

1969.149 Edwards (Jonathan) Family Collection

Extent: 3 boxes

Inclusive Dates: 1645-2003

Bulk Dates: 1734-1758

Scope and Content:

The Edwards Family Collection contains documents and objects relating to Jonathan Edwards and his family. Edwards served as the second minister and missionary to the Stockbridge Indians from 1751, when he was dismissed from a post in Northampton, Massachusetts, until 1758, when he became president of the College of New Jersey (later to become Princeton University).

The collection includes printed sermons by Edwards, original correspondence by family members, books either written or used by Edwards, materials commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> and 300<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of his birth, and a few objects. Most outstanding among the objects is the six-sided desk Edwards used while living in Stockbridge and writing "Freedom of the Will." Paul Bayne's 1645 "A Commentary upon the Whole Epistle of the Apostle Paul..." was owned by Edwards and includes his signature, and Edwards' own text, "Justification by Faith alone..." contains his signature and marginalia. The collection does not include any documents written in Jonathan Edwards' own hand.

An Edwards Family Study Collection is also available (1969.149S). This collection consists of photocopied documents relating to Jonathan Edwards and his family. Documents include articles, essays, speeches, photocopied correspondence, images, and a copy of Esther Burr's journal, among others. There are no original documents in the study collection.

Historical Note:

Jonathan Edwards was born on October 5, 1703, in East Windsor, Connecticut, and entered Yale College in 1716. He was variously employed as a clergyman at a Presbyterian church in New York City and as a tutor at Yale before being ordained as minister in Northampton, MA, on February 15, 1727. That same year, he married Sarah Pierpont, with whom he would eventually have eleven children. He oversaw a significant revival in Northampton, which spread across the Connecticut River Valley and the colonies as the Great Awakening, during the years 1733-35. This revival established Edwards' prominence and brought some critics to claim that his preaching encouraged religious fanaticism. A second wave of revival led to Edwards' best-known sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which he first preached in Enfield, Connecticut, in 1741. As the decade progressed, Edwards fell out of favor with his congregants, and he was dismissed from his position in Northampton in 1748.

Edwards moved to Stockbridge and became the second minister and missionary to the Stockbridge Mahican (Mohican) Indians in 1751, following the 1749 death of John Sergeant. He wrote his most significant works while in Stockbridge, including "Freedom of the Will," or, "A Careful and Strict Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will which is Supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame," published in 1754.

In 1757, Edwards' son-in-law, Aaron Burr, Sr., died and left vacant his office as president of the College of New Jersey. Edwards left Stockbridge to take the position of president as of February 16, 1758. Soon afterward, he chose to have a smallpox inoculation. He died as a result of this inoculation on March 22, 1758, and was buried in the Princeton Cemetery.

Arrangement:

Series I: Documents

Series II: Commemorations and Anniversaries

Series III: Photographs and Images

Series IV: Books Published or Used During Edwards' Lifetime

Series V: Books Published Posthumously

Series VI: Objects

Administrative Information:

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