

From 1796 to 1797, William Dillwyn writes to Susanna and Samuel regarding his travels through Ireland. There are also letters during this time from Susanna and Samuel regarding the illness of Samuel Emlen, Sr, who died on December 30, 1799.

Letters from 1800 to 1806 are housed in the third volume and letters from 1807 to 1810 are housed in the fourth volume. Researchers will find letters from November to December 1803 out of chronological order in Box 5, Folder 6. Letters are filled with news of family and friends. In 1807, Susanna writes of the marriage of John Syng Dorsey, and in 1808 she writes of her cousin Susan Cox's marriage to Joseph Parrish. Dr. Philip Syng Physick was married to Samuel Emlen, Jr.'s half-sister Elizabeth (he was also later legally separated from her), and he is discussed with some frequency throughout the correspondence. The letters occasionally include descriptions of her family and friends. In a July 5, 1809 letter to her father, Susanna writes, "Dr. Pysick, a person I sincerely love, is ... naturally grave, constantly engaged in occupations that call for his whole attention, and daily a spectator of evils he can only at best, partially relieve, [and] he has acquired what seems to me so gloomy a view of life, that I tell him, I could not live if I did not entertain more cheerful sentiments." Researchers will find letters from 1808, 1809 and 1811 out of chronological order in Box 6, Folder 18.

The final volume contains letters from 1811 to 1818. During the year of 1815, many letters discuss Susanna's breast cancer and demonstrate not only her fear, but the concern and support of her entire family. During this time frame, Susanna's faith is particularly well demonstrated via her letters to her family. Her writing, however, is typically honest and she describes her experience from the time that she "perceived a tumour in [her] left breast, irregularly shaped, about the size of a partridge egg," to her operation without anesthesia, to the relief of recovery when she writes, " the Physicians all agreed that the disease was completely eradicated." Susanna and Samuel's correspondence does not focus solely on her illness, even during the height of the problems, but continues, as throughout the entire collection of correspondence to pay tribute to Quakerism, family, friends and their community. From late 1816 to mid 1818, Samuel and Susanna Emlen visited her father in England. As a result, the depth of correspondence is somewhat reduced during that time period.

This collection should be consulted by any researcher interested in colonial America, the early United States, Quakerism, abolition, Native Americans, history of medicine, women's history, and Philadelphia and New Jersey history. Beyond, the general description of life through the eyes of Quakers in Philadelphia, New Jersey, and England from 1770 to 1818, this family witnessed national events, epidemics, and wars. Susanna's descriptions, in particular, are compassionate and honest and may provide new perspectives on known events in American history.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Library Company of Philadelphia 2010.10.20