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Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

William Smith letters to Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson

1781, 1791

MssCol 15664

Summary

Creator: Smith, William, 1746-1822

Title: William Smith letters to Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson

Date: 1781, 1791

Size: .01 linear feet (2 items in 1 folder)

Source: Donated by John S. Kennedy, 1896, as part of the Emmet Collection, and J. Pierpont Morgan, 1899, as part of the Ford Collection.

Abstract: Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (1737-1801) was a prominent American poet and author, known especially for the literary salon she established in colonial Philadelphia, and her association with the family estate of Graeme Park in Horsham, Pennsylvania. William Smith (1746-1822) was a Philadelphia physician and druggist. In 1775 he married Ann Young (1756-1780, also known as Anna Young), the niece of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson. He married Letitia Correy in 1783, and purchased Graeme Park from Fergusson in 1791. The collection consists of two letters dated 1778 March 20 and 1791 March 16, written by W. Smith at Philadelphia to "Dear Madam" (Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson). His letter of 1778 March 20 apprises her of efforts being made by her friends in the Pennsylvania Assembly to restore her property rights, and shares news of mutual acquaintances and the progress of the war. His letter of 1791 March 16 concerns his plans to attend a sale she was holding.

Preferred citation: William Smith letters to Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Creator History

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (1737-1801) was a prominent American poet and author, known especially for the literary salon she established in colonial Philadelphia, and her association with the family estate of Graeme Park in Horsham, Pennsylvania. Her marriage in 1771 to Henry Hugh Fergusson resulted in the forfeiture of Graeme Park in 1778 when he was attainted for treason as a loyalist, but her property rights to it were restored by Act of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1781.

William Smith (1746-1822) was a Philadelphia physician and druggist. In 1775 he married Ann Young (1756-1780, also known as Anna Young), the niece of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson. He married Letitia Correy in 1783, and purchased Graeme Park from Fergusson in 1791. Smith held degrees from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University; 1766, 1784) and the College of Philadelphia (now University of Pennsylvania; M.D., 1771). In the 1770s Smith sold medicinal supplies at his shop on Second Street, and in later years was a partner in the drug business of Lehman & Smith. He served as a Philadelphia delegate to the Pennsylvania Provincial Conference of July 15, 1774 and supported the Revolution. In 1776 Congress appointed him to serve as Continental druggist at Philadelphia. Smith was elected to the American Philosophical Society in 1792.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of two letters dated 1778 March 20 and 1791 March 16, written by W. Smith at Philadelphia to "Dear Madam" (Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson). The recipient's identification is based on Smith's reference to "the papers of my dear Anny," her niece's nickname; the description of her financial affairs; and his greeting in both letters to her companion, Miss Stedman. His letter of 1778 March 20 appraises her of efforts being made by her friends in the Pennsylvania Assembly to restore her property rights, and shares news of mutual acquaintances and the progress of the war. His letter of 1791 March 16 concerns his plans to attend a sale she was holding. A later annotation mistakes the writer for William Smith (1727-1803), provost of the University of Pennsylvania, also known to Fergusson; his handwriting differs substantially from that of physician William Smith.

Key Terms

Occupations

Authors.
Pharmacists
Physicians.
Poets.

Geographic Names

Philadelphia (Pa.) -- Social life and customs -- 18th century
United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783

Subjects

Women authors, American -- 18th century -- Correspondence
Women poets, American -- 18th century -- Correspondence

Names

Fergusson, Elizabeth Graeme, 1737-1801
Fergusson, Elizabeth Graeme, 1737-1801 -- Correspondence
Smith, William, 1746-1822
Emmet collection
Ford collection