



Walter Havighurst Special Collections Miami University Libraries

John W. Browne Collection 1796-1849

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Title: John W. Browne Collection
Dates: 1796-1849
Media: Manuscripts
Quantity: .75 cubic feet
Location: Closed stacks

COLLECTION SUMMARY

The collection includes correspondence, receipts, resolutions, financial documents, and miscellaneous items pertaining to John Browne's mission to secure donations of money and books for Miami University.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

A native of Bristol, England, the Reverend John W. Browne was editor of the Cincinnati weekly newspaper, *Liberty Hall*. In 1810, Browne was appointed as a missionary to solicit and receive donations for Miami University. Riding on horseback, Browne traveled East from his congregation at Paddy's Run in Butler County, Ohio on January 4, 1811 to raise a building fund for the university. Receiving \$50 a month and expenses along the way, Browne collected approximately \$2,500 and also accepted a large number of books for the institution. After traveling from Cincinnati to Pittsburgh, Williamsburg, Washington, Baltimore, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts, Browne returned to Cincinnati on August 3, 1812, discouraged and in poor health. In November 1813, a committee was appointed to receive the money, the books, and a full report from Browne. However,

Browne died of hypothermia after falling into a cold creek, and did not live to fulfill this final duty of his mission.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE COLLECTION

When Browne died, the administration of his estate passed to his son, Samuel J. Browne. After the elder Browne's death, the Miami University Board of Trustees worked with the younger Browne to obtain a settlement of his father's estate in order to obtain the funds which Browne had collected on his mission. By 1817, the books that Browne collected on his journey had been sorted; some were held in the university's library, while 118 volumes were sold to the Cincinnati Circulating Library Society at seventy-five cents per volume, totaling \$88.50. The remaining books were auctioned, bringing \$371.86 to the university. In 1820, the books reserved for Miami's library were sent to Oxford.

After several requests for time extensions from the Board of Trustees committee appointed to make a report on the Browne matter, the committee finally submitted a report on July 6, 1824. The report stated that Browne had been given \$950 for salary. After salary, expenses, and transportation and storage of the books were deducted, the university profited a little over \$100, which may have been collected from Samuel Browne. Along with this money, Browne gave two globes that his father purchased during this mission and that are referenced in this collection.

On March 25, 1937, Browne's grandson, Samuel Stokes, presented Miami University President Alfred Upham with the documents contained in this collection.

Browne's final report to the university's Board of Trustees regarding his mission is included in the McBride Manuscripts. The copy is dated 1812.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The collection begins with the articles of agreement between Browne and Miami University for his appointment as a missionary to solicit and receive donations for the university's use. The document also reveals that Browne would keep an accurate journal of his route and enter the amount of all donations he may receive on behalf of the university, together with the names of the benefactors. A letter from Browne to the chairman of Miami University's trustees not only states wishes regarding his acceptance of the appointment, but also provides information about Browne's route for his journey. His plan was to begin in Cincinnati and travel to Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Charleston, South Carolina, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, back to Ohio.

Browne's correspondence to Messrs. Symmes and Shields provides accounts of the progress of his mission. Horse injuries, weather challenges and preaching experiences often comprise Browne's accounts. They also include current subscription lists, such as one on March 4, 1811 that records Henry Clay of Kentucky's promised \$20.00 contribution to the cause, as he "could not spare the cash."

However, Browne admitted that his progress was slow. Residents of communities he visited were often pressed for contributing to other local public building causes, such as new churches, courthouses, and educational institutions. While financial contributions were challenging, acquiring volumes for Miami's library was more profitable. "I find it a rare thing to get a dollar, but I find some encouragement in procuring books for the University Library," Browne wrote to Joab Comstock on May 16, 1811. "In Baltimore I have collected about 200 vol. of different descriptions & subjects & about 200 vol. in Washington. I have the prospect of many more – so that I do expect I shall procure a handsome library."

Browne proves himself to be very conscientious. Writing to Daniel Symmes on June 8, 1811 about his success in collecting books for the university's library, Browne inquires whether he would be justified in purchasing a set of encyclopedias if he can procure a deduction of 25 or 30 percent as a donation. He states, "If I found liberty in my own mind to expend my cash, I might obtain in this way I am led to suppose it would be of very considerable advantage to the Institute but I must scruple making any advances save on the subject of making expenses until I have your approbation."

