

Guide to the William Shenstone Papers

OSB MSS 63



by Diane J. Ducharme

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: OSB MSS 63

CREATOR: Shenstone, William, 1714-1763

TITLE: William Shenstone papers

DATES: 1726-1979, 1751-1770

BULK DATES: 1751-1770

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.4 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers concern the Leasowes estate, including correspondence with Shenstone's attorney Thomas Milward and others about his legal and financial difficulties; mortgages and indentures on the property; documents concerning the case of Dolman vs. Shenstone and the settlement of his estate after his death; and surveys, descriptions and engravings of the Leasowes.

The collection also contains engraved portraits of Shenstone; verses addressed to him by friends, including Robert Dodsley and Lady Luxborough; and an autograph copy of his "The Snuff-box."

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Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.shen>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Bequest of James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The William Shenstone Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

William Shenstone Papers. James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

WILLIAM SHENSTONE, 1714-1763

William Shenstone was born in Halesowen, Worcestershire on November 13, 1714. He was educated first in a dame school run by Sarah Lloyd, whom he celebrated in his poem "The Schoolmistress," then at the Halesowen grammar school. In 1732 he matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford, where his friends included the writers Richard Jago and Richard Graves.

A small volume of his poetry was privately printed at Oxford in 1737, and "The Judgement of Hercules" and "The Schoolmistress" appeared anonymously in 1741 and 1742. Shenstone was enrolled at Oxford until 1742, but took no degree.

After the death of his guardian Thomas Dolman in 1745, Shenstone moved onto the Leasowes estate and devoted his life and more than his income to improving the grounds and gardens. The *ferme ornée* style of ornamented landscaping at The Leasowes was an important influence on later English landscape gardening (a term Shenstone may have originated), and the grounds became "a place to be visited by travellers, and copied by designers," as Johnson noted.

Shenstone's occasional poetry continued to appear in Robert Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748, 1755, 1758), and his friends and correspondents included several literary figures, among them William Somerville, Joseph Spence, Joseph Grainger, Thomas Percy, and the actor Thomas Hull, as well as Lady Luxborough.

In early 1763, Shenstone hoped to be granted a pension by Lord Bute, and visited Lord Stamford in pursuit of it. Unfortunately, during his return home he developed a chill and a "putrid fever," and died on February 11, 1763. The unmarried Shenstone had no direct heirs, and left his financially embarrassed estate to his cousin, John Hodgetts. Dodsley published his three-volume *Works*, which included Shenstone's essay "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening," in 1764-69.

Scope and Contents

The William Shenstone Papers consist of correspondence, legal and financial documents, and printed material related to the poet William Shenstone and his estate, The Leasowes. The papers span the dates 1726-1979, but the bulk of the material dates from the 1750s and 1760s. The papers are housed in one box and have been organized into four series.

[Series I, Correspondence](#), is arranged in two subseries. The first, William Shenstone Correspondence, contains letters by and to Shenstone, arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Folders 5-10 hold Shenstone's letters to his estate manager and attorney Thomas Milward, most concerning the lands inherited by Shenstone from his guardian Thomas Dolman but contested by Dolman's other heirs. The second subseries, Thomas Milward (Estate) Correspondence, contains third-party letters to Milward on various business matters, chronologically arranged.

[Series II, Financial Papers](#), consists of miscellaneous bills and receipts pertaining to Shenstone and is housed in folders 18-22.

[Series III, Legal Papers](#), is arranged in two subseries. Dolman v. Shenstone, found in folders 23-33, contains the progress of the writs pertaining to the dispute over the Halesowen inheritance, from the original deed signed by William Penn of Harborough Hall (grandfather of both parties), through the final agreement to partition the estate. Other Legal (Estate) Papers are located in folders 34-43 and include farm mortgages, indentures, and the complete text of a Chancery Brief filed against Shenstone's heirs by his former housekeeper Mary Cutler, alleging nonpayment of wages, interest and 500 pounds to "settle her in the world without going into any other or new service in case of his Death as he had very frequently said it was his intention and design she never should."

[Series IV, Other Papers](#), is housed in folders 44-58. The first subseries, William Shenstone, contains mostly printed material, including engraved portraits of Shenstone and pages from a printing of "The Schoolmistress." The Leasowes includes 18th century engravings of views of the gardens, mounted newspaper clippings concerning the estate, a portion of a poem, "The Leasowes," a map and description from an 1865 freehold auction announcement, and a copy of a 1979 article by John Riely on the development of the gardens.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence

WILLIAM SHENSTONE CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 1	Hodgetts, John. ALS to Mr. Clarke; Snowhill, Birmingham John Hodgetts was executor of Shenstone's will.	1766 Nov 9
b. 1, f. 2	Milward, Thomas. ALS to William Shenstone	1762 Apr 5
b. 1, f. 3	Reynolds, Robert (clerk to a Mr. Crawley). ALS to William Shenstone	1755 May
b. 1, f. 4	Shenstone, William. ALS (copy) to Thomas Holbeache	1760 Apr 8
b. 1, f. 5	Shenstone, William. 2 ALS to Elizabeth Milward	1759, 1760
b. 1, f. 6-10	Shenstone, William. 27 ALS to Mr. Thomas Milward	1755-61

THOMAS MILWARD (ESTATE) CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 11	ALS from Thomas Dolman; Broom	1753 Jul 8
b. 1, f. 12	3 ALS from Elizabeth Milward	1755-56
b. 1, f. 13	ALS from John Ingram	1756 Apr 16
b. 1, f. 14	ALS from H. Roberts Jr.	1758 Jul 26
b. 1, f. 15	4 ALS from Thomas Holbeache	1759-60
b. 1, f. 16	ALS from Rowland Hill; Be[waley?]	1761 Jul 4
b. 1, f. 17	ALS from J. Pixell	1767 Feb 25

Series II: Financial Papers, 1753-56

b. 1, f. 18	Accounting of Shenstone's Receipts and Disbursements	1753-56
b. 1, f. 19	"Mr. Shenstone's Further bill from Milward"	1758
b. 1, f. 20	"Holbeache's bill to Mr. Dolman and Shenstone"	1761 Oct 22
b. 1, f. 21	"Mr. Shenstone's Further bill from Milward"	1761 Sep 2
b. 1, f. 22	Bill	n.d.

