Guide to the Backhouse and Mounsey Collection

MSS 13

compiled by Fiona Robinson; edited by Francis Lapka

July, 2011

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https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/rare-books-and-manuscripts
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Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:**  Yale Center for British Art, Rare Books and Manuscripts  
Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts  
1080 Chapel Street  
P. O. Box 208280  
New Haven, CT 06520-8280  
ycba.rarebooks@yale.edu  
https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/rare-books-and-manuscripts

**CALL NUMBER:**  MSS 13

**CREATOR:**  Backhouse, Edward, 1808-1879

**TITLE:**  Backhouse and Mounsey collection

**DATES:**  1819–1856

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**  2 linear feet (2 volumes + 1 box)

**LANGUAGE:**  English

**SUMMARY:**  The collection comprises etchings, lithographs, and drawings by Edward Backhouse, Edward Backhouse Mounsey, and other members of the Backhouse and Mounsey families of Darlington (County Durham) in the early 19th century.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:**  To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0013

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0013.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- b. box
- f. folder

Administrative Information

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**


**Conditions Governing Access**

The materials are open for research.
Biographical / Historical

The Backhouse family of Darlington, County Durham, were prominent 18th- and 19th-century naturalists and horticulturists. The Backhouses were also Quakers and important bankers. They aligned themselves with the Pease family--also Quakers of Darlington--to become prominent 19th-century industrial financiers (becoming the principal underwriters of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in the 1820s).

Edward Backhouse (1808-1879) was a Quaker minister and historical writer. He was born in Darlington on 8 May 1808, but lived for most of his life in Sunderland, where he was a partner--but not an active one--in the family colliery and banking businesses. He was a member of the Society of Friends and devoted himself to philanthropic and religious causes. In 1856 he married Katharine, daughter of Thomas and Mary Mounsey of Sunderland; they had no children. He wrote several religious histories, including Biographical memoirs: being a record of the Christian lives, experiences, and deaths of members of the religious Society of Friends from its rise to 1653 (published 1854), and Early Church History to the Death of Constantine (published, posthumously, in 1884) which offers a Quaker perspective of the early church.

A good amateur painter, he was also interested in natural history, and illustrated several works written by his second cousin James Backhouse, including: Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies (1843) and Narrative of a visit to the Mauritius and South Africa (1844). In the 1840s, he self-published collections of his own etchings of birds.

Edward Backhouse Mounsey (1840-1911) of Darlington, was the nephew of Edward Backhouse and son of John and Lucy Backhouse Mounsey. In 1878, he married Rachel Ann Fryer. He was a member of the Society of Friends and played an important role in the family banking business.

Thomas Mounsey (1793-1850) was the son of Ann Robson and John Mounsey. He married Mary Capper (ca. 1796-1870) in 1817, and they had four sons and two daughters. According to the Annals of Smith of Cantley, Balby, and Doncaster, County York (1878), Thomas devoted much of his leisure time to fine arts, primarily sketching, drawing, lithography, and etching on copper. He collaborated often with his relative Jonathan Richardson, who eventually became a skilled lithographic printer.

Scope and Contents

The collection comprises etchings, lithographs, and drawings by Edward Backhouse, Edward Backhouse Mounsey, and other members of the Backhouse and Mounsey families of Darlington (County Durham) in the early 19th century. The collection demonstrates that a number of family members practiced etching as a hobby. They were also early adopters of lithography, although the quality of the lithographic work is frequently less refined.
Some of Edward Backhouse’s etchings present in the current collection appear to have been self-published in the 1840s.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into three series: I. Albums; II. Etchings and drawing book by Edward Backhouse Mounsey; III. Copper plates by Thomas Mounsey.
Series I. Albums

Backhouse and Mounsey collection

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Collection Contents
Series I. Albums

b. Vol. 1

Album of etchings, drawings, and lithographs by Edward Backhouse and others
1 v. (76 leaves, with blanks); 36 cm
Backhouse, Edward, 1808-1879

1819–1856

The album includes etchings and lithographs by Edward Backhouse, together with work by other family members, presented “to his dear nephew, Edward Backhouse Mounsey, 1855.” This was the year in which he married Katherine Mounsey, and having no children of their own, probably saw young Edward as the son he never had.

