

such as the Federal Convention of 1787 and topics such as the health of Benjamin Franklin, the popularity of President Washington and the trials of a new republic are addressed throughout the correspondence.

This collection is largely arranged in chronological order. However, because each letter was assigned a catalog number and catalog numbers are referenced in publications, the arrangement of the collection was not disturbed. As a result, there are letters from 1803, 1808, 1809 and 1811 that are not in correct chronological order. Researchers are advised to peruse the entire collection for any misfiled correspondence.

The first volume, housed in boxes 1 and 2, includes letters dating from 1770 to 1793. The first letter, written January 5, 1770, is marked as "my dear father's first letter to me," and describes Sarah Logan Smith, Susanna's mother who died when Susanna was only one month old. By the time that Susanna was eight years old, William Dillwyn had moved permanently to England and remarried. The letters in this volume are largely regarding family--they were written to and from a child, but as the years progress and Susanna grows into a woman, the tone of the letters changes. There is much information in these letters about Susanna's half siblings, which may prove valuable to researchers studying Lewis Weston Dillwyn (1778-1855), son of William and Sarah Weston Dillwyn, who became a noted naturalist and Whig Minister of Parliament. The letters also describe Susanna's life including the books she read, her Quaker faith, visits to family members' homes, and sending squirrels to England for her siblings. William Dillwyn writes of his travels to Holland with Samuel Emlen (father of Susanna's future husband) and her uncle. Susanna writes several letters to her father in 1792 regarding relations with Native Americans, particularly regarding Cherokee and Oneida representatives who visited Philadelphia. In 1793, Susanna writes of the Indian treaty at Sandusky.

Included in this first volume are also letters regarding the 1793 yellow fever epidemic. In a letter dating September 9, 1793, Susanna writes, "I wish from time to time to give some account of the dreadful distemper which common report will inform you has become so prevalent in Philadelphia. It is indeed, my dear father, such a time of anxiety and deep distress as I believe was scarce ever known before in this country--almost every family, even here, either laments the loss of some near connection or suffers great apprehension on account of their remaining friends who have not left the city. And for those who have no particular connection with this city cannot be unmoved at the continual tales of distress and death we every day hear. In short there seems no prospect but of the entire desolation of the town, not home but from the mercy of divine Providence." Indeed, she states, "my thoughts are full of the subject. It is difficult to disengage them to obtain even that momentary relief that seems necessary to health." These letters are full of compassion, not only for the patients and families of yellow fever victims, but of the doctors trying so desperately to control the disease. She frequently mentions Dr. Benjamin Rush and his efforts during the epidemic. By September 29, 1793, Susanna writes to her father, "the disease is called the yellow fever. It has spread into I believe all parts of the city and taken away great numbers, among whom are many of the most valuable members of the community, and a great many young people of our society and others. Almost a total suspension of all business has taken place: the distresses of the poor, from sickness, [and] want of business."

The second volume dates from 1794 to 1799. During this time frame, there is significant correspondence regarding the engagement and marriage of Susanna to Samuel Emlen, Jr. Samuel Emlen, Jr. wrote to William Dillwyn asking permission to marry Susanna in March and May 1794, and in June 1794, he received permission. By July, Susanna and Samuel had received a certificate of William Dillwyn's consent to the marriage. Around the same time, they received a similar certificate from Samuel Emlen, Sr.