In several letters, Browne confesses disappointment in not receiving replies from Messrs. Symmes and Shields about his progress. For example, he writes on September 19, 1811, "I have been expecting some reply to the many letters which I have forwarded to you in the course of my journey – not one having come to hand naturally leads me to conclude that my missionary exertions have not satisfied your mind, or that your missionary is beneath your notice. If the former be the case, one single official hint will immediately close the scene & lead my attention toward the state of Ohio." Still not receiving a reply from Symmes, he penned a report to others affiliated with the university on his progress. For example, on February 3, 1812, he wrote, "Should the least degree of dissatisfaction occupy the minds of the Trustees, I shall very cheerfully close the concern at a moment's notice & haste to the state of Ohio. You might well imagine disagreeable sensations arise in my mind from the treatment my letters have met with by Mr. Symmes – and could I suppose this communication would receive the like reception it would be the last communication & you would soon see me at Cincinnati."

Browne is quick to share suggestions he has received from other individuals, such as the prudence of completing one wing of a building for fire prevention and not selling land adjacent to the college in a section of town. In a February 27, 1812 letter to William Ludlow, Browne writes, "One thing I am well convinced of, that the sooner something is begun to draw public attention the more valuable the lands will become."

Often, Browne's letters read like a travel guide to noted American cities. For example, Browne wrote to his son, William, on April 30, 1811 that he was "astonished to see the alteration in the appearances of Baltimore" since his last visit to the city 14 years before. "The buildings of brick are neat & grand – some very superb. The streets crowded with passengers & carriages – equal or superior to Bristol – The Banks, magnificent."

Browne's mission also provided him with the opportunity to make the acquaintance of college presidents and other noted Americans. For example, in his May 3, 1811 report, Browne wrote of his meeting with Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the noted architect who designed the U.S. Capitol, and Latrobe's offer to draw a plan of the university and a statement of materials. On August 8, 1811,

Browne provides a sketch and details of Princeton College President Dr. Samuel L. Smith's description of a favorable design of a college building.

However, Browne often was not as successful in meeting his financial objectives. Writing on April 30, 1811, Browne states: "It has pleased the Lord to give me favor in the eyes of the people in a way of friendly intercourse with the most influential characters in America – and in the ministry of the Word has graciously supported me so that I am generally favored with a goodly number of hearers. I have not been very successful in procuring Cash for building the University but I find that I can procure a number of Books – which I am now preping [sic]."

Letters also reveal Browne's devotion to his family and the sacrifices he made in undertaking this mission, yet his commitment to accomplishing what he agreed to do. Two letters to Browne's son, William, provide details of the Browne family and his health. Moreover, as he writes on February 3, 1812, "Could I have foreseen the difficulties & obstacles & especially the length of time necessary to be absent from my family & other concerns I should never have undertaken it. Being engaged I find it my duty to make every exertion my strength will admit. It is a concern which cannot be forwarded by haste, and that the event will prove that the more time can be spent therein the more success will ensue."

The collection continues after Browne's death, which occurred shortly after his return to Cincinnati. A May 21, 1813 missive from Samuel J. Browne and Seth M. Levinworth to Miami University Treasurer William Murray requests that all the documents Browne transmitted to the university's trustees be forwarded to them in order to settle Browne's estate.

The collection contains documents regarding the settlement of Browne's estate, including receipts for the globes and other items Browne acquired for the university during his mission. A report outlines the findings of a committee of the university's trustees regarding the sale of those books, while a catalogue provides the titles of those books. Financial documents include a list of auction sales on the university's account, receipts for storage of books on behalf of the university, and the final settlement of Browne's estate, dated April 21, 1824.

Two documents from December 1810 present Browne's credentials for his missionary endeavor, certifying Browne's residence in Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio and the signers' belief that Browne has sustained an "upright and respectable character" that "has been consistent with his profession." An undated sermon expressed Browne's views and beliefs on religion.

Other documents in the collection include Samuel Browne's ownership of a lot in the Enon Baptist Church burying ground; religious writings of Revd. J. J. Biddulph; correspondence from the Department of State to Browne regarding publication of laws, an invitation to join the board of directors of the Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton Railroad on an opening excursion from Cincinnati to Dayton on September 18, 1851; and a copy of the September 3, 1800 issue of *The Western Spy and Hamilton Gazette*.

