

## ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE WELLCOME INSTITUTE LIBRARY

### THE WELLCOME COLLECTION OF PAPERS RELATING TO EDWARD JENNER\*

April 1985 sees the opening of a new Jenner Museum in The Chantry, Edward Jenner's former home at Berkeley, Gloucestershire. To mark the occasion, the Wellcome collection of papers relating to Edward Jenner, his family, and the early history of vaccination, has for the first time been fully sorted and listed. This article examines the background to the collection, which represents not only the most important manuscript source for the life and work of Jenner, but one of the most archivally complex collections in the Wellcome Institute Library.

The acclaim with which Jenner's discovery of vaccination was greeted, and the controversy which it aroused, were soon reflected in the size of Jenner's post-bag. By 1804, he was complaining that every daylight hour brought him a letter, adding to the pile upon pile awaiting answer.<sup>1</sup> With more than two hundred on his desk at one point, he could boast that there was not a country in the globe to which he did not owe a letter and that all his leisure was occupied with pen, ink, and paper.<sup>2</sup> He was, in his own words, "vaccine clerk to the world",<sup>3</sup> so burdened with correspondence that part of his parliamentary claim for remuneration was to rest on the enormity of his postage bills.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, by the time of his death Jenner's papers were "extremely voluminous and in the greatest disorder".<sup>5</sup> As well as letters received, there were notebooks containing copies of letters sent, journals and memoranda books, a flattering quantity of honorary diplomas, and literary and scientific works which included poems, an essay on marriage, and drafts of the famous *Inquiry*.

In his will, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in 1823, Jenner instructed his executors to publish any of his papers that they thought suitable, and to destroy those not worthy of preservation. They were to deliver the remainder, and any profits resulting from publication, to his son Robert Fitzhardinge Jenner.<sup>6</sup> In response to the first of these instructions, the executors commissioned an official biography from Jenner's friend John Baron, and made available to him the whole of the Jenner papers.<sup>7</sup> The resulting *Life of Edward Jenner*, which appeared in two

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<sup>1</sup>Jenner to J. G. Marcet, 3 September 1804, in Genevieve Miller (editor), *Letters of Edward Jenner*, Baltimore, Md., Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Jenner to Richard Dunning, 25 October 1804, in Paul Saunders, *Edward Jenner, the Cheltenham years 1795–1823*, Hanover, New Hampshire, University Press of New England, 1982, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup>See the papers relating to Jenner's claims on Parliament in 1807, MS 3022.

<sup>5</sup>John Baron, *The life of Edward Jenner*, 2 vols., London, Henry Colburn, 1838, vol. 1, p. xxi.

<sup>6</sup>A photocopy of the will, from the P.C.C. records in the Public Record Office, is in the Wellcome Institute. A probate copy of the will has recently come to light in the Gloucestershire Record Office.

<sup>7</sup>Baron, *op. cit.*, note 5 above, vol. 1, p. ix.

volumes in 1827 and 1838, published a substantial number of letters and papers from the Jenner archive. What became of the papers themselves when the book was complete remains unclear. A few items evidently remained in Baron's hands, and later found their way to the Royal College of Surgeons of England.<sup>8</sup> The bulk of the papers, however, were probably destroyed by Jenner's executors in accordance with his will. For, of the myriad letters received by Jenner, only the tiniest fraction seems now to survive. Neither is there any trace of his letter books, nor of some of the other papers described and used by Baron. Partisan as it is, written to boost confidence in vaccination, and to immortalize "the kindness, the rectitude, the consistency and the unextinguishable ardour and devotedness of Jenner in a glorious cause",<sup>9</sup> Baron's will remain the only biography of Jenner to be based on the complete Jenner archive.

Historians interested in Jenner need not, however, despair, for two principal sections of the archive have survived.<sup>10</sup> One portion was considered sufficiently important to be passed on as an heirloom to Robert Fitzhardinge Jenner. In particular, he inherited the letters from John Hunter to Edward Jenner, and a draft of the *Inquiry* in Jenner's own handwriting. R. F. Jenner never married, and, following his death in 1854, the papers were inherited by his cousin Mrs. Annie Austin, a daughter of the Revd George Charles Jenner.<sup>11</sup> In 1877, through the agency of Thomas Madden Stone, Annie Austin sold the Hunter letters and the holograph *Inquiry* to Sir James Paget. Paget presented them in 1879 to the Royal College of Surgeons of England, where they still remain.<sup>12</sup> A few additional letters to Jenner passed in 1877 into Thomas Madden Stone's own collection. These are now in the Wellcome Institute, having been purchased with part of the Stone collection in 1945.<sup>13</sup>

