

"A Matter of Absolute Necessity": Eleazar Wheelock & Moor's Indian Charity School

Of the many programs designed to educate Native Americans in the colonial period, Moor's Indian Charity School, founded by Eleazar Wheelock in 1754, was the most ambitious. Moor's was large, well organized and publicized. It was also founded on the premise that Indians would make better missionaries than their Anglo counterparts. This exhibit examines Wheelock's educational philosophy, the daily life of Indian students at Moor's Charity school, including the hardships students faced adapting to the English way of life, as well as the little-discussed experience of the women students at the school. The exhibit also explores the outcomes of Wheelock's educational experiment, from successes like Samson Occom to the "failures" of those who returned to an indigenous life styles.

The exhibition, curated by Shermaine Waugh with assistance from Peter Carini and Barbara Kreiger, was be on display in the Class of 1965 Galleries from December 2, 2013 to February 28, 2014.

Materials Included in the Exhibition

Case Title	Materials included
Case 1. Moor's Indian Charity School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In this 1756 letter to Reverend Whitefield, Eleazar Wheelock describes his disapproval over the state of neglect that has led to what he describes as "the piteous state of the Indian Natives of this Continent." Wheelock believes the only solution to the "problem of the Indians" is to educate and spread the Gospel among them, which would hopefully keep them from a life of "hunting and rambling" (Mar. 1, Lebanon). MSS D.C. Hist. 756201 (MS-1310, Box 3) 2. This small notebook consists of a list of students in attendance at Wheelock's Charity School along with their dates of entrance (1757). MSS D.C. Hist. 757900.3 3. The original Passport for Indian Youths on their journey from "Bethel," N.J. to Eleazar Wheelock's Charity School. The 'passport' combines, on a single sheet of paper, a letter and diagonally placed travel directions. The left side of the itinerary has twenty-seven place names, beginning with Bethel at the bottom of the page and Lebanon at the top. Each place name is complemented on the right side by a name of reference, where the boys could ask for assistance, food, and shelter (1754). MSS D.C. Hist. 754900 (MS-1310, Box 3) 4. Towards the end of this letter from Wheelock to Sir Wm. Johnson Wheelock outlines his plan for Indian girls to be instructed "in all ye arts of good Housewivery, Tending a Da[i]ry, Spinning, the use of their Needle" as well as reading

	<p>and writing (Dec. 11, 1761. Lebanon). MSS D.C. Hist. 761661 (MS-1310, Box 5)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. This letter from Eleazar Wheelock to Governor Wentworth explains the Charity School's goals, and provides an account of its achievements. Wheelock stresses his goal to "cure the natives...of their savage temper, deliver them from their low, sordid and brutish manner," and make them "good wholesome members of society, and obedient subjects to the king of Zion." The letter also mentions of the importance of the Indian girls' instruction in being good housewives (Sept. 21, 1762, Lebanon). MSS D.C. Hist. 762521.1 (MS-1310, Box 6) 6. John Daniel, the father of one of the Indian boys attending Moor's School Writes to Wheelock objecting to Wheelock's focus on husbandry and having his son used for two years as a workhand on the farm while he is attending school. Daniel closes by withdraw his son from the school. (Nov. 30, 1767. Charlestown) MSS D.C. Hist 767630.3 (MS-1310, Box 17) 7. A letter from John Smith detailing his visit to the Charity School and a day in the life of the Indian students, from the ringing of the schoolhouse bell to singing psalms and reading and reciting verses in English. (Boston, May 18th 1764) MSS D.C. Hist 764318.2 (MS-1310, Box 8) 8. A writing sample from one of the students, Hezekiah Calvin, aged 11, a Delaware Indian. The sample is a copied Latin motto, and includes a note by Eleazar Wheelock about the writer on the back (Lebanon, Nov. 19, 1759.) MSS D.C. Hist 759619 (MS-1310, Box 4) 9. Letter from Sarah Bingham to David McClure mentions the "ignorant" and "savage" behavior of the women at Wheelock's Charity School along with disciplinary problems surrounding excess consumption of liquor. (August 1, 1787) MSS D.C. Hist. 787451 (MS-1311, Box 2)
<p>Case 2. Hardships & Life after the Charity School</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In this letter from Joseph Fish reports to Wheelock on the condition and bad conduct of one of Wheelock's former students, Jacob Woolley. Woolley has left the school and was found "at his Old Quarters" acting as a ne'er-do-well, collecting scraps of firewood. (Jan. 20 1764, Stonington) MSS D.C. Hist. 764120.2 (MS-1310, Box 8)

