Charles Lamb:
An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator</th>
<th>Lamb, Charles, 1775-1834</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Charles Lamb Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>1801-1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent</td>
<td>5 boxes, 1 oversize folder (osf) (1.97 linear feet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>The Charles Lamb Collection consists primarily of handwritten manuscripts, Lamb's fair copies of works by others, and outgoing correspondence from Lamb and his sister Mary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Open for research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquisition</th>
<th>Gift (Stark Collection, 1925) and purchase (Hanley Collection, 1964)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Processed by</td>
<td>Jamie Hawkins-Kirkham, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repository</td>
<td>The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biographical Sketch

Charles Lamb was born in London on February 10, 1775, to John and Elizabeth Field Lamb. In October 1787, he began his education at Christ's Hospital where he met his life-long friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Christ's Hospital was intended to prepare boys for a university education followed by taking orders in the Church of England. However, Lamb's stammer caused him to leave school early and find work first as a secretary to the businessman Joseph Paice, then as a clerk at the East India Company where he would remain for thirty-three years. After Lamb left school, he met Ann Simmons, the inspiration for some of his earliest poetry, which was first published in the 1796 edition of Coleridge's Poems.

In September 1796, tragedy struck the Lamb family when Mary, Lamb's elder sister who had a history of mental instability, killed their mother. She was judged temporarily insane and sent to Hoxton Asylum. To prevent her permanent confinement in a mental institution, Charles made the decision to devote his life to his sister's care. While her illness did necessitate occasional periods of confinement, Mary was able to lead a somewhat normal life under the care of her brother, with whom she lived and even helped to write children's literature.

For a time, Lamb took a break from writing to focus on caring for his sister, but he soon took it up again, and in June 1797 contributed fifteen poems to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Poems, Second Edition. Lamb continued to write poetry throughout his life, but he also began to try his hand at theater, novel writing, children's literature, and journalistic writing. He wrote plays, including John Woodvil, a tragedy in Shakespearean blank verse, but he turned increasingly to prose, the earliest example of which is his novel A Tale of Rosamund Gray (1798).

In 1820, Lamb began writing essays under the pseudonym Elia for London Magazine. These essays, for which Lamb is best known, were published as Elia (1823) and The Last Essays of Elia (1833). In 1823, Charles and Mary moved to Colebrooke Row in Islington where they adopted Emma Isola, whom they had met in Cambridge when she was nine. In the following years, Lamb was able to retire from the East India Company, but despite his new freedom, Lamb wrote less in the last decade of his life. He died on December 27, 1834.

Sources:


Scope and Contents

The Charles Lamb Collection consists primarily of handwritten manuscripts, Lamb's fair copies of works by others, and outgoing correspondence from Lamb and his sister Mary. The collection is arranged in two series, I. Works, 1804-1825, undated, and II. Outgoing Correspondence, 1801-1834. Part of this collection was previously accessible through a card catalog but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works Series is subdivided into Lamb's works, Lamb's fair copies, and other papers. Lamb's works consist of an acrostic, a biblical question game, a lesson in English grammar, and numerous poems and essays. Also included is a commonplace book with poems, epitaphs, excerpts, and acrostics. Lamb's fair copies consist of Lamb's handwritten copies of the poetry of authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Valentine Le Grice, Andrew Marvell, Thomas Overbury, Matthew Prior, William Strode, Thomas Tickell, Edmund Waller, and George Withers. The final item in the series is a photostat regarding Lamb by an unidentified author.

The Outgoing Correspondence Series consists of letters sent by Lamb and his sister, Mary. The letters are subdivided by author and then arranged by recipient and date. The bulk of the letters are written to William Wordsworth. Other recipients include Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Sarah Hazlitt, Charles Ollier, John Howard Payne, John Rickman, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Mary Wordsworth. Included with each letter is a typewritten transcript.

Related Material

Additional manuscript material regarding Lamb is located in several other collections at the Ransom Center. One undated letter to Lamb from Samuel Taylor Coleridge is located in Coleridge's papers. Other collections containing Lamb-related materials are Harry Smith Bache, Edmund C. Blunden, E. V. Lucas, Joanna Richardson, and the Robert Spradlin Collection of Charles Lamb Research Papers. Some editions of Charles Lamb's works are located in the Library; the Performing Arts Prints Collection contains an image of Lamb; and the Vertical File contains information about Lamb in the Edmund Blunden and Christopher Morley files.