A second portion of the Jenner archive survived in the hands of one of Edward Jenner's executors, his nephew the Revd William Davies (1769–1849). Prominent amongst it was the earliest known draft of the *Inquiry*. This manuscript is in the hand of Davies himself, indicating that he sometimes served as his uncle's amanuensis. It also contains annotations in the hand of Edward Jenner, and in that of a third person who can now be identified as Richard Worthington.<sup>14</sup> In addition, William Davies acquired notebooks relating to Jenner's patients (dating from 1794 and 1803), the essay on marriage, a selection from Jenner's correspondence, and a number of his diplomas, including certificates relating to his medical education signed by William

<sup>8</sup>These are described in W. R. LeFanu, *A bio-bibliography of Edward Jenner*, London, Harvey and Blythe, 1951, p. 137.

<sup>9</sup>Baron, op. cit., note 5 above, vol. 1, p. x.

<sup>10</sup>Several other stray items from the Jenner papers are also recorded in LeFanu, op. cit., note 8 above.

<sup>11</sup>MS. 3030 includes a copy of R. F. Jenner's will.

<sup>12</sup>E. H. Cornelius and A. J. Harding Rains, *Letters from the past from John Hunter to Edward Jenner*, London, Royal College of Surgeons, 1976, introduction.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas Madden Stone (d.1894), was employed in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Large sections of his autograph collection were purchased in 1945 by the Wellcome Library and by the Royal College of Surgeons from the widow of Dr J. H. Watson. The Wellcome section included several letters to Jenner, and two letters from Annie Austin to T. M. Stone concerning her sales of Jenner letters and papers.

<sup>14</sup>My judgement is based on a comparison with Worthington's handwriting in a letter which he wrote to Jenner (MS. 5232/22). Worthington is known independently to have seen a draft of the *Inquiry* before publication, and to have recommended its publication as a pamphlet rather than in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* (Baron, op. cit., note 5 above, vol. 1, p. 142).

Hunter and others, and a remarkable testimonial to the efficacy of vaccination signed at Guy's Hospital in 1802 by 112 members of the Physical Society.

In Davies' hands these papers became part of a much larger archive relating to the Jenner and Davies families. Davies had already inherited papers of his and Edward Jenner's common ancestors dating back to the late seventeenth century, including, for instance, a collection of sermons by Jenner's maternal grandfather, the Revd Henry Head (1664–1739). There were also account and notebooks of the Revd William Davies senior (1741–1817), Edward Jenner's brother-in-law. Papers of yet more members of the family had passed into the archive through the activities of the Revd William Davies (father, son, or sometimes both) as executors of family wills. The Revd William Davies junior, for instance, had been an executor of Edward Jenner's sister Mary Black (d.1810), adding to the collection a large body of sermons by her husband the Revd George Charles Black(1723–75),<sup>15</sup> and father and son together had acted as the executors of a remote cousin of Edward Jenner, Elizabeth Seely, née Jenner (d.1804), bringing to the archive a substantial body of papers of the Jenner family of Standish, including papers of the Revd Thomas Jenner (1678–1768), President of Magdalen College, Oxford.<sup>16</sup> The younger Revd William Davies did not preserve the distinctions between these disparate groups of papers, and in his later years he used them to compile at least one family album. As a result, many of the papers now bear his annotations, and also reflect the trimming and snipping of his scissors.

On the Revd William Davies' death in 1849, the composite archive, swollen again by the addition of his own diaries and correspondence, his transcripts of poems by Edward Jenner, and his papers as one of Jenner's executors, passed to his daughter Sarah Bloxsome (1812–91), wife of the Revd William Henry Bloxsome (d.1877) of North Nibley. Sarah Bloxsome's will, made the year before her death, was witnessed by a local bank manager from Wotton-under-Edge, Frederick James Mockler. Under its terms, her estate passed to her son John Buckle Bloxsome, and when he too died in the following year, 1892, Mockler acted as the executor of his will.<sup>17</sup> Within a year, the entire Davies and Jenner archive was in Mockler's possession. How this came about, since he was not a beneficiary under the Bloxsome wills, is unclear. Mockler had, however, been given a few papers by J. B. Bloxsome during the latter's lifetime,<sup>18</sup> and claimed to have acquired the bulk of the collection through Mrs Mockler, his wife, who may perhaps have been related to the Bloxsome family.<sup>19</sup>

Whatever the case, by August 1893 Mockler was already in a position to display his impressive collection at the Bristol Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition.<sup>20</sup> In the

<sup>15</sup> See the copy of Mary Black's will, MS 1233.