Series III: Legal Papers

DOLMAN V. SHENSTONE

b. 1, f. 23	Deed concerning Esther Penn Signed by William Penn, William Penn Jr., and Ann Shenstone	1726 Mar 25
b. 1, f. 24	Bill of complaint by Dolman With observations in Shenstone's hand	1726 Jul 3
b. 1, f. 25	Notice of intent to execute complaint	1755 Oct 27
b. 1, f. 26	Rough draft of Shenstone's answer in Chancery.	[1755-56?]
b. 1, f. 27	Notes by Shenstone on a draft	[1755-56?]
b. 1, f. 28	Draft answer for Shenstone in Chancery with notes by Shenstone	1755-56
b. 1, f. 29	Proposal for division of lands Signed by H. Hollier	1756 Jan 4
b. 1, f. 30	Proposal for division of the estate	n.d.
b. 1, f. 31	Proposals for divisions	n.d.
b. 1, f. 31	Amended bill of complaint by Thomas Dolman	1756 May 6
b. 1, f. 32	Draft answer to amended bill of complaint	1756 Nov 1
b. 1, f. 33	Note on date of partition of estate	1760 Apr 17

OTHER LEGAL (ESTATE) PAPERS

b. 1, f. 34	"An abstract of William Shenstone's title to the Ivey Estate in Halesowen Parish in the county of Salop"	n.d.
b. 1, f. 35	Indenture between William Shenstone and Paul White	1758 Oct 30
b. 1, f. 36	Deed between Willian Shenstone and Paul White concerning earlier indenture	1758
b. 1, f. 37	AN to Thomas Milward from Paul White; Kinver	1759 Sep 10
b. 1, f. 38	Indenture between William Shenstone and Edward Davies	1756 Apr 23
b. 1, f. 39	Mortgage Deed between William Shenstone and William Davies	1760 Mar 25
b. 1, f. 40	Draft surrender of the mortgage by Davies	n.d.
b. 1, f. 41	Indenture between Paul White, Edward Toye, and William Shenstone	1761 Oct 1
b. 1, f. 42	Indenture between William Shenstone, Samuel Spencer, and John Spencer	1758
b. 1, f. 43	Chancery Brief: Cutler agt. Davies Mary Cutler representing the creditors of the Shenstone Estate; William Davies representing the Shenstone Estate	1764-65

Series IV: Other Papers

WILLIAM SHENSTONE

b. 1, f. 44	Untitled verses in Greek, Latin and English in unidentified hand	n.d.
b. 1, f. 45	"The Snuff Box": facsimile of Shenstone autograph	n.d.
b. 1, f. 46	"The School-Mistress": printed, mounted and incomplete	n.d.
b. 1, f. 47	Three portrait engravings of Shenstone Two versions of the 1795 engraving after W. G. Waldron, one in color	1795, n.d.
b. 1, f. 48	Four engraved pages from the 1791 <i>Works, in Verse and Prose</i> , mounted	1791
b. 1, f. 49	"Family of Shenstone the Poet," by H. Sydney Grazebook: printed	n.d.
THE LEASOWES		
b. 1, f. 50	"Leasowes farm as surveyed by Mr. William Lowe" Original and printed version	1759
b. 1, f. 51	"Whitacre's farm at Churchill as surveyed by Mr. Lowe"	1760
b. 1, f. 52	"The LEASOWES, A Poem" Printed. Incomplete	n.d.
b. 1, f. 53	"A Description of the Leasowes, the Seat of the Late Willam Shenstone, Esq" by Robert Dodsley Printed, mounted on album stock, and incomplete. Includes verses addressed to Shenstone by Dodsley and others	
b. 1, f. 54	Newspaper clippings and articles concerning the Leasowes Mounted on album stock	1772-99
b. 1, f. 55	Engravings of views at Leasowes and Halesowen "A View in Virgil's Grove" is hand-colored; most mounted on album stock	1775-1822, n.d.
b. 1, f. 56	"The Leasowes as in the time of Shenstone A.D 17___, drawn by Arthur Dixon from a sketch by Mr. Dovaston"	1838
"The Leasows Estate"		
b. 1, f. 57	Map and description from a freehold auction announcement ("Lot 10")	1865
b. 1, f. 58	Riely, John. "Shenstone's Walks: the Genesis of The Leasowes" Printed. Article originally published in <i>Apollo</i> .	1979 Sep

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

Female domestics -- Great Britain
Gardens, English -- Design
Gardens -- England -- Design
Poets, English -- Homes and haunts -- England
Wages -- Household employees

Geographic Names

Leasowes Garden (Halesowen, England)

Names

Dodsley, Robert, 1704-1764
Luxborough, Henrietta Knight, Baroness,
1699-1756
Shenstone, William, 1714-1763