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Guide to the Sir William Lee Family Papers

OSB MSS 52



by Diane J. Ducharme and Thanh Tran

July 2010

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: OSB MSS 52

CREATOR: Lee, William, Sir, 1688-1754

TITLE: Sir William Lee family papers

DATES: 1588-1814

BULK DATES: 1710-1754

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 17.29 linear feet (28 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers, most of which date from the lifetime of Sir William Lee, consist of personal and official correspondence, notes, memoranda, household accounts and financial papers, records of court cases, and other documents. Family correspondents include Lee's brothers Sir George and Thomas Lee; his brother-in-law, William Melmoth, and his son William. William's letters describe student life at Wadham College, Oxford and Clare College, Cambridge. Subsequent letters detail William's Grand Tour through continental Europe, with sojourns in Paris; several cities in Italy, including Rome; and at the imperial court of Austria-Hungary. Other correspondents include Scroop Egerton, the Duke of Bridgewater; Sir Roger Drake; and Lord Hardwicke. Hardwicke's letters concern patronage, the Marriage Act of 1753, and the trials of the Jacobite rebels, including Lords Kilmarnock, Cromarty and Balmerino. Other subjects represented in Lee's correspondence include county politics and elections and local legal matters; news of Parliament and current events, including the Jacobite Rebellion and the War of the Austrian Succession; and medical remedies and receipts. There are also letters from prisoners asking for pardons or commutations, and from tenants concerning estate matters.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.leefam>

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.leefam>.

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

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased by James Marshall Osborn from Sotheby's, 8 March 1939 (Hartwell sale); gift of James Marshall Osborn, 1967.

Box 22, Fresh Wharf Estate Papers, was purchased from Bernard Quaritch, Ltd. on the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Fund, 2002.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Sir William Lee Family Papers are 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

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

Processing Information

The collection received preliminary processing and partial cataloging at the time of acquisition. Further organization, rehousing and description were carried out in 2010. Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from the original dealer description and from a preliminary list compiled by a curatorial assistant in the 1970s. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are based on those provided at the time of acquisition or by Beinecke staff at a later date. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases.

Sir William Lee, 1688-1754

Sir William Lee was born at Hartwell, Buckinghamshire, England, in 1688, the second son of Sir Thomas Lee of Hartwell, M.P. for Aylesbury. He was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1704, and soon after matriculated at Wadham College, Oxford, but did not take a degree. He was called to the bar in 1710, was appointed Latin secretary to King George I in 1718, and ten years later was named attorney-general to Frederick Prince of Wales. In 1727 he was elected to Parliament for Chipping Wycombe through his family's interest, and served until he was appointed a puisne justice of the King's Bench in 1730.

Lee married Anne Goodwin early in his career, and the couple had one son, William (d. 1778). Anne died in 1729, and in 1733 Lee married Margaret Drake Melmoth, a widow with a fortune of 25,000 pounds. In the same year, Lee's friend and colleague Lord Hardwicke was named Chief Justice. When Hardwicke was further promoted to Lord Chancellor in February 1737, he nominated Lee as his successor. Lee became Chief Justice on June 8th, and was also knighted that day as well.

Lee served as Chief Justice until his death, and was praised for his ability and impartiality as a judge. His court ruled that women who paid parish rates were entitled to vote in elections of parish officers. Lee presided at several of the treason trials of Jacobite rebels held by the special commission at Southwark in 1746. Among his rulings was *R. v. Townley*, which denied the defendant the right to be treated as a prisoner of war even though he held a commission in the service of the Pretender.

Lady Margaret Lee died in 1752; Sir William Lee died at his residence in Bloomsbury Square, London, after a stroke, on April 8, 1754. He was buried in the church at Hartwell, and left his fortune, including his manor at Totteridge, Hertfordshire, to his son William.

Scope and Contents

The Sir William Lee Family Papers document many aspects of the personal, family, and professional life of the prominent jurist and landowner Sir William Lee and his extended family. They include extensive personal and official correspondence; records of court cases; notes on legal and Parliamentary questions; personal, financial and legal memoranda; household accounts and financial papers; and other family and personal papers.

Series I, *Correspondence*, includes letters by William Lee (1729-1778) describing his extensive Grand Tour, as well as letters from other Lee relatives and Lord Hardwicke. Other subjects represented in the correspondence include county politics and elections and local legal matters; news of Parliament and current events, including the Jacobite Rebellion and the War of the Austrian Succession.

The remaining series primarily document Lee family financial and legal matters and Lee's service as Chief Justice. Additional documents relating to the Jacobite Rebellion are located in Series III, *Political and Governmental Papers*. A catalogue of Lee's library, along with many notes by Lee on his wide reading, is located in Series V, *Notes on Reading and Other Papers*.

Arrangement

Organized into nine series: I. Correspondence, 1724-1797; II. Financial Papers, 1700-1796; III. Political and Governmental Papers, 1700-1770; IV. Personal and Family Papers, 1588-1796; V. Notes on Reading and Other Papers, 1750; VI. Miscellaneous Legal Papers and Documents, 1700-1770; VII. Printed Materials, 1745-1814; VIII. 2002 Addition (02.5.8), 1695-1776; IX. Oversize, 1602-1806.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1724-1797

1.67 linear feet (4 boxes)

Series I, *Correspondence*, documents the personal and professional activities of jurist and landowner Sir William Lee. Family correspondents include his brothers Sir George Lee and Thomas Lee and his brother in law William Melmoth.

There are eleven folders of letters from William Lee (1729-1778) to his father Sir William. The earliest letters describe student life at Wadham College, Oxford and Clare College, Cