



Harvard at the time of the American Revolution, 1764-1778: a research guide to selected material in the Harvard University Archives

Use this guide to find primary and secondary sources about Harvard between 1764 and 1778 in the Harvard University Archives. Links are provided for material that is available online. Archives' call numbers are noted in italics for items available for use in the Archives reading room.

Search the following resources to identify additional material in the Archives:

- HOLLIS
- OASIS
- Paper shelflists in the Archives reading room
- Tolman card index to University records in the Archives reading room

If you are looking for biographical information about Harvard students, alumni, and other individuals, consult the resources listed in the [Archives biographical research guide](#).

The Archives reference staff is always available to help you locate and use Archives' material – please don't hesitate to ask for assistance. Contact information can be found on the [Archives web site](#). This guide is a work in progress – your suggestions for updates are welcome.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Corporation Records (President and Fellows of Harvard College)

Listed below are meeting minutes, correspondence, and other records that document Corporation activity during the years 1764 to 1778. You may browse through all the records for those years or use the Tolman card index in the Archives reading room to locate specific topics in the records. Some of this material is available in its original format; some must be accessed through microfilm or photocopies.

- **College Records (Minutes of meetings)**
 - September 17, 1750-April 23, 1778 *UAI 5.30.2, Volume 2*
 - May 5, 1778-August 31, 1795 *UAI 5.30.2, Volume 3*
- **Harvard College Papers and Corporation Papers**

Includes correspondence and other records, compiled at various times during Harvard's history. Titles and dates vary; arranged chronologically within each title.

- Harvard College Papers - First Series, 1650-1825 (microfilm)
UAI 5.131
- Harvard College Papers - First Series, Supplements, 1636-1815 (microfilm) *UAI 5.131.5*
- Harvard College Papers - Supplements, ca.1636-1785. (microfilm)
UAI 5.131.5
- Harvard College Papers – Supplements, 1785-1815. (microfilm)
UAI 5.132.5
- Corporation Papers, First Series, 1764-1780 (32 folders)
UAI 5.120, Box 4

Presidents' Papers

This material includes correspondence and other records relating to official Harvard business as well as personal papers.

- Edward Holyoke (President from 1737 to 1769)
Inventory of papers: <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:hua02005>
UAI 15.870
- Samuel Locke (President from 1770 to 1773)
Inventory of papers: <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:hua03005>
UAI 15.872
- Samuel Langdon (President from 1774 to 1780)
Inventory of papers: <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:hua04005>
UAI 15.874

Board of Overseers Records

Browse these records, or use the Tolman index to locate specific topics.

- Minutes of meetings
 - July 4, 1744 – April 8, 1768 (photocopy) *UAII 5.5.2, Vol. II*
 - May 3, 1768 – May 15, 1788 (photocopy) *UAII 5.5.2 Vol. III*
- Visiting Committee reports to the Overseers
 - Vol. 1: May 13, 1761 – September 21, 1825 *UAII 10.5 VT*
 - Vol. 1, supplement: August 7, 1765 August 7 – June 2, 1825 *UAII 10.5 VT*

Treasurers' and other financial records

- John Hancock (Treasurer from 1773 to 1777)
Inventory of papers: available in Archives' reading room
UAI 50.27.73
- Donations book, 1636-1839. Account of grants, bequests, and other donations to Harvard. Volume 1 (1636-1784); Volume 2 (1776-1839) *UAI 15.420*
- Treasurers' collected papers, 1736-1809 (Some fragile documents in this collection may not be available for research use.) *UAI 50.6 Box 2*
- Steward's records, 1764-1809. *UAI 70.6*
- College commons book, 1772-1820. Correspondence, bills, receipts, and other papers relating to dining services and supplies. *UAI 15.250*
- Account of damages done to the College by the Army after April 19th 1775, submitted to the General Court of Massachusetts on April 25, 1778.
<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:1074947?buttons=y>
<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.ARCH:1074948?buttons=y>
The Continental Army was stationed within Harvard buildings during portions of the Revolutionary War. This document lists damages to buildings caused by the troops, for which the College sought financial reparation. It includes the text of the resolution from the Massachusetts legislature approving compensation.
UAI 5.120

Faculty Records

Browse these records, or use the Tolman index to locate specific topics.