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Jacob Fowler writes with gratitude to Wheelock for his education and the opportunity to teach a school of Indians in Onawatagegh. (Jan.31 1767, Onawatagegh) MSS D.C. Hist. 767131 (MS-1310, Box 14) 3. In this letter to George Whitefield, Wheelock details some of the problems encountered in educating the Indians. He is openly frustrated with their “savage” behavior and speaks of the troubles they have grasping the English language, getting used to furniture, and communicating. (July 4, 1761, Lebanon.) MSS D.C. Hist. 761404 (MS-1310, Box 5) 4. The Connecticut Board of Correspondents report on the examination of Indian boys educated in the Charity School. The Board finds the boys “qualified for school matters.” MSS D.C. Hist. 765212.8 (MS-1310, Box 10) 5. Eleazar Wheelock writes to Henry Sherburne about a lack of money for the school and notes that he feels worn out, but at the same time, encouraged that something great is near for “the pagans.” MSS D.C. Hist. 765220.2 (MS-1310, Box 10) 6. Joseph Woolley, a former student, writes to Wheelock of bringing Christ to Indians at Onohoquawge. Woolley represents Wheelock’s goal of missionary service for the Indians post-Charity School. (Feb.9, 1765 Onohoquawge) MSS D.C. Hist. 765159.1 (MS-1310, Box 10) 7. Draft of the charter for the Indian Charity School (1758). MSS D.C. Hist. 758900.3 (MS-1310, Box 4) 8. Wheelock writes of the unsatisfactory nature of white missionaries for the school. He believed much more could be effected by training the Indians and returning them to their brethren. D.C. Hist. E97.6.M5.W5 1763 [Also available online via Hathi Trust] 9. Portrait of Samson Occom by M. Chamberlin. Iconography 250 10. The Boston Commissioners write to Eleazar Wheelock, revealing that they do not think the statements given out as to the training of Samson Occom, Wheelock’s first student, are true (Sep. 3, 1767. Boston). MSS D.C. Hist. 767503.3 (MS-1310, Box 16)
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<p>Case 3. Daily Life and Women's Education</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confession of Mary Secutor, a female student at the Charity School. She admits that she has been guilty of drunkenness and disorderly conduct which "dishonors God" in a tavern while in the company of other Indian boys and girls. MSS D.C. Hist. 768211.1 (MS-1310, Box 17) 2. A sketch of the Moor's Indian Charity School by a Siltig, G. Iconography 34 3. A list of books that David Fowler carried into the Mohawk Country from the library to distribute among the boys that were attending school there. MSS D.C. Hist. 768900.2 (MS-1310, Box 19) 4. Wheelock writes of the unsatisfactory nature of white missionaries for the school. He believed much more could be effected by training the Indians and returning them to their brethren. D.C. Hist. E97.6.M5.W5 1763 5. In this letter, Samson Occom, Wheelock's first Indian student addresses criticisms of his life and education by the Boston Commissioners. MSS D.C. Hist. 765628.1 (MS-1310, Box 12)
<p>Case 4. Wheelock's Philosophy of Education</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A series of books likely to have been studied by the boys at the Charity School includes: Homer's <i>The Iliad</i>, <i>The Hebrew Old Testament</i>, and <i>The Orations of Cicero</i>. Woodward 153 v.2, Woodward 322, Woodward 154 2. A Hebrew primer annotated and illustrated by Samson Occom, Wheelock's first student, and inspiration for the Charity School. The primer shows Occom's familiarity and ability with languages at the very early stages of his education. Rare Book PJ4566.M71735 cop.3 3. <i>A Guide to the English Tongue</i> and <i>The British Instructor</i> were two of books used in the English School for teaching the Indian students to read and write. Woodward 262, Woodward 257.