On the following leaf he has written, “Sketches from Nature by Edward Backhouse, mostly taken in 1829.” There are 224 separate items including several original watercolors.

This album gathers together a comprehensive collection of Edward Backhouse’s private and public work, much of which is very ephemeral and possibly unrecorded elsewhere. It starts with examples from when he was just 12 years old, and shows him as a gifted watercolor artist, skilful etcher and engraver, and early exponent of lithography.

Work by Edward Backhouse includes (but is not limited to): several drawings and numerous fine etchings of birds; several drawings and many etchings of varied animals (including tigers, a weasel, warthog (?), stag, lion, elephant, bull, polar bear, rhinoceros, and seals); numerous drawings, etchings, and lithographs of ships of all sorts; landscape etchings and lithographs, including scenery from the Swiss Alps.

Work by Edward Backhouse Mounsey includes: numerous drawings and etchings of ships and marine scenes; etchings of animals; etchings of landscapes.

Contributions from other family members are much less frequent. They include work (in varied media) by Lucy Backhouse Backhouse, T.J. Backhouse, A.B. (presumably Ann Ford Barclay), Homasia Bardon, W. Davison, J.C. Mounsey, Thomas Mounsey, Susan Pease, and Jonathan Richardson.

There are also a number of unsigned works.

The album includes etchings and lithographs by Edward Backhouse, together with examples from other family members, presented “to his dear nephew, Edward Backhouse Mounsey, 1855.” This was the year in which he married Katherine Mounsey, and having no children of their own, probably saw young Edward as the son he never had.

On the following leaf he has written, “Sketches from Nature by Edward Backhouse, mostly taken in 1829.” There are 224 separate items including several original watercolours, and the album also contains work by his nephew Edward, W. Davison, Homasia Bardon, J.C. Mounsey, Susan Pease, Eliz. B.

This album gathers together a comprehensive collection of his private and public work, much of which is very ephemeral and possibly unrecorded elsewhere. It starts with examples from when he was just 12 years old, and shows him as a gifted watercolour artist, skilful etcher and engraver, and early exponent of lithography.

Subjects:
Animals in art
Birds in art
Ships in art

Genres / Formats:
Marines (Visual works)

b. Vol. 2

Album of etchings, drawings, and lithographs belonging to Rachel Backhouse, of Pilmore Hall
1 volume (58 leaves, with many blanks) ; 29 cm

Contains artwork by a great variety of family members. A pencil note by E.B. Mounsey (the younger) on the front endpaper states: “much here belongs to Rachel Backhouse, and came from Pilmore.” Rachel was the wife of Alfred Backhouse, of Pilmore Hall, Rockcliffe Park.

The album comprises 32 items. There is evidence of some leaves being removed, presumably by the family at some point in its history. Some of the items are signed and dated; dates range from 1831 to 1848.

Items include: two engravings of wild cats by Edward Backhouse; engravings of Dinsdale Baths and Dinsdale Woods & Hotel by J.M. Sparkes; four botanical watercolors, one initialled S.B.; a watercolor of a moth by Lucy Backhouse Backhouse; a sepia drawing of ground squirrels by Ann Ford Barclay; an unsigned tinted lithograph of a castle; a sepia drawing of a knife grinder by Lydia Pike; a fine architectural drawing in graphite, by John Mounsey Backhouse; a graphite drawing of Schladern, Germany, by E.J.B.; a graphite drawing of a goat’s head by H.B.; an etching of a peasant with a pipe, by the York artist, H[enry] Cave; an unsigned full-page sepia lithograph of an Arabian battle scene; two woodcuts of a dead duck, and a hawk, by E. Gurney Barclay; a graphite drawing of a lioness and cubs, by E. Gurney Barclay; an unsigned engraving of Netley Abbey by Moonlight; two large colored lithographs of a cat and a dog; a graphite drawing of one of the family houses; and two small portrait engravings.