- Minutes of meetings of the College faculty
 - 1752-1766 (photocopy) *UAIII 5.5.2, Vol. I*
 - 1766-1775 (photocopy) *UAIII 5.5.2, Vol. II*
 - 1775-1781 (photocopy) *UAIII 5.5.2, Vol. III*
- Disorders papers (administrative records of disturbances by students), 1768-1788
UAIII 15.21.6 Folder 1
- District reports (reports on the condition of student rooms and other College property; not comprehensive), 1727-1813 *UAIII 15.22 and UAIII 15.22.5*

Faculty Papers

- Benjamin Guild (1749-1792) earned his A.B. from Harvard in 1769 and an A.M. in 1772. Guild was a Latin tutor at Harvard College from 1776-1780 and a prominent bookseller. His diaries from 1776 and 1778 refer to his lectures at Harvard and to the examination of students. *HUG 1439.x*
- Stephen Sewall (1734-1804) earned his Harvard A.B. in 1761 and taught oriental languages and Hebrew at Harvard from 1761 to 1785. He held the following positions: Instructor in Hebrew (1761-1764), Librarian (1762-1763), and Hancock Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental Languages (1764-1785). His papers contain lectures on Hebrew and Oriental literature delivered at Harvard between 1765 and 1785, and a letter to S. Sewall from his mother, 1768. *HUG 1782.2 and HUG 1782.5*
- Samuel Williams (1743-1817) earned his A.B. in 1761. He taught mathematics and natural philosophy, and was the third Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. His papers include manuscripts of writings on theology and various scientific topics, sermons, meteorological observations and notes. *HUG 1877.x*
- John Winthrop (Harvard, A.B., 1732, A. M. 1735) taught science, astronomy and mathematics at Harvard. He was the second Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. His papers include diaries (1739-1779) and a meteorological journal (1742-1779). *HUG 1879.2xx*

Buildings records

There are several sources of information in the Archives' collections relating to the construction and use of buildings on campus. Search HOLLIS to obtain Archives' call numbers for most of this material.

Online sources for buildings research include:

[Harvard Book](#) (1870)

[Harvard Handbook](#) (1936)

[Hail, Christopher. Cambridge Buildings and Architects, 2001.](#)

Harvard College buildings at the time included:

- Harvard Hall (built 1766)
- Holden Chapel (built 1744)
- Hollis Hall (built 1763)
- Massachusetts Hall (built 1720)
- Wadsworth House (built 1727)

Commencement records

- Commencement broadsides, listing graduates' names and announcing the topics for formal debate or exposition (theses and quaestiones.) Photocopies. See HOLLIS number 009423834 for more detailed description of holdings. *HUC 6642.1*
- Scrapbook, mostly on Harvard Commencements, 1770-1803. Newsclippings. *HUC 6770.100*

Laws and statutes

- Laws and statutes: manuscript copies of laws of 1767. *UAI 15.809* (*Transcription available in Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, v. 31, pp.383-38, in the Archives reading room. See HOLLIS for other locations.*)
- [The laws of Harvard College. Boston: Printed by Samuel Hall, at no. 53, Cornhill, \[1790\]](#)

Library records

- [An Account of the fire at Harvard-College, in Cambridge; with the loss sustained thereby. Boston: Printed by R. and S. Draper, 1764](#)
- Library charging records. Accounts of books circulated to students, faculty, and administrators. *UAIII 50.15.60*
- Library catalogues
 - 1773 catalogue, served as a reading list for undergraduates *HUF 523.6.73*
 - ca. 1775 catalogue, perhaps of the books at Concord, probably in the hand of President Langdon *UAIII 50.15.35*
 - 1790 catalogue, volumes acquired between 1764 and 1790 *HUF 523.90.x*
 - Facsimiles of the 1773 and 1790 catalogues are included in: Harvard College Library, W. H. Bond, and Hugh Amory. [The Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723-1790](#). Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, v. 68. Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1996. *HUF 523.596.9* (*See HOLLIS for additional locations.*)

Student diaries and more (descriptions provided by Josie Rodberg)

Appleton, Nathaniel. Letters of Nathaniel Walker Appleton to his Classmate, Eliphalet Pearson, 1773-1784, ed. William Coolidge Lane. Thirteen letters from 1773-1776, and several more from 1776-1784. Typed and annotated by the editor. Appleton was a student at Harvard, from which Pearson had graduated in 1773. *HUD 773.4.*

Chandler, S. (Harvard A.B. 1775). Handwritten. 30-page account book and 100-page diary covering January 1773 to mid-1774. Nearly daily entries covering his experience as a student at Harvard. Photostat. *HUD 773.13, box 1677*

Cummins, Joseph. The Book Harvard, by Joseph Cummins.
A sympathizer's 7-page handwritten account of the "Butter Rebellion" of 1766 in Harvard College. A typed (19 pp.) version of a notebook written by a student (class of 1772) that includes two sections explaining the students' objections underlying the 1766 Butter Rebellion, and one section explaining the Faculty's point of view. One section is the "Book of Harvard," seemingly the same as the Joseph Cummins version listed above. The volume also contains historical and biographical information provided by the editor. *HUD 2767.15 VT*
See also [The Rebellion of 1766 in Harvard College, by William Coolidge Lane.](#)

