

Charles Lamb:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Lamb, Charles, 1775-1834
Title:	Charles Lamb Collection
Dates:	1801-1834
Extent:	5 boxes, 1 oversize folder (osf) (1.97 linear feet)
Abstract:	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.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-02366
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift (Stark Collection, 1925) and purchase (Hanley Collection, 1964)
Processed by:	Jamie Hawkins-Kirkham, 2010
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

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:

Courtney, Winifred F. "Charles Lamb." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/> (accessed 29 October 2010).

Swaab, Peter. "Lamb, Charles (1775-1834), Essayist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15912> (accessed 29 October 2010).

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**

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

"Tweed Side," handwritten manuscript, undated	Container 2.6
"Twenty Ninth of February," handwritten manuscript, 1825	Container 2.7
Lamb's Fair Copies, undated	
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Love," handwritten copy, undated	Container 2.8
Hazlitt, William. Lecture V. On Thomas and Cowper, handwritten manuscript in Hazlitt's hand, with additions to the text by Lamb, undated	Container 2.9
Isola, Emma. Extracts in prose and verse, some in the hand of Charles Lamb, undated	Container 2.10
Kyd, Thomas. "Hieronimo," handwritten manuscript, undated	Container 4.40
Le Grice, Charles Valentine. "Epigram on Bloomfield," handwritten copy by Emma Isola with note by Lamb ascribing it to Le Grice, undated	Container 3.1
Marvell, Andrew. "Bermudas," handwritten copy, undated	Container 3.2
Overbury, Thomas, Sir. "A Fair and Happy Milkmaid," handwritten copy, undated	Container 3.3
Prior, Matthew. "To a Child of Quality, Five Years Old; the Author Forty," handwritten copy, undated	Container 3.4
Prior, Matthew. "The Garland," handwritten copy, undated	Container 1.3
Strode, William. "A Song in Commendation of Music," handwritten copy, undated	Container 3.5
Tickell, Thomas. "Lucy and Colin," handwritten copy with pencil drawing by Emma Isola, undated	Container 3.6
Waller, Edmund. "Song," handwritten manuscript, undated	Container 3.7
Withers, George. "The Muse, a Consolation," handwritten copy, undated	Container 3.8

Other, undated

Unidentified author. Photostat regarding Charles Lamb, undated

Container
3.9

Outgoing Correspondence 1801-1834**Lamb, Charles, 1801-1834**

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 1804 March 10	Container 4.39
Hazlitt, Sarah	
1815 October 19	Container 4.13
1823 April 25	Container 4.27
1825 January 20	Container 4.29
1825 March 1	Container 4.30
1825 April 18	Container 4.32
1825 November 11	Container 4.28
1830 May 24	Container 4.41
Ollier, Charles, 1827 May 21	Container 4.42
Payne, John Howard, 1823 January 23	Container 4.43
Rickman, John, 1801 November	Container 4.38
Wordsworth, Dorothy	
1804 June 2	Container 3.12
1805 June 14	Container 3.19
1819 November 25	Container 4.23
1821 January 8	Container 4.24
Wordsworth, Mary, 1818 February 18	Container 4.20
Wordsworth, William	
1801 January 30	Container 3.10
1803 March 5	Container osf 1
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

1825 May **Container 4.33**

1826 September 6 **Container 4.34**

1830 January 22 **Container 4.35**

1833 end of May **Container 4.36**

1834 February 22 **Container 4.37**

Lamb, Mary, 1803-1817

Hazlitt, Sarah

1815 August 20 **Container 4.11**

1816 mid-November **Container 4.17**

1816 late **Container 4.18**

Wordsworth, Dorothy

1803 July 11 **Container 3.12**

1805 May 7 **Container 3.18**

1806 August 29 **Container 3.22**

1810 November 13 **Container 4.3**

1810 November 23 **Container 4.4**

1817 November 21 **Container 4.19**