<sup>16</sup> MS 5222 includes a copy of Elizabeth Seely's will, and papers of her executors.

<sup>17</sup> Copies of these wills are in the Principal Probate Registry at Somerset House.

<sup>18</sup> A list of these, in Mockler's hand, is included in MS 4487.

<sup>19</sup> A file relating to the collection in the Wellcome Institute archives includes correspondence to and from Mockler dating from as early as 1893. In a letter of 24 January 1896, Mockler claimed to have put together the collection "through the connections of my wife's with the old Doctor". Later, in 1903, the collection was said to have been, in reality, the property of Mrs Mockler (report by C. J. S. Thompson, 13 March 1903).

<sup>20</sup> Bristol Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition, *Fine Art section, exhibit IV, Dr Edward Jenner . . . the collection formed by Frederick Mockler*, Bristol, J. W. Arrowsmith, 1893.

following year, it went on display in London, at first at a Holborn hotel, and later at King's College. "The Jenner relics", as the portraits, diplomas, manuscripts and memorabilia were known, evoked a lively interest fostered by the coincidence of the King's College exhibition with an outbreak of smallpox in London.<sup>21</sup> It was urged that the relics should be found a permanent home, "where they can best be seen as in a shrine".<sup>22</sup> Additions which Mockler continued to make aroused further enthusiasm. In December 1893, he acquired a variety of Jenner memorabilia from Mrs G. C. Jenner, apparently the daughter-in-law of Edward Jenner's nephew and assistant, the Revd George Charles Jenner.<sup>23</sup> Papers of the Revd G. C. Jenner also found their way into the collection, and were probably acquired by Mockler from the same source. More importantly, in April 1894 he purchased from A. J. Murray the papers of Charles Murray (d.1847), a London solicitor closely associated with Edward Jenner.<sup>24</sup> Charles Murray had been secretary of the Royal Jennerian Society from 1803 until 1809, and of the National Vaccine Establishment from 1809. Amongst his papers, Mockler acquired records of both societies, including five minute books of the Royal Jennerian Society. In addition, from other sources, Mockler purchased autograph letters of Edward Jenner, and probably, too, a number of other items not obviously deriving from Jenner or Davies sources, including a collection of poems in the hand of Edward Jenner's life-long friend Edward Gardner.

Admired though it was, the Mockler collection was to have a very short life-span. Part of it was lent to Henry Wellcome for exhibition in London in 1895, and there was a further major exhibition at Cardiff in 1896.<sup>25</sup> But from the outset the purpose of Mockler's exhibitions was to attract buyers. In December 1894, he went so far as to put the whole collection up for auction at Puttick and Simpson's. Only the failure of most lots to realize the prices which he expected prevented the complete dispersal of the papers. Most lots were, in fact, bought in,<sup>26</sup> with a few notable exceptions such as a series of twenty-nine letters from Edward Jenner to Charles Murray,<sup>27</sup> and they were to emerge again in the catalogue of the 1896 Cardiff Exhibition. But by this time, Mockler was tiring of exhibitions. He wrote of Jenner, "The poor old gentleman and his relics have cost me so much money, time, and trouble, that I do not want him many more times returning on my hands", adding plaintively, "I could have lent him to Boulogne and to America, but he was bound to come back again".<sup>28</sup> Financial pressure also made it urgent for him to sell. The relics were to find their way

<sup>21</sup> A volume of newscuttings relating to the collection 1893–1925, begun by Mockler and continued by the Wellcome museum staff is amongst printed books in the Wellcome Institute, ref. BZP (Jenner) (2).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, cutting from the *Academy*, 9 September 1893.

<sup>23</sup> Mockler's list of this acquisition is in MS 3587.

<sup>24</sup> Mockler's list of these is in MS 3587. Genevieve Miller's statement (*op. cit.*, note 1 above, p. 42) that Murray was a surgeon appears to be incorrect.

<sup>25</sup> *A catalogue of the collection of relics of Dr. Edward Jenner . . . formed by Frederick Mockler and exhibited at the Cardiff Fine Art, Industrial and Maritime Exhibition*, Cardiff, Western Mail Ltd, 1896.