Page, John. Diary of John Page, 1757-1780.
Handwritten. 38 pages covering July 1757 to the end of 1763 with approximately monthly entries. 20 pages covering 1764-1781 listing what he sold to whom; he seems to have been a grocer of some kind (after attending Harvard). 26 pages of notes listing area births, deaths, and his own thoughts on topics such as "of gravity," "of heat and cold," and "of light." *HUD 757.68*

Additional primary sources

- Freeman, James (Harvard Class of 1777). Concerning the parts of arithmetick. Manuscript textbook/student notes. Volume dated September 25, 1774. *HUC 8774.353*
- [Notice regarding removal of students to Concord, New England Chronicle, September 7, 1775](#) (This may take a while to load – accessing it directly from the America's Historical Newspapers e-resource may be easier.)
- [Lillie, Rupert. Pictorial map of Cambridge, 1760-1770 \[birds-eye view, created 1939\].](#)
- [Pittman model of Harvard as it was in 1775, photograph, 1947](#)

For more information on the model:

[Lillie, Rupert B. The Historical Series of Harvard Dioramas." Harvard Library Bulletin, Volume 1 Number 3 \(Autumn 1947\): 391-393.](#)

Secondary sources/Background reading (check HOLLIS for additional locations)

Harvard and the American Revolution

- Ayres, Linda. Harvard divided: an exhibition held at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 3 through October 10, 1976. Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, c1976. Exhibition catalog. *HUF 401.176.36*
- [Blake, Henry N. "Harvard Soldiers and Sailors in the American Revolution." Harvard Graduates' Magazine 28\(1919\): 243-259.](#)
- Caughey, John Lyon. A study of the Harvard men who were loyal to Great Britain in the American Revolution. Undergraduate honors thesis, 1925. *HU 92.25.263*
- Cohen, Sheldon. "Harvard College on the eve of the American Revolution." 1982. Offprint from Sibley's Heir, publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 59, 1982. *HUA 982.14*
- Lillie, Rupert. "Cambridge in 1775." Booklet. *HUA 775.50*
- [Metcalf, Keyes D. "The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1765-1877." Harvard Library Bulletin, Volume 1, Number 1 \(Winter 1947\): 29-51.](#)
- Moore, H. G. "Our colonial colleges: 5 -- Harvard University." Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine (October 1948). *HUA 948.56*
- [Olsen, Mark and Harvey, Louis-Georges. "Reading in the Revolutionary Times: Book Borrowing from the Harvard College Library, 1773-1782." Harvard Library Bulletin, New Series Volume 4, Number 3 \(Fall 1993\): 57-72.](#)
- Rising, E. A. Harvard College in the Revolution, 1775. Cambridge, Mass.: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1974. Map. *Archives reading room.*

General Harvard history

- [Carpenter, Kenneth. "The First 350 Years of the Harvard University Library: Description of an Exhibition." Harvard Library Bulletin, Volume 34, Number 1 \(Winter 1986 Special Issue\).](#)
- Harris, Seymour Edwin. Economics of Harvard. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970. *Archives reading room. See HOLLIS for other locations.*
- [The Harvard Book: a series of historical, biographical, and descriptive sketches by various authors; illustrated with views and portraits; collected and published by F.O. Vaille and H.A. Clark. Cambridge: Welch, Bigelow, and Company, 1875.](#)
- [Harvard University handbook: an official guide to the grounds, buildings, libraries, museums, and laboratories, with notes on the history, development and activities of all departments of the university. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936.](#)
- [An historic guide to Cambridge, compiled by...Daughters of the American Revolution. 2nd edition. Cambridge, 1907. Includes maps.](#)
- Morison, Samuel Eliot. Three Centuries of Harvard. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936. *Archives reading room. See HOLLIS for other locations.*
- [Peirce, Benjamin. A history of Harvard University from its foundation, in the year 1636, to the period of the American Revolution. Cambridge: Brown, Shattuck, and Company, 1833.](#)
- [Quincy, Josiah. The history of Harvard University. Cambridge: J. Owen, 1840](#)

Other repositories at Harvard and beyond

Sources for the study of the American Revolution can be found in other archives and special collections at Harvard. Search HOLLIS using the subject term [United States -- History -- Revolution, 1775-1783](#) to identify material at some of these collections. A complete list of Harvard repositories can be found at the Harvard Libraries [Archives and Special Collections portal](#).

Other local resources include:

[Cambridge Historical Society](#)
[Massachusetts Archives](#)
[Massachusetts Historical Society](#)