



**Finding Aid
of the digitized records of**

**Letters to
John Heckewelder (1743-1823)
1779-1820**

**Lanie Yaswinski
2025**

Reference Code

A (for Archives)

Title

Letters to John Heckewelder (digitized records)

Dates

1779-1820

Level of Description

Item level, organized chronologically

Extent and medium of the unit of description

30 folders found in one box (Box 16 Heckewelder)

Name of Creator

Correspondence related to mission work created under the oversight of the Moravian Congregation of Bethlehem, Provincial Helpers' Conference (PHC) and Provincial Elders' Conference (PEC) in North America.

Administrative/Biographical History

Moravians first arrived in Colonial America (Savannah, Georgia) in 1735 with one of their major initiatives to establish a mission to Native Americans living in the vicinity of Savannah. After Moravians resettled in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley in the early 1740s, missionary activities ultimately ensued among the Delaware and other Native American groups. Moravian missionaries followed the Delaware in particular westward from Pennsylvania to Ohio, to Canada, Indiana, and finally to Kansas. Moravian missionaries also worked among Mahicans in New York and Connecticut, and among the Cherokee in modern-day Georgia and Oklahoma. Mission work among Native Americans lasted until the year 1900.

John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder (1743-1823) was a Moravian missionary to the Delaware Indians in western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Canada from 1762 until his retirement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1810. He was born to Moravian parents in Bedford, England and educated in Moravian schools at Buttermere and Fulneck until the family moved to Bethlehem in 1754. His parents were later called to mission service in the West Indies while John remained in Bethlehem and apprenticed as a cooper until 1762, when he accompanied the Moravian missionary Christian Friedrich Post on a mission to relocate the Christian Delaware in western Pennsylvania to Ohio. In 1771 he became the assistant of another Moravian missionary, David Zeisberger, with whom he worked for the

next fifteen years with Christian Native Americans in various settlements in western Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan as their communities were pushed further westward. During this time, Heckewelder became fluent in the Delaware language and customs, consequently being asked to serve as an ambassador for the American government on various peace treaty negotiations with Native American tribes during the 1790s. In 1810, Heckewelder and his family retired to Bethlehem, where he wrote definitive works on Native American culture and language, and served as a member of the American Philosophical Society until his death in 1823.

Archival History

The Letters to John Heckewelder record group is an artificial collection, a collection of letters with unknown provenance assembled and organized to facilitate its management or use. At this time, it is not clear how and when these letters came to be deposited at MHS. In the past, it seems that the collection was organized at the item level by staff or volunteers according to general subject matter, and then numbered sequentially and placed into boxes according to subject. The collection was digitized with its current numbering system over a number of years, with digitization completed in 2023. In order to improve accessibility and enhance descriptions, Lanie Yaswinski was hired in August 2023 to edit the database entries and create finding aids for these digitized collections.

Scope and Content

This collection contains letters written to the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder as he served in various Native American mission communities between 1779-1806, along with letters he received in retirement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania between 1812-1820 from Moravian missionary Abraham Luckenbach stationed in Goshen, Ohio.

System of Arrangement

The records were previously organized at the item level, according to general subject groups. Since the records were digitized with a sequential numbering system, the physical system of arrangement remains intact. To improve accessibility and establish intellectual control over the subject group, records are organized chronologically in the finding aid.

Conditions governing access

Unrestricted

Conditions governing reproduction

Researchers may access these records in person through appointment at MHS, or alternately may request digital reproductions. Contact MHS for pricing and policies regarding reproduction, copyright and permission to publish.

Language/Scripts of material

German, English, Delaware

Handwritten Latin and German script

Physical characteristics and technical requirements

Ink or pencil on loose sheets of paper

Finding aids

PDF on website and printed finding aid in reading room

Existence and location of originals

Original records stored in the Archives Room, the Moravian Historical Society.

Related units of description

Related records are found in collections at the following institutions:

- Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA (MAB) in the following collections: Records of the Moravian Missions to the American Indians (MissInd); Records of the Moravian Church in the Eastern West Indies (MissEWI); Bethlehem Congregation records (Beth Cong) in terms of minutes of various American Indian church councils or conferences
- Unity Archives, Herrnhut, Germany (UA)
- Moravian Archives - Southern Province, Winston-Salem, NC, regarding the missions among the Cherokee

Archivist's note

Finding aid created by Lanie Yaswinski, 2025

Rules or Conventions

DACS; ISAD (g)

Dates of description

Previously arranged and described by MHS staff or volunteer "A.K." in the past. Digital entries revised by Lanie Yaswinski, 2023-24.

CITATION INSTRUCTION:

Moravian Historical Society in Nazareth PA, Moravian Missions + A(number) i.e. A123. For shortened citations use MHS for the repository and the reference number, (i.e. MHS A###).

Object ID	Name/Title	Date
A267	Letter to John Heckewelder, Lichtenau, from David Zeisberger, Schoenbrunn	September 8, 1779
A268	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Jeremiah Denke, Lititz PA	January 23, 1787
A269	Letter to John Hekewelder, Bethlehem PA, from David Zeisberger, Pettquotinke	October 4, 1789
A270	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Johannes Ettwein, New York, includes English translation	September 4, 1790
A271	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from David Zeisberger, Fairfield	August 16, 1797
A272	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Muskingum near Schoenbrunn	October 11, 1798
A273	Letter to John Heckewelder, Muskingum, from J.A. Huebner, Lititz PA	October 29, 1798
A274	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Abraham Steiner, Bethabara NC	January 31, 1799
A275	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Goshen	June 7, 1799
A276	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from John Ettwein, Bethlehem PA	October 4, 1799
A277	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from J.P. Kluge, White River, including translation	September 8, 1802
A278	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from G.H. Loskiel, Bethlehem PA	December 5, 1802
A279	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from Jacob von Vleck, Nazareth PA	September 30, 1803
A280	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from Christian Friedrich Denke, Fairfield [Jongquakamik], includes translation	September 4, 1804
A281	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Goshen, includes translation	March 2, 1804
A282	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Goshen	January 7, 1805
A283	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Goshen	March 17, 1805
A284	Letter to John Heckewelder, Muskingum, from Carl Gotthold Reichel, Salem NC	October 14, 1805
A285	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Goshen	June 8, 1805
A288	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from C.F. Denke	January 18, 1806
A286	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten, from David Zeisberger, Goshen	June 14, 1806
A287	Letter to John Heckewelder, Gnadenhuetten on Muskingum, from John Schnall, Fairfield	April 12, 1808
A266	Letter to John Heckewelder at Gnadenhutten on Muskingum, from Joachim Hagen and Michael Jung	n.d.
A289	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA from Abraham Luckenbach, Goshen	November 13, 1812
A290	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Abraham Luckenbach, Goshen	March 19, 1817
A291	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Abraham Luckenbach, Goshen	May 6, 1818
A292	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Abraham Luckenbach, Goshen	November 16, 1819
A293	Letter to John Heckewelder, Bethlehem PA, from Abraham Luckenbach, Goshen	February 6, 1820

A294	Letter to John Heckwelder, Bethlehem PA from Abraham Luckenbach, Goshen	May 22, 1820
A295	Copy of the Original Manuscript of David Zeisberger's Lenni-Lenape Indian Language from John Heckewelder's Private Library	n.d.