History of the Documents

_The Occom Circle_ draws its materials from the papers of Eleazar Wheelock, a collection of individually catalogued manuscripts and the Samson Occom papers MS-1237. The Wheelock papers consist primarily of letters written to Wheelock by Occom and others in his circle, discussing Occom, or plans that relate to him, the Indian Charity School, and the founding of Dartmouth College. A few documents such as the minutes of meetings or financial documents are included in these papers. Occom’s extant papers at Dartmouth College, MS-1237, consist of Occom’s journals, sermons, an herbal, an autobiographical narrative and a confession copied in his hand.

The exact provenance of the Occom documents is unclear, though many of the letters were addressed to Eleazar Wheelock. These letters appear to have been cataloged as part of a project conducted in 1902 by Henry K. Pierce, Dartmouth Class of 1904. Some documents may have come by way of the papers of Nathaniel Whitaker, a fellow minister and associate of Wheelock, and others may have been acquired from the estate of Frederick Chase, Treasurer of the College who collected papers for the 1891 history he wrote of Dartmouth. Following the initial cataloging by Pierce, a full inventory was compiled as part of Dartmouth's Bicentennial in 1969 and published in 1971 under the direction of librarian Edward Connery Lathem. As a result of the work done on _The Occom Circle_, a detailed guide to Occom's journals, sermons, and prose pieces was created in 2013 and can be found at [http://ead.dartmouth.edu/html/ms1237_fullguide.htm](http://ead.dartmouth.edu/html/ms1237_fullguide.htm).

Rationale of Project

Our goal is to preserve digitally and make broadly accessible to scholars, students and the general public both facsimiles and transcriptions of all manuscripts at Dartmouth College by Occom, and those about him and his activities we consider relevant. According to the Modern Language Association’s Committee on Scholarly Editions (CSE), whose standards we have followed ([http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines](http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines)), _The Occom Circle_ is a hybrid. We received our funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to create a “scholarly digital edition” of works by and about Samson Occom. Our project is a “scholarly edition” in the sense that scholarly expertise has determined which texts are included, how they will be reproduced and presented, and what shape the introductory materials, notes, and indexes take. It conforms to the basic requirements of an electronic edition—that it includes a fresh transcription of documents and “a facsimile that shows the original typography or handwriting, lineation, and layout” (See G. Thomas Tanselle, “The Varieties of Scholarly Editing.” In D. C. Greetham, ed., _Scholarly Editing: a Guide to Research._ New York: Modern Language Association, 1995: 58). It is also a “digital archive” in the sense that it contains primary documents in the form of digital surrogates alongside transcriptions. Thus, the OC illustrates a current tendency in electronic editing by blending the features of a scholarly edition, an electronic edition, and a traditional archive.

The OC also shares some features with what the CSE identifies as “thematic research collections,” which it defines as aiming “toward the ideal of being all-inclusive resources for the study of given topics” ([http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines](http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines)). Our topic
encompasses the writing and correspondence of Occom throughout his life, as well as that of the members of Occom’s circle of associates. In 2006 Joanna Brooks published the canonical edition of *The Collected Works of Samson Occom*. For our digital edition we both widened the scope to include other people, and narrowed it to only those documents held in the Dartmouth collection, although the *OC* links to other archives of Occom’s writings. Our goal is to illuminate the extensive networks of connections that formed around Occom as the most significant Native American intellectual and activist in the second half of the 18th century. The *OC* includes writing by other Native people connected to Occom as well documents related to the major figures involved in the Indian Charity School, Occom’s various missionary journeys, the founding of Dartmouth College, and the establishment of Brothertown in northern New York. We decided in this initial phase not to include printed texts, such as Occom’s famous *Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, Indian*, or his collection of hymns, which are available as facsimiles online, though we have included facsimiles of printed texts that contain Occom’s marginalia, such as his *Hebrew Primer*. Thus, our archive is necessarily subjective and far from complete. Both time and funding constraints forced us to limit what we could include. More remains to be done, but the advantage of a digital project is that it can always be expanded, updated, and linked with other projects and databases.

**Editorial Decisions**

In making editorial decisions about transcribing and presenting documents, we have been guided by the Modern Language Association’s Committee on Scholarly Editions. The *Occom Circle* contains new transcriptions of the original documents. In the cases where a document has been published previously (for Occom, in Brooks’ *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom*, Mohegan, and for Wheelock in various Dartmouth College publications), we have transcribed all documents from the originals and consulted the previous transcription only after ours were completed, and only if there were questions about discernment. Inevitably, then, our transcriptions differ from previous ones. We welcome questions and corrections on all of our transcriptions, through the Feedback/Contact us link, indicated below.

**Accuracy**

To insure the accuracy of the materials in our scholarly edition, we established and followed a rigorous transcription and reviewing process. The process we adopted for transcribing is detailed in the section on Procedures and Protocols. In summary, members of the team of specially trained transcribers, transcribed each document from the original and in consultation with a facsimile of the document, which allows for a minute examination and discernment of accidentals. The transcriber then reviewed the transcription with another member of the team by reading the transcription, which was checked against the original. The transcriber did an initial markup of the transcription for dates, persons, places, and organizations, and variations like the long s, superscripts, deletions, insertions, illegibles, damage, etc., validated it using a customized initial validation tool, and sent it to the Project Manager for another review. The Tagging team then finished marking up the document and created the header. All transcriptions go through a final review by the head of the markup team and the Project Manager before they are uploaded to the website.
Our principle is to offer our best interpretation of the original writer’s intention. Thus, our transcriptions are “diplomatic,” that is, we follow the definition of M. J. Driscoll, “Electronic Textual Editing: Levels of Transcription” on the TEI website (www.tei-c.org/About/Archive_new/ETE/Preview/driscoll.xml), “in which every feature which may reasonably be reproduced in print is retained. These features include not only spelling and punctuation, but also capitalization, word division and variant letter forms. The layout of the page is also retained, in terms of line-division, large initials, etc. Any abbreviations in the text will not be expanded, and, in the strictest diplomatic transcriptions, apparent slips of the pen will remain uncorrected.” Several of Occom’s journals have been emended in black ink or red pencil by later editors, who attempted to regularize Occom’s spelling, grammar, and punctuation, and who underlined names of persons and places. We have made note of the existence of these emendations and others, but have not transcribed them. Our rules for the key elements of representation, in the order Driscoll lists them, as well as other elements specific to this archive, are:

- **Spelling**: We have faithfully reproduced the writers’ original spelling. Eighteenth-century orthography is unstable, erratic, and often phonetic, especially in holograph materials. Writers spell words and proper names differently, even in the same document. This creates problems in the tagging, searching, and annotation of person and place names; we explain our solutions in the User’s Guide. Often, a document will contain more than one usage of a word or proper name, which helps clarify it. In cases where this does not happen and we cannot discern an unclear word’s meaning, we have tagged the word as “illegible” and sometimes append a “guess.”
- **Punctuation**: We have transcribed all original punctuation. Eighteenth-century punctuation is erratic; grammatical sentences are not always full-stopped. Occom, for example prefers to use a comma followed by a long dash.
- **Capitalization**: We have retained all original capitalization. Eighteenth-century capitalization is also erratic and random; sometimes, the initial words of sentences are not capitalized but another word in the sentence is. In addition, it is often hard to discern the upper case form of some letters, especially c, g, m, s, v, and w.
- **Word Division**: We have retained the original division of words. Writers sometimes use hyphens, but more often do not.
- **Variant Letter Forms**: The most frequent variant letter form is the long s, which we have tagged as such, and retain. We also retain the thorn (y), which we treat as a modernization, since it is an archaic form of “th”. See below for a list of the expansion of words that use the thorn.
- **Layout of Page**: We have retained, as far as possible in a word-processed document, the original layout of pages, and ask users to refer to the facsimiles for the most accurate versions.
• Line divisions: We have retained original line breaks in order for users to be able to compare the transcriptions and the facsimiles and find their place in the originals more easily.

• Large Initials: We have retained and tagged large initial letters of words.

• Abbreviations/superscripts: We have retained all original abbreviations, contractions, and superscripts, including titles (e.g. M⁷, Messers). Eighteenth-century writers frequently use superscripts to indicate abbreviations. Some writers create their own system of abbreviations. Writers frequently punctuate superscripts with periods and/or commas, or underline them; in some cases, they do both.

• Slips of pen: Unless otherwise indicated on a specific document, we have retained all slips of the pen, such as: when a writer inverts letters (e.g. “Ducth” for “Dutch”), writes one letter for another (e.g. “beg” for “bed”) or leaves out a letter (e.g. writes “the” for “they”). When there is more than one uncrossed t or crossed l in a document, we have noted and emended them.

• Deletions/Insertions: We have retained all deletions in strikethrough type and roughly in their position on the page. Insertions are indicated with a caret either above or below the line. If insertions are written up the side of the page, we indicate this with a locating word, e.g. “right,” “left,” “top,” “bottom.”

• Underlining: We have retained underlining, which appears as underlining not italics.

• Dashes: Eighteenth-century writers use a variety of dashes for a variety of purposes. Rather than attempt to discern each writer’s intention, we have retained all dashes as an em dash.

• Illegible words and letters, words and letters missing due to manuscript damage, or words intentionally omitted or left blank in the documents, as when in his journals Occom leaves a space for the name of a person who hosts him or a Biblical text from which he has spoken: These are tagged with the general category “gap” and a reason: blotted out, editorial insertion, faded, illegible, lacuna, malformed, omitted, page torn. If we feel reasonably certain about a guess, we include that in the tag.

