

New York. Oswald married Elizabeth Holt (died 1797), the daughter of John Holt and Elizabeth Hunter Holt (died 1788), who was also a printer. In 1792, Eleazer Oswald joined the French Revolutionary Army and served from September 18, 1792, until the summer of 1793. As a colonel of the artillery, Oswald participated in the Battles of Jemmapes and Liège in Belgium, and was sent on a secret mission to Ireland to assess the feasibility of a successful French invasion. After filing his reconnaissance report in France, Oswald returned to the United States, and soon after died in New York from yellow fever.

John Holt Oswald (1777?-1810) was the eldest son of Eleazer and Elizabeth Oswald, and also involved in international commerce. According to contemporary newspaper obituaries, "His acquirements in most of the living languages were proofs of an indefatigable zeal and industry in erudite pursuits." It was reported in *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* for August 23, 1810, that he had died in Carthage (though whether in Spain or Colombia is not known) the month before, leaving behind in Philadelphia, "a bereaved widow, three children, and affectionate brothers and sisters." His wife Emily died the following year.

William Hunter Oswald (born 1787), another son of Eleazer and Elizabeth Oswald, also had a career in international trade during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Prior to his life in Europe, he had worked in Jameson Hunter's counting house in England. Oswald arrived in Sicily in 1809 from Philadelphia and once there held a variety of positions, mostly in or near Malta. Also in 1809, according to his diary, he was sharing quarters with Theophilus Richards Jr., whom Oswald described as a young Englishman "forming an Establishment in Malta." In the summer of 1810, Oswald made an extensive tour of Sicily to improve his health. Throughout his time in Europe, he maintained contacts with family friend and Philadelphia merchant Samuel Mifflin (1776-1829). In 1814, he made an overland trip from Naples to Trieste and in 1815, went into business with British merchant Richard Nuttall in Trieste. An 1814 passport, issued in Naples to Oswald by the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, described him as 26-year-old trader, born in London, and tall with chestnut hair. Genealogy and local history records state that he married Sarah Stamper Hall (born 1792); his date of death is unknown.

Collection Overview

Series I, Correspondence (1809-1816) is arranged in three subseries: Incoming, Outgoing, and Miscellaneous, and includes letters written to, written by, and copied to William Hunter Oswald. They primarily concern issues of trade and shipping, though they also mention world affairs, local conditions and landscapes, and news of America.

As Oswald was conducting international business subject to unreliable communication services, he made and retained copies of his outgoing correspondence. Some letters reflect his personal opinions; in a letter to his brother, he gave a positive review of Palermo except for its citizens, ending with "Nature appears to have bestowed her bounties upon a people not capable of profiting by them." Napoleon and the European wars figure in many of the letters, particularly in relation to their effect on business, duties, availability of goods, and transportation. In a letter