There are significant collections of Lamb manuscripts in the Henry E. Huntington Library, the New York Public Library, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the British Library, and libraries at Harvard University, Yale University, Princeton University, and the University of Kentucky. The Charles Lamb Society Library, which holds some autograph items, is now housed in the Guildhall Library, London.
# Series I. Works 1804-1825, undated

**Works, 1804-1825, undated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Container</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acrostic, handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Angel Help: A Legendary Subject,&quot; manuscript in the hand of Emma Isola with handwritten corrections by Lamb, undated</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Question Game and Answers, handwritten questions on 32 individual cards with two cards of answers, undated</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonplace book, handwritten manuscript with poems, epitaphs, excerpts, acrostics, etc., 1804</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darby &amp; Joan, handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Female Phaeton,&quot; handwritten manuscript with pencil drawing, undated</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I had a sense in dreams of a beauty rare...,&quot; handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lesson in English Grammar and a Dictionary of Terms, handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Love Will Come,&quot; handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Manners of a London Waterman and His Fare a Hundred Years Ago,&quot; handwritten manuscript, 1825</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Manners of a Spruce London Mercer and His Female Customer, a Hundred Years Ago,&quot; handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;On an Infant Dying as Soon as Born,&quot; manuscript in the hand of Emma Isola with handwritten corrections by Lamb, undated</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectory House, Fornham, All Saints, Suffolk, handwritten manuscript around a pencil drawing of a house by Emma Isola, undated</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Rhedycinian Barbers,&quot; handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanzas for Miss Daubney's Album, Dulwich, handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Thoughts on Presents of Game,&quot; handwritten manuscript, undated</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"Tweed Side," handwritten manuscript, undated

"Twenty Ninth of February," handwritten manuscript, 1825

**Lamb's Fair Copies, undated**

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Love," handwritten copy, undated

Hazlitt, William. Lecture V. On Thomas and Cowper, handwritten manuscript in Hazlitt's hand, with additions to the text by Lamb, undated

Isola, Emma. Extracts in prose and verse, some in the hand of Charles Lamb, undated

Kyd, Thomas. "Hieronimo," handwritten manuscript, undated

Le Grice, Charles Valentine. "Epigram on Bloomfield," handwritten copy by Emma Isola with note by Lamb ascribing it to Le Grice, undated

Marvell, Andrew. "Bermudas," handwritten copy, undated

Overbury, Thomas, Sir. "A Fair and Happy Milkmaid," handwritten copy, undated

Prior, Matthew. "To a Child of Quality, Five Years Old; the Author Forty," handwritten copy, undated


Tickell, Thomas. "Lucy and Colin," handwritten copy with pencil drawing by Emma Isola, undated

Waller, Edmund. "Song," handwritten manuscript, undated

Withers, George. "The Muse, a Consolation," handwritten copy, undated

**Other, undated**
Unidentified author. Photostat regarding Charles Lamb, undated
Outgoing Correspondence 1801-1834

Lamb, Charles, 1801-1834

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 1804 March 10

Hazlitt, Sarah

1815 October 19
1823 April 25
1825 January 20
1825 March 1
1825 April 18
1825 November 11
1830 May 24

Ollier, Charles, 1827 May 21

Payne, John Howard, 1823 January 23

Rickman, John, 1801 November

Wordsworth, Dorothy

1804 June 2
1805 June 14
1819 November 25
1821 January 8

Wordsworth, Mary, 1818 February 18

Wordsworth, William

1801 January 30
1803 March 5

1804 October 13; also addressed to Dorothy Wordsworth and Mrs. Samuel Taylor Coleridge
1805 February 18  Container 3.13
1805 February 19  Container 3.14
1805 March 4  Container 3.15
1805 March 21  Container 3.16
1805 April 5  Container 3.17
1805 September 28  Container 3.20
1806 June 26  Container 3.21
1806 December 11  Container 4.1
1810 October 19  Container 4.2
1814 August 9  Container 4.5
1814 September 19  Container 4.6
1814 December 28  Container 4.7
1815 early  Container 4.8
1815 April 7  Container 4.9
1815 April 28  Container 4.10
1815 August 9  Container 4.11
1816 April 9  Container 4.14
1816 April 26  Container 4.15
1816 September 23  Container 4.16
1819 April 26  Container 4.21
1819 June 7  Container 4.22
1822 March 20  Container 4.25
1823 January  Container 4.26
1825 April 6  Container 4.31
Lamb, Charles, 1775-1834

1825 May
1826 September 6
1830 January 22
1833 end of May
1834 February 22

Lamb, Mary, 1803-1817

Hazlitt, Sarah
1815 August 20
1816 mid-November
1816 late

Wordsworth, Dorothy
1803 July 11
1805 May 7
1806 August 29
1810 November 13
1810 November 23
1817 November 21