• Mystery words: These are words that are legible, but not known to us; if a word is indisputably spelled a certain way, but the meaning is unclear, we have transcribed it as is.

• Dates and place information: These usually appear at the top of documents. If they do not appear, conjectures are included in the document information.

• Writing by other hands: We have included docketts, the notation of author and date that Wheelock or his secretary and other recipients of letters routinely included on the side or outside of a letter for identification and filing purposes. Writing by later editors has not been included, but is noted.

• Text appearing on envelops. This has been included and its location noted.

Modernized transcriptions
In this version of the documents, for ease of reading we have removed deletions, moved additions in line, expanded uncommon abbreviations, modernized common
abbreviations, and regularized spellings. We have striven for consistency throughout. Please consult “Variant Spellings and Abbreviations” for a full list of these changes.

Some of the rules we have followed in modernizing are:

• Misspelling versus modernization/correction: If an error is not consistent, we have tagged it as a “correction” and corrected it. If it is consistent (in the document or in the writer’s canon), we have treated it as an 18th century usage or idiosyncrasy and retained it.
• British versus American spelling: We expanded abbreviations and modernized words to American spelling.

Annotations

Each document is annotated with the following information:

• A manuscript (MS) number indicates how a document is identified in the Dartmouth library. See below for an explanation of these numbers.
• A title briefly identifies each document and includes date, writer and recipient.
• An abstract summarizes the content of the document.
• A note on handwriting highlights important aspects of the writing and its legibility.
• A note on paper indicates its size, quality and condition.
• A note on ink indicates color and density.
• A note on the signature includes noteworthy aspects such as abbreviated or missing signatures and multiple signatories.
• A note on layout indicates whether the document conforms to the usual arrangement, where page 1 appears on 1 recto, page 2 on 1 verso, and so on.
• A noteworthy section includes anything noteworthy about the document in terms of content or form.

In addition, we have attempted to annotate as many of the items mentioned in the documents that are digitally tagged and searchable, though some are simply unidentifiable. These fall into four categories: persons, places, organizations, and events. Each annotation includes a description of the item and the sources we have drawn it from. Annotations have been researched and written by the research team, comprised of graduate and undergraduate students (named in the Staff list), and supervised by the Project Director and Project Manager. The annotations appear as pop-up boxes when users click on a name, place or organization that is highlighted in a document.

One of the challenges of tagging and annotating 18th century documents is unstable orthography. Not only do different writers spell proper names differently but the same writer will spell proper names differently within documents and from one document to the next. In addition, proper names and places names appear in a variety of forms and often refer to the same thing. For example, place names can appear in an Indian language and an Anglo-American version, and refer to a place that is often known by a modern variant or version. In order to be able to search for all the versions of a proper name, we constructed a series of “ographies” that include the standard spelling of persons, places, and organizations we decided on and all variants. Thus, users will be able to search for and find all variations, for example, of “Occom,” though it is spelled “Occum,” “Ocom,”
Website
The website has been specifically designed for our project, and its use is explained in the User’s Guide. All materials on it are freely accessible and reproducible. It is maintained on a Dartmouth College web server, and is part of Dartmouth’s Digital Library. Each document is assigned a Digital Object identifier (DOI) to insure persistent naming, and both the archival master files and the access derivatives will be archived with appropriate technical metadata, including color targets. 48-bit color archival master images of each item have been scanned using Epson flatbed scanners to the following quality settings: 600 ppi; TIFF file format; 16-bits/channel RGB color. JPEG derivatives have been produced for use online. Transcriptions are marked up in XML according to the latest version (P5) of the Text Encoding Initiative Guidelines, to at least Level Four markup as defined in the Digital Library Federation’s TEI for Libraries publication (http://www.diglib.org/standards/tei.htm#level4). XHTML derivatives, linked to color page images, have been created via XSLT stylesheets for web delivery. The use of TIFF and TEI for images and text respectively also aids the long-term viability of this data. MARC records for each letter or document have been created and added to our OPAC and to OCLC WorldCat.

There are no issues of copyright for the primary materials. We have provided links to other databases, archives, organizations, and related contextual materials; we have a comments and feedback section, as well as a bibliography of secondary and critical sources and pedagogical materials.

MS Numbers
Each manuscript is identified by a six digit number, which is created as follows:
The first three digits are derived from the last three digits of the year the document was created. 1769 would become 769. The last three digits of the number are derived from the month and day the document was created. Each month is assigned a three digit number as listed below:

- 100=January
- 150=February
- 200=March
- 250=April
- 300=May
- 350=June
- 400=July
- 450=August
- 500=September
- 550=October
- 600=November
- 650=December

The day the document was created is then added to the month number.

Examples:
- May 18, 1794 = 794318
- August, 23, 1821 = 821473
If the year is not known then the number begins with 000
   Example:
   August 23 no year = 000483
If the month is not given use 900
   Example:
   1794 no month = 794900
If no day is given use 40
   Example:
   August, 1794 = 794490