Several indentures signed in Browne's presence in his role of recorder of Hamilton County can be found in the collection, including those dating from: June 10, 1796 between John Mercer of Cincinnati

and merchants Abijah and Jesse Hunt; February 13, 1806 between Charles Vattier and George Williamson of Cincinnati; Hamilton County Sheriff William McFarland and Joseph Curtis, September 29, 1806; Joseph Curtis and Aquila Wheeler of Cincinnati; Aaron Ireland and James Gallaway of Hamilton County, Ohio, November 29, 1806; William McFarland and Jacob Lawble, et al., July 18, 1807; William Stratton and Jacob Lawble, et al., August 29, 1807; Joseph Delaphine and Jacob Lawble, December 30, 1811.

The collection continues with Samuel J. Browne's correspondence. Early letters from family include a December 16, 1797 letter from his sister, Mary Anne Browne, in which she convinces her brother that although they are separated by 3,000 miles of water, she has not forgotten him. On May 14, 1802, Samuel writes his father that he is recovering from illness and wishes to hear from his family. Later letters to his mother provide accounts of his experiences while traveling in England, Chillicothe, Washington, and Baltimore.

Other letters console Samuel on the death of his father and his first wife, Fanny Farmer Browne; while further correspondence imparts news from his sister (now Mary Ann Browne Avery), living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Correspondence between Samuel and his second wife, Esther Browne, provide details of travel and household matters.

Robert Hamilton Bishop's May 1825 letter to Samuel, editor of the weekly Cincinnati *Emporium* transmits the text of an advertisement to run in the newspaper that describes Miami University faculty, classes, student accommodations, daily schedule, and annual expenses.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

Series I: John W. Browne

Sub-Series I: Correspondence

Sub-Series III: Resolutions

Sub-Series IV: Financial Documents

Sub-Series V: Miscellaneous Documents

Series II: Samuel J. Browne

Sub-Series I: Correspondence

Sub-Series II: Miscellaneous Documents

Series III: Other Correspondents

Sub-Series I: Correspondence

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

- Access: This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.
- Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to cite the *John W. Browne Collection* and *The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries* in all footnote and bibliographic references.
- Processed By: Betsy Butler (2007-2008)
- Provenance: Found in Board papers, President Upham's file, June 1937, with accompanying letter from Samuel Stokes dated March 25, 1937. Papers received and accessioned by Miami University Archives on September 28, 1978 and were sent to the Walter Havighurst Special Collections.
- Property Rights: The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries, owns the property rights to this collection.
- Copyrights: Reproduction of materials in the collection is subject to the restrictions of copyright law. To use any materials not yet in the public domain, the researcher must obtain permission from the copyright holder.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the box and folder numbers shown below.

Series I: John W. Browne

Sub-Series I: Correspondence

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
1	1	W. Browne	John W. Browne	April 1802	Bath, England	Cincinnati, Ohio	Acknowledges receipt of two letters; effects of administration on restoration of peace with France and other European powers; prosperity of

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
							market; news of relatives and friends
	2	John W. Browne	Trustees of Miami University	ca. 1810			Accepting the appointment of missionary to receive donations
	3	John W. Browne	President of Miami University	August 28, 1810			Articles of agreement regarding appointment as missionary
	4	John W. Browne	Symmes, Shields and Corry	February 3, 1811	Top of Allegany Mountain	Cincinnati, Ohio	First report of mission
	5	John W. Browne	Symmes and Shields	March 4, 1811	City of Washington	Cincinnati, Ohio	Second report of mission
	6	John W. Browne	William Browne	March 21, 1811	Alexandria, District of Columbia near City of Washington	Bath, Great Britain	News of family and Browne's trip
	7	John W. Browne	William Browne	April 30, 1811	Baltimore, Maryland	Bath, Great Britain	Report of Browne's stay in Washington and Baltimore; news of family
	8	John W. Browne	Symmes and Shields	May 3, 1811	Baltimore, Maryland	Cincinnati, Ohio	Fourth report of mission, including details of meeting Benjamin Latrobe, who offered to draw a plan and

