

# Guide to the John Cleaveland Papers

MS 882



compiled by Bruce P. Stark

December 1982

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 882

**CREATOR:** Cleaveland, John, 1722-1799

**TITLE:** John Cleaveland papers

**DATES:** 1786-1807

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1 linear foot

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of sermons by John Cleaveland (1722-1799) and his son, John Cleaveland (1750-1815). The elder John Cleaveland is responsible for fifty-two sermons, chiefly preached at Ipswich, Massachusetts (1793-1798) and the younger is represented by seventy-two sermons delivered at Stoneham and Wrentham, Massachusetts from 1786-1807.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0882>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0882>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Ruth Cleaveland Monroe, 1959.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

John Cleaveland Papers. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

John Cleaveland, the third son and the seventh of eleven children of Josiah Cleveland, of Canterbury, Connecticut, and grandson of Josiah Cleveland, of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, and Canterbury, was born April 11, 1722, O. S. His second cousin, the Rev. Aaron Cleveland (Harv. Coll. 1735), was a direct ancestor of President Cleveland. The mother of our graduate was Abigail, eldest daughter of Elisha and Rebecca (Doane) Paine, of Eastham, Massachusetts, and Canterbury. He was destined for a farmer's life, but an injury due to overwork during his youth disabled him for severe physical labor, and led to his seeking a College education.

He united with the Canterbury Church in 1740, and on entering College the next year found himself in a revival atmosphere, with which he was fully prepared to sympathize. His home circle in Canterbury was also especially moved by a similar revival, and one of his mother's brothers became conspicuous, in 1742, as a lay exhorter. In the fall of 1744, John Cleaveland, with his brother Ebenezer (just admitted Freshman), incurred College censure by being present with their parents at what were technically "Separatist" meetings in Canterbury, though they were at the same time private meetings of the major part of the church of which John Cleaveland was a member. On their return to New Haven in November, the brothers were suspended by the Rector and Tutors, for violating the laws of the Colony and the College, and since they could not conscientiously make such an acknowledgment of wrong-doing as the Rector required, but vitiated their humble apology by "continuing to justify themselves," they were expelled in January, 1745. A great clamor followed this act, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to obtain redress through the next General Assembly. It was not, however, until so late as 1763, long after it could have been of any value to him, that the subject of this notice was admitted to a degree by the College.

For several months in the year 1745 he studied theology with the Rev. Philemon Robbins (Harv. 1729), the "New Light" pastor in Branford, Connecticut, and while thus engaged was invited by the Separatists in his native town to preach for them as a candidate for settlement. This offer he declined, but in September of the same year he consented to supply a New Light (afterwards the Eleventh Congregational) Church in Boston, which he was still serving when he acted as the moderator of the ecclesiastical council which organized on the 22d of May, 1746, a new Congregational Church in Chebacco Parish (since 1819 the town of Essex), in Ipswich, Massachusetts. This new enterprise was a secession from the old church in Chebacco, on grounds similar to those which had caused a separation in the Canterbury church; and when on December 17 he received a call to the pastorate of the new church, just as he was considering a call from his Boston congregation, he accepted the former, though the social advantages of the capital must have been more attractive. The pastor of the mother church in Chebacco (which was the Second Church in Ipswich), the Rev. Theophilus Pickering (Harv. 1719), exerted himself strenuously to prevent Mr.

Cleaveland's ordination; but that event took place, on the 25th of February, 1747, and the old pastor was obliged to content himself with involving the intruder in a pamphlet war.

Mr. Pickering died a few months later, and Mr. Cleaveland by his zeal and activity secured the approbation of the entire community, so that on a future vacancy occurring in the ministry of the old church in Chebacco, he brought about, in 1768, an arrangement for the two societies to worship together, half the year in each meetinghouse; this was soon followed (in 1770) by an agreement that the old parish should pay a part of Mr. Cleaveland's salary, and, in 1774, by a complete union of the two churches, and this in 1776 by a union of the ecclesiastical parishes. He remained sole pastor until his death, after a brief but painful illness, in Chebacco, April 22, 1799, at the age of 77. He preached as usual on the last Sabbath but one before his death.

