

The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,
Union Theological Seminary, New York

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 11

Finding Aid for

Samuel Leigh Papers, 1818 – 1824



Source: Colwell, James. *The Illustrated History of Methodism. Australia: 1812-1855. New South Wales and Polynesia: 1856 to 1902.* Sydney: W. Brooks, 1904.

Finding Aid prepared by: Rebecca Weintraub, September 2012
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Summary Information

Creator: Samuel Leigh, 1785-1852
Title: Samuel Leigh Papers
Dates: 1818-1824
Abstract: Wesleyan Methodist missionary to Australia and New Zealand. Collection contains typed copies of correspondence and journal entries from nineteenth-century manuscript originals by Samuel Leigh to fellow missionaries abroad.
Size: 1 box, 0.25 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance:** Originally part of the independent Missionary Research Library, these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL.
- Access:** Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu, or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions:** The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation:** Item description, MRL 11: Samuel Leigh Papers, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Samuel Leigh, a Wesleyan Missionary, was born on September 1, 1785 in Milton, Staffordshire, England. At first a lay helper with the Independent Church at Hanley, Leigh thereafter attended a Congregational seminary in Hampshire, but withdrew because he disagreed with its Calvinist teachings.

Instead, Leigh answered the call to be a missionary. In 1814 Leigh was appointed as a missionary in North America by the Methodist Conference. Soon after this appointment, Leigh received notice in a letter from Montreal stating that no missionary be sent to North America due to the general unrest of the area. It was fortuitous that Leigh did not make the trip, as the ship on which he was meant to sail sunk with all but four on board perishing. Now without an appointment, the Methodist Conference arranged to send Leigh to New South Wales.

Leigh left from Portsmouth on February 28, 1815 onboard the *Hebe* and arrived in Sydney on August 10, 1815. There he founded the Sydney Asylum for the Poor and took a lead role in the formation of the Auxiliary Bible Society and the Australian Religious Tract Society. Leigh first began his preaching in the area of Sydney known as "The Rocks," but soon expanded to the country going to Castlereagh, Parramatta, Windsor, Liverpool, and even setting the cornerstone to a small chapel in Windsor in 1818. At this point, Leigh had created a circuit of Methodist missionary work which included fifteen preaching places and involved 150 miles of travel over the course of ten days. Since he was only able to go to each preaching place once during this time period, Leigh (as evidenced in his letters) was always in need of more missionaries to assist him in his work.

Leigh's strenuous work put a grave toll on his health. After a short trip to New Zealand and a longer one to England (where he married his first wife, Catherine, in 1821), both for his health, Leigh arrived back in the area and established the first Wesleyan mission in Whangaroa, New

Zealand in June of 1823. Leigh and his wife did not stay long, returning to Sydney that September.

After Leigh's wife died in Parramatta in 1831, Leigh left Australia for England where he married Elizabeth Kaye in 1842. Leigh continued to do some mission work until his retirement in 1845. He died on May 2, 1851.

Sources:

Colwell, James. *The Illustrated History of Methodism. Australia: 1812-1855. New South Wales and Polynesia: 1856 to 1902.* Sydney: W. Brooks, 1904.

Doust, R.J. "Leigh, Samuel (1785–1852)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Accessed September 27, 2012 <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/leigh-samuel-2348>.

"New Zealand, 1821-1853. Samuel Leigh, Walter Lawry," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 17, no. 1 (1929): 8-10. Accessed September 27, 2012. http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_whs_04.php#vol17.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of 128 pages of correspondence retyped from the nineteenth-century originals. The majority of the collection is made up of correspondence, though there are parts of Leigh's journal entries scattered throughout, whether as individual documents or as quoted in his letters.

In his letters, Leigh discusses religious life and the missionary progress being made in New South Wales, including Sydney and Windsor, and also expounds on the civilization of the natives such as their customs, traits, looks, manners, and opinions. The difficulties and hardships that he and his colleagues had to endure are also enumerated. Leigh reflects upon his experience in New Zealand, especially of the natives and his first encounters on the Island, and his return to Australia due to ill health.

Processing

The original letters and diaries by Samuel Leigh were unable to be located. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes.

Further Sources

The State Library of New South Wales offers two items for Samuel Leigh: a notebook for addresses at missionary meetings, [1820?] and an address of thanks presented to Rev. Samuel Leigh on departure for England, 31 December 1828 from congregation and friends. Further information can be found on their website at: <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/>.

The life of the Rev. Samuel Leigh, missionary to the settlers and savages of Australia and New Zealand; with a history of the origin and progress of the missions in those colonies (1870), by Alexander Strachan, is available online via the Internet Archive at:
<http://archive.org/details/lifeofrevsamuell00straiala>.

The British Library offers a letter from Sir Samuel Egerton Leigh to his brother recommending he join the Christian faith. This can be accessed online at:
<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?action=interpret&source=gale&docLevel=FASCIMILE&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=columbiau&tabID=T001&docId=CW115989355&type=multiPage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&finalAuth=true>.

Contents list

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1-3	Correspondence and Journal, September 6, 1818-June 27, 1824