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
							statement of materials for Miami University; also includes statement of books received.
9		John W. Browne	Joab Comstock	May 16, 1811	Baltimore, Maryland	Crosby (Hamilton County), Ohio	Attempting to reconcile Mr. Vaughen's debt to Mr. Williams by visiting John Jones; progress of the mission
10		John W. Browne	Daniel Symmes	June 8, 1811	Baltimore, Maryland	Cincinnati, Ohio	Accounting of receipts (books and cash); query regarding purchasing a set of encyclopedias
11		John W. Browne	Gentlemen of Miami University	August 8, 1811	Trenton, New Jersey		Last days in Baltimore; time in Delaware and Philadelphia, including visit to Dr. Samuel L. Smith, president of Princeton College, and his recommendations for the design of a college
12		John W. Browne	Joseph Van Horne	September 5-9, 1811	New Brunswick, New Jersey	Cincinnati, Ohio	Complains of no answers from Symmes and his problems in collecting in Baltimore and Delaware due to

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
							other debts
13		John W. Browne	Daniel Symmes and James Shields	September 19, 1811	Elizabethtown, New Jersey	Cincinnati, Ohio	Report of collections to date; time in Philadelphia and Elizabethtown
14		John W. Browne	Daniel Symmes	September 28, 1811	Newark, New Jersey	Cincinnati, Ohio	Report of mission in New Jersey and Elizabethtown; how other public buildings are making financial demands on residents
15		John W. Browne	Sarah Browne	November 29-30, 1811	Waterford, New York	Cincinnati, Ohio	Report of time in Albany, New York; recent experiences in preaching sermons; plans for rest of the journey; thoughts about daughter Charlotte's impending marriage
16		John W. Browne	Samuel J. Browne	January 2 and 13, 1812	Lancinburgh, New York	Cincinnati, Ohio	Concerns about Calvinism; progress and effects of his journey
17		John W. Browne	Joseph Van Horne	January 13, 1812; February 3, 1812	Lancingburgh, New York; Worcester, Massachusetts	Cincinnati, Ohio	Still having no reply from Symmes, he reports to Van Horne and

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
							trustees on his progress and plans for next destinations
	18	John W. Browne	William Ludlow	February 27, 1812	Beverly near Salem, Massachusetts	Oxford, Ohio	Reports to Ludow as president of Miami University, as he still has not heard from Symmes. Includes report on his health, suggestions about beginning building efforts

Series I: John W. Browne

Sub-Series II: Estate Settlements and Receipts

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	19	Receipt for items from John Browne estate	April 21, 1824
	20	Settlement between Samuel J. Browne and Miami University for claims for storage and services	April 21, 1824

Series I: John W. Browne

Sub-Series III: Resolutions

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	21	Resolution authorizing William Murray, the treasurer of Miami University, to call on Samuel J. Browne for books	May 1, 1812
	22	Resolution appointing committee to settle with Browne estate administrators (April 12 and September 26, 1821)	1821
	23	Resolution regarding report of Browne estate committee administrators	June 19, 1822

Series I: John W. Browne
Sub-Series IV: Financial Documents

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	24	Sales at Auction on Account of the Miami University	December 21, 1816
	25	Receipt for storage of books on behalf of Miami University	December 1815-June 1817
	26	Receipt for Daniel Drake regarding repairing boxes and trunks of books	October 18, 1827
	27	Settlement of the estate of John W. Browne	April 21, 1824

Series I: John W. Browne
Sub-Series V: Miscellaneous Documents

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	28	Document appointing John Browne recorder for the county of Hamilton, signed by Ohio Governor Edward Tiffin and William Creighton, Secretary of State	December 16, 1803
	29	Credentials of John W. Browne	December 27, 1810
	30	Sermon written by John Browne	Undated
	31	Report of the committee of Trustees regarding books collected by Browne	October 18, 1817
	32	"Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Miami University which were selected out of the collection made by John W. Brown [sic], and sold by the committee at Cincinnati"/"Catalogue of Books Sold at Auction	Undated
	33	Indentures	1796-1811
	34	Miscellaneous documents pertaining to Samuel and John Browne	1809, 1826, undated

Series II: Samuel J. Browne
Sub-Series I: Correspondence

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
2	1	Samuel J. Browne	Mary Ann Browne	December 16, 1797	Harrisburgh	Bristol, England	Convincing her brother that although they are separated by 3,000 miles of water, she has not forgotten him; news of family
	2	Samuel J. Browne	John W. Browne	May 14, 1802	Chillicothe, Ohio	Cincinnati, Ohio	Recovering from sickness; requests to hear from family
	3	Samuel J. Browne	Sarah Browne	April 5, 1811	Bath, England	Cincinnati, Ohio	Experiences in England
	4	I. Innez	Samuel J. Browne	January 23, 1813	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Cincinnati, Ohio	Letter of sympathy regarding the death of John Browne
	5	Samuel Browne and Seth Levinworth	William Murray	May 21, 1813	Cincinnati, Ohio	Hamilton, Ohio	Requests that all the documents Browne transmitted to Miami University's trustees be forwarded to them in order to settle Browne's estate
	6	Samuel J. Browne	Sarah Browne	December 4, 1815	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Cincinnati, Ohio	Visits in Chillicothe, Washington and

