

# Guide to the Witter Family Papers

MS 1075



compiled by Susan Grigg

February 1980

Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
(203) 432-7441  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1075

**CREATOR:** Witter family

**TITLE:** Witter family papers

**DATES:** 1752-1852

**BULK DATES:** 1781-1852

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.25 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of legal papers, medical accounts, religious writings, and other papers relating to Avery Downer, Jacob Witter, and their relations, including Jonah and John Witter.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1075>

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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.1075>.

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 Henry W. Beckwith, 1940 and 1943, and Mrs. John H. Quinlan, 1948.

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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

Witter Family Papers (MS 1075). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

John Witter, the eldest son and second child of Jonah Witter, of Brooklyn, then part of Pomfret, Connecticut, and grandson of Nathan and Keziah (Branch) Witter, of Brooklyn, was born in Brooklyn on April 28, 1785. His mother was Eunice Cady, of Brooklyn. The Rev. Thomas Williams (Yale 1800) was a first cousin, and Professor John H. Hewitt (Yale 1859) is a nephew. In the year of his birth his parents removed to Preston, and after having taught for a few terms he was prepared for College by John Adams (Yale 1795) in Bacon Academy, Colchester.

For the three years next after graduation he taught in the Hopkins Grammar School in Hartford. He then returned to Yale as Tutor, declining the offer of a post in the Academy where he was educated. In March, 1816, he united with the College Church on profession of his faith.

In the fall of 1817, he returned to Bacon Academy, and on April 30, 1819, he was married to Eliza Loomis, eldest child of Asa and Sophia (Loomis) Bulkeley, of Colchester.

After a few years he became principal of the Academy in Plainfield; and after retiring from that position his residence continued in the town, where he was occupied with the cultivation of his farm and occasional teaching until his death on December 30, 1858, in his 74th year.

He maintained a good reputation as a scholar and as an instructor, and was esteemed for his high character. He was for years a deacon in the Congregational Church in Plainfield.

After the death of his first wife, he married Olive Smith, of Plainfield.

By his first marriage he had three daughters and two sons. One son and one daughter died in infancy.

(Taken from F. B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of Yale College, Class of 1812*, pp. 505-506).

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## Scope and Contents

The Witter Family Papers consist of miscellaneous items related to Avery Downer (1762-1854) of Preston, Conn., Jacob Witter (1737-1798) of Norwich, Conn., and several of their relations. The papers of Avery Downer have to do with his career as a physician, including his service in the Revolution. The papers of Jacob Witter are legal documents and religious writings. Jacob Witter's grandnephew, John Witter (1785-1858; Y. 1812) is represented by a play, "The Lounger," said to have been produced unofficially around the time of his graduation. The connection between the two lines is that Lucas Witter, one of Jacob's

nephews married Avery Downer's second daughter, Emily. For more genealogical information see *The Witter Genealogy* and *The Downers of America*.

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## Collection Contents

### Avery Downer (1762-1854)

b. 1, f. 1	Memorandum, "An Uncommon Occurrence," relating to his certification by a committee of the New London County medical association	1784
b. 1, f. 2	Medical account book containing a narrative of the Battle of Groton Heights	1847-1852, undated
b. 1, f. 3	"Revolutionary Reminiscence" to the editor of the <i>New London Daily Star</i> English	1849
b. 1, f. 4	"Names of Persons wounded in Groton [Fort?] on the 6th of September 1781 and attended on by Avery Downer..." English	undated
b. 1, f. 5	Note on the medical effects of music and dancing	undated
b. 1, f. 6	Mary Ann Downer (1802-1880): commonplace books	1830, undated
b. 1, f. 7	John Labastide: valentine	1784
b. 1, f. 8	Salmon Treat: deed to Asher Rossiter for land in Preston, Connecticut	1752
Jacob Witter (1737-1798)		
b. 1, f. 9	Papers relating to Jonah Witter's activities as conservator of his estate	1785-1799
b. 1, f. 10	"A Short Treatise on the Duty and Necessity of Universal Christian Fellowship and the Obsurdity [sic] and Wickedness of Christians Refusing Fellowship with Those of other Denominations" English	undated
b. 1, f. 11	"Meditations on Various Religious Subjects" English	undated
b. 1, f. 11	John Witter (1785-1858): colloquy, "The Lounger"	1812
b. 1, f. 12	Samuel W. Wood: ALS to his (father-in-law?), Jonah Witter	1833
b. 1, f. 13	Photograph, "Jacob Witter house, Bean Hill, Connecticut/The Witter & Hyde [Tavern?]"	undated
b. 1, f. 13	Raw silk fiber and cocoon	undated

## **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.

### **Subjects**

Families  
Groton Heights, Battle of, Conn., 1781  
Medicine  
Medicine, Military  
Physicians  
Religious tolerance

### **Geographic Names**

Connecticut -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783  
New London (Conn.) -- History -- Revolution,  
1775-1783  
United States -- History -- Revolution,  
1775-1783 -- Campaigns

### **Names**

Downer, Avery, 1762-  
Witter, Jacob, 1737-1798

### **Families**

Witter family