<sup>26</sup> A copy of the sale catalogue, 21 December 1894, annotated with prices and notes on lots bought in, is in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

<sup>27</sup> Seventeen of them are now in the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. See S. Weir Mitchell, 'The manuscript letters of Jenner in possession of the College', *Trans. Coll. Physns Philadelphia*, 1900, 3rd series, 22: 101–110. Others are identifiable in Genevieve Miller, *op. cit.*, note 1 above.

<sup>28</sup> Wellcome Institute archives, Jenner file, a letter from Mockler, 10 March 1895.

*Illustrations from the Wellcome Institute Library*

not to a shrine, but to a pawnshop, before being sold by Mockler c.1897 to Mikael Pedersen, a Danish engineer, of nearby Dursley.<sup>29</sup>

The ultimate fate of the collection was sealed by Henry Wellcome. Having negotiated unsuccessfully for the collection in 1895 and 1903, Wellcome purchased a large portion from Pedersen in 1911. Included were a number of portraits as well as Jenner's diplomas, and autograph letters. The remainder came up for sale at Sotheby's 25–27 November 1918. All the lots were purchased by Wellcome. In this way, the Mockler collection passed almost in its entirety into Wellcome's hands. It became a treasured part of the Wellcome Museum, and was the subject of exhibitions commemorating the centenary of Jenner's death in 1923, and the bicentenary of his birth in 1949.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Wellcome continued Mockler's work by adding wherever possible to the nucleus of Jenner and Davies papers. Notable amongst Wellcome's purchases was a remarkable series of seventy-eight letters from Jenner to his friend the Revd Thomas Pruen, together with prescriptions written by Jenner for members of the Pruen family. Wellcome also purchased papers of Eliza Cox Painswick, one of the lay practitioners of vaccination whom Jenner encouraged, and of Henry Jones Shrapnell, a surgeon and junior partner of Jenner, who served as secretary to the committee which erected a statue to Jenner in Gloucester Cathedral. Other acquisitions included a collection of drawings of smallpox inoculation and of vaccination made by George Kirtland, used by Jenner in connexion with his petition to Parliament in 1802. Many autograph letters were also acquired, including seven from Jenner to his nephew Edward Davies, and one to Jenner from John Hunter. Today, the total of autograph letters by Jenner in the Institute is close on 180, the largest such collection in existence.

Many of the papers were recorded by S. A. J. Moorat in his catalogue of the Institute's western manuscripts published in 1973 (MSS. 1139, 1180–1218, 1233, 1271, 1913, 2048–2069, 2471, 2766, 2802–2819, 3014–3028, 3030–3072, 3115, 3180, 3587–3588, 3662–3663, 4220, 4257, 4301–4306, 4487–4488, 4717).<sup>31</sup> Generally, however, Moorat excluded correspondence from his catalogue. The Jenner correspondence, together with an important section of the papers not available to Moorat in 1973, is now fully sorted and listed for the first time (MSS. 5222–5249).

A shrine would be no more appropriate a home for the papers than a pawnshop. It is hoped that, in the Wellcome Institute, the papers will be fully exploited for the contribution which they can make to historical studies. As early as 1893, it was said of the Mockler collection that "from the materials here assembled, all authentic, it would be possible to write Jenner's biography afresh".<sup>32</sup> That task remains to be done, and it is a remarkable fact that recent biographies of Jenner by Dorothy Fisk