						Baltimore; news of family and friends
7	Samuel J. Browne	Fanny Farmer	September 20, 1822	Batheaston	South Hill Home	Regret for her sorrow; difficulties in their relationship
8	Browne /Farmer Family	Samuel J. and Fanny Browne	August 18, 1824	South Hill	Cincinnati, Ohio	News of family and friends
9	Robert Hamilton Bishop, Jr.	Samuel J. Browne	May 10 and 12, 1825	Oxford, Ohio	Cincinnati, Ohio	Request for advertisement for Miami University in the Cincinnati <i>Emporium</i>
10	Mary Ann Browne Avery	Samuel J. Browne	April 28, 1832	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Cincinnati, Ohio	News of family, friends, and Baton Rouge
11	S. Blackwell	Samuel J. Browne	November 30, 1837	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Cincinnati, Ohio	Making sugar from beets; news of family
12	Anna Blackwell	Samuel J. Browne	December 13, 1837	Burlington	Cincinnati, Ohio	Experiences teaching at Burlington and plans to return to England and until then as a governess
13	M. Tallant	Samuel J. Browne	January 27, 1838		Cincinnati, Ohio	Death of Mrs. Browne and funeral services for her
14	Samuel J. Browne	Mrs. Farmer	August 25, 1838	Cincinnati, Ohio	Wesbury, Wiltshire, England	Recovery from illness; death of his father;

						experiences at recent congregational meeting
15	Edwin A. Atlee	Samuel J. Browne	October 21, 1841	Mears' Farm	Cincinnati, Ohio	Esther Browne's heart condition
16	Esther B. Browne	Samuel J. Browne	September 9, 1844	Cincinnati, Ohio	Toledo, Ohio	News of their children, friends, family, and household affairs
17	Samuel J. Browne	Esther B. Browne	September 19, 1844		Cincinnati, Ohio	News of his journey in Canada
18	Samuel J. Browne	Esther B. Browne	May 2, 1847	New Junction	Cincinnati, Ohio	Progress of riverboat journey through Ohio
19	Esther B. Browne	Samuel J. Browne	May 15, 1847	Cincinnati, Ohio	Buffalo City, New York	News of family, friends and household matters
20	Esther B. Browne	Samuel J. Browne	June 2, 1847	Cincinnati, Ohio	Cleveland, Ohio	News of family, friends and household matters
21	Samuel J. Browne	Esther B. Browne	June 13, 1847	Conneaut, Ohio	Cincinnati, Ohio	News of journey from Buffalo, New York to Toledo, Ohio
22	Samuel J. Browne	Esther B. Browne	June 15, 1849	Cleveland, Ohio	Cincinnati, Ohio	News of journey and advice on household matters
23	Julia French	Samuel J. Browne	July 4, 1849	Baton Rouge,	Cincinnati, Ohio	Safe arrival home after visit

Louisiana

to Cincinnati to
find brother-in-
law suffering
from cholera

Series II: Samuel J. Browne
Sub-Series II: Miscellaneous Documents

Box	Folder	Title	Date
2	24	Quotations on love	March 18, 1829

Series III: Other Correspondents
Sub-Series III: Correspondence

Box	Folder	Author	Recipient	Date	Sending Location	Receiving Location	Subject
2	25	Unknown	Unknown	September 2, 1818	Bath, England	Bath, England	Flattered by opinion and confidence of the correspondent; able to correspond
	26	Thomas Shaw Fletcher	Jonathan Fletcher	March 11, 1822	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Bath, England	News of passage from Liverpool to Philadelphia
	27	Sarah Farmer	Fanny Browne	June 23, 1829	Cambridge Place	Cincinnati, Ohio	News of family
	28	Rachel Stokes	Samuel Stokes	May 4, 1839	New Brighton, Pennsylvania	Rancocus, New Jersey	News of family