His pastorate was repeatedly interrupted by service to his country. In March, 1758, he was commissioned by Governor Pownall as Chaplain in a Massachusetts regiment raised under Colonel Bagley to assist in the invasion of Canada, and in this capacity he served on the shores of Lake George until October. The next year his regiment was ordered to the garrison at Louisburg, Cape Breton, which occasioned another absence of four months. In the succeeding years Mr. Cleaveland was conspicuously identified by his pulpit utterances and by his contributions to the newspapers with the rising sentiment against Great Britain.

When the Revolutionary War came, he went at once to the front, and from June to November, 1775, was with the army about Boston as Chaplain of Colonel Little's regiment, the 17th Foot, while all his four sons were also in the service. Again in the fall of 1776 he served for a short time as chaplain of Colonel Jonathan Cogswell's Essex County regiment in the neighborhood of New York. It was said of him with significant if evident exaggeration, that he preached all the men of his parish into the army, and then went himself.

He was married, July 31, 1747, to Mary, younger daughter of Parker and Mary (Choate) Dodge, of Hamilton, then a part of Ipswich. She died of a cancer, on April 21, 1768, in her 47th year, and he married, in September, 1769, Mary Neale, widow of Captain John Foster, of the adjoining town of Manchester.

She died April 19, 1810, in her 80th year, at the home of one of her step-sons, in Topsfield, Massachusetts.

Of the four sons by the first marriage, the eldest was debarred by his health from completing his education at this College; he had, however, a long and useful career in his father's profession. Two other sons became physicians of distinction; and the fourth died young. By the same marriage there were three daughters, all of whom left descendants.

Mr. Cleaveland sustained the character of a very earnest, though not elegant, preacher, and a most exemplary and conscientious man.

A sermon occasioned by his death, by the Rev. Elijah Parish (Dartmouth Coll. 1785), was printed, and bears ample testimony to his character. As thus commemorated, "tho' of a mild spirit, he was decided in his opinions; tho' gentle in his manner, he was independent in his conduct... We recollect his pleasing address his meekness of temper, the suavity of his manner, and the uniform propriety of his deportment... Charity and good nature were prominent features of his character."

He died on April 22, 1799.

(Taken from Franklin B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College*, II, pp. 29-35).

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## Scope and Contents

The John Cleaveland Papers are contained in four boxes and consist entirely of manuscript sermons. The collection contains 124 sermons, 52 preached by John Cleaveland (1722-1799), the distinguished separatist minister, and 74 preached by his son John Cleaveland (1750-1815). The elder John Cleaveland's (1722-1799) sermons were preached between September 15, 1793 and December 30, 1798. Most were first preached at Chebacco Parish in Ipswich. The sermons of the younger John Cleaveland (1750-1815) cover the periods 1786 to 1799 and 1807. Most of his sermons were preached at Stoneham and Wrentham. The same sermon may have been preached as many as seven times over a period of several years. One, for example, by the younger John Cleaveland was first given at Newburyport on June 25, 1797, and then given

twice more at Chebacco and Topsfield in 1797, at Medway in 1798, and at Medfield and Attleboro in 1799. Those interested in further information about the elder John Cleaveland (1722-1799) and his times should consult Chirstopher Jedry, *The World of John Cleaveland: Family and Community in Eighteenth Century New England* (1979).

The sermons of the elder John Cleaveland (1722-1799) fill folders 1-52 and those of the younger John Cleaveland (1750-1815) folders 53-124. The sermons for each man are arranged chronologically and the date given is that when it was first preached.

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## Collection Contents

### Sermons

#### John Cleaveland (1722-1799)

b. 1, f. 1 - 38                      1793-1796

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b. 2, f. 39 - 52                     1796-1798

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#### John Cleaveland (1750-1815)

b. 2, f. 53 - 75                     1786-1793

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b. 3, f. 76 - 105                   1794-1799, 1807

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b. 4, f. 106 - 124                  1807  
English

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Geographic Names**

Ipswich (Mass.) -- Religious life and customs  
Stoneham (Mass.) -- Religious life and customs  
Wrentham (Mass.) -- Religious life and customs

### **Genres / Formats**

Sermons

### **Subjects**

Clergy

### **Names**

Cleaveland, John, 1722-1799  
Cleaveland, John, 1749-1815