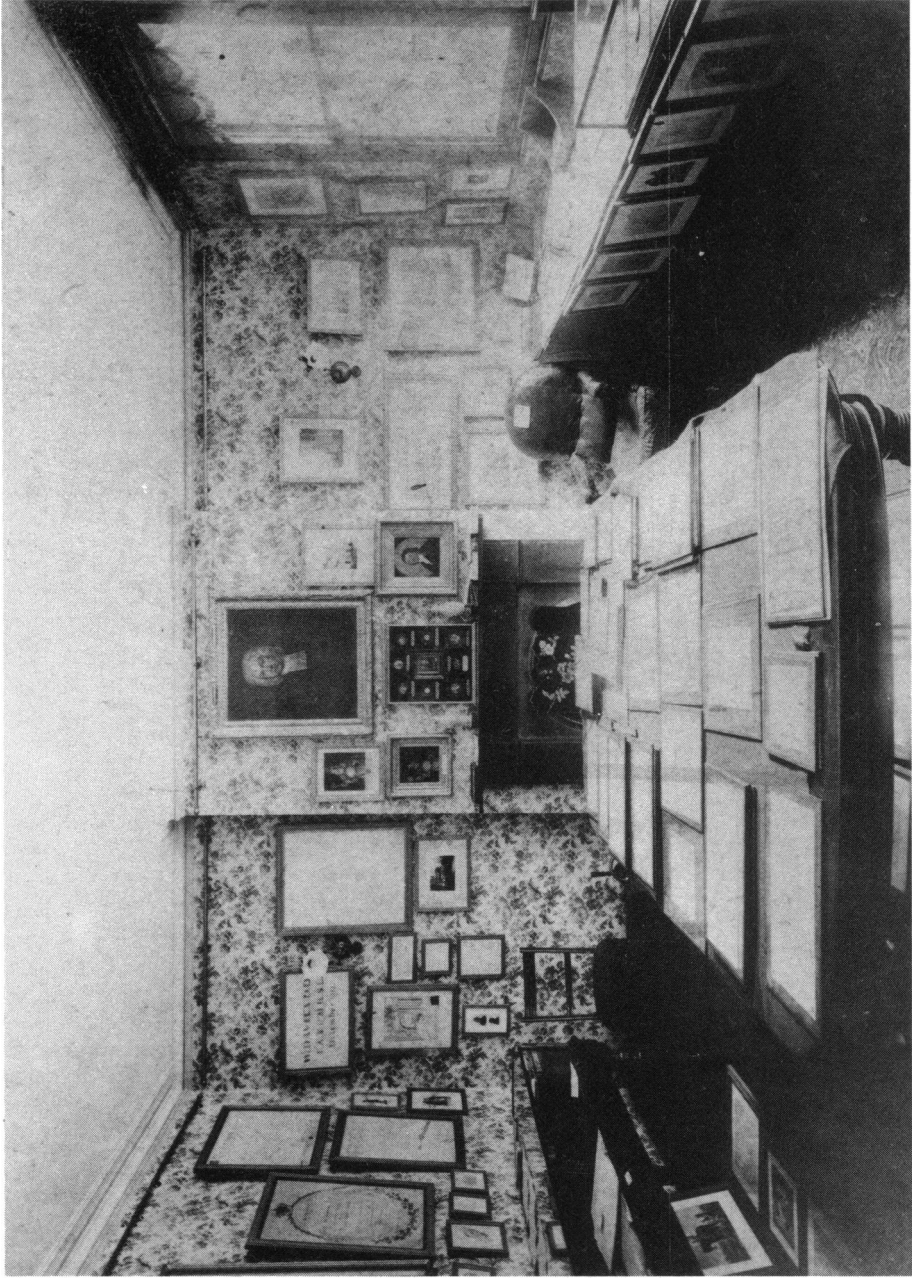
<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, a report by C. J. S. Thompson, 13 March 1903, and Thompson reports, 20 January 1911.

<sup>30</sup> *An exhibition commemorating the centenary of the death of Dr. Edward Jenner*, London, Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, 1923. *Catalogue of an exhibition of books, manuscripts, and relics commemorating the bicentenary of Edward Jenner*, London, Oxford University Press for the WHMM, 1949.

<sup>31</sup> S. A. J. Moorat, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library, part 2, MSS. written after 1650 A.D.*, 2 vols, London, Wellcome Institute, 1973.

<sup>32</sup> *Br. med. J.*, 9 September 1893, p. 591.





**Plate 1. Part of the Mockler collection of Jenneriana, probably at Mockler's house at Wotton-under-Edge, c. 1895. (Photograph in the Wellcome Institute Library.)**





Plate 2. The Jenner section of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, c. 1920s. (Photograph in the Wellcome Institute Library.)

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and Paul Saunders have made no use of the papers in the Wellcome Institute.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, the history of the early vaccination societies, which also remains to be written, would be illuminated by the papers of Charles Murray and the Royal Jennerian Society which form part of the collection. For both these tasks the Institute's rich collection of printed books and pamphlets relating to Jenner and the early vaccination controversies, many of them deriving from the Mockler collection, provide the essential context, accompanied by the Jenner family portraits in the Institute's iconographic collection, and the museum objects relating to Jenner now in the Wellcome collection at the Science Museum.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Dorothy Fisk, *Dr. Jenner of Berkeley*, London, Heinemann, 1959; and Saunders, *op. cit.*, note 2 above. The Wellcome collection was used extensively by Dr E. A. Underwood, but his typescript biography of Jenner remains unpublished in the Wellcome Institute.

<sup>34</sup>Many of the latter are currently on loan to the Jenner Museum.