Genres / Formats:
Botanical illustrations
Landscape drawings

Subjects:
Animals in art
**Series II. Etchings and drawing book by Edward Backhouse Mounsey**

| b. 1, f. 1 | **Cod fishing**  
1 etching; 14 x 20 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Four copies. | 1855 |
| b. 1, f. 2 | **Elephant attacked by a tiger**  
1 etching; 12 x 17 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Six copies. | 1854 |
| b. 1, f. 3 | "**Fly fishing, favorable wind, & trout rising as fast as possible**"  
1 etching; 17 x 23 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Comical etching of a fisherman with his line caught in a tree overhead. Animals gather on the opposite riverbank. Six copies. | 1854 |
| b. 1, f. 4 | **Shipwreck**  
1 etching; 17 x 23 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
One copy. | 1854 |
| b. 1, f. 5 | **Lighthouse**  
1 etching; 22 x 14 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Seven copies. | 1854 |
| b. 1, f. 6 | **Castle and village**  
1 etching; 13 x 20 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Five copies. | 1855 |
| b. 1, f. 7 | **Shipwreck, or naval battle scene**  
1 etching; 14 x 20 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Six copies. | 1855 |
| b. 1, f. 8 | **Jericho**  
1 etching; 14 x 20 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
One copy. | 1855 |
| b. 1, f. 9 | **Ships wrecked on ice floes**  
1 etching; 14 x 20 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Six copies. | 1854 |
| b. 1, f. 10 | **A ship in arctic waters**  
1 etching; 14 x 21 cm  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Five copies. | 1854 |
<table>
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<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 11</td>
<td><strong>A kayak in arctic waters</strong> &lt;br&gt;1 etching; 10 x 13 cm &lt;br&gt;Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 &lt;br&gt;Three copies.</td>
<td>1854</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 12</td>
<td><strong>A double-masted ship</strong> &lt;br&gt;1 etching; 6 x 10 cm &lt;br&gt;Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 &lt;br&gt;Three copies.</td>
<td>1854</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 13</td>
<td><strong>A ship aflame (?) on choppy waters</strong> &lt;br&gt;1 etching; 13 x 20 cm &lt;br&gt;Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 &lt;br&gt;Five copies.</td>
<td>1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 14</td>
<td><strong>A boat near shore</strong> &lt;br&gt;1 graphite drawing; 18 x 30 cm &lt;br&gt;Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911</td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 15</td>
<td><strong>Drawing book</strong> &lt;br&gt;16 leaves of graphite drawings; 18 x 24 cm &lt;br&gt;Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 &lt;br&gt;The drawing book is inscribed: E.B. Mounsey, 1852. The 14 leaves of drawings mainly depict houses and architectural details, with two drawings of boats. Also loosely inserted is one comic sketch, in graphite, of an elephant (in man’s clothing), and another graphite sketch of a ship and whale.</td>
<td>1852</td>
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</tbody>
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## Series III. Copper plates by Thomas Mounsey

| b. 1, f. 16 | **Etched copper plate depicting a stately ivy-covered mansion**  
1 printing plate : copper; 12 x 15 cm  
Mounsey, Thomas, 1793-1850 | 1819 |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genres / Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Printing plates</td>
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</table>

| b. 1, f. 17 | **Etched copper plate depicting a lake within a hilly landscape**  
1 printing plate : copper; 10 x 16 cm  
Mounsey, Thomas, 1793-1850 | 1822 |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genres / Formats:</strong></td>
<td>Printing plates</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Animals in art
Art, Amateur -- Great Britain
Birds in art
Etching -- Great Britain
Quakers -- Great Britain
Ships in art

Genres / Formats
Botanical illustrations
Children’s art
Etchings
Graphite drawings
Juvenilia
Landscape drawings
Lithographs
Pen and ink drawings
Printing plates
Watercolors

Names
Backhouse, Edward, 1808-1879
Backhouse, John Mounsey
Backhouse, Lucy Backhouse, 1812-1872
Backhouse, Rachel, 1826-1898
Backhouse, Thomas J. (Thomas James), 1810-1857
Barclay, Ann Ford, 1822-1913
Barclay, Elizabeth Gurney
Cave, Henry, 1779-1836
Davison, W.
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911
Mounsey, J. C.
Mounsey, Thomas, 1793-1850
Pease, Susan
Pike, Lydia
Richardson, Jonathan, 1802-ca. 1880
Sparkes, J. M.

Families
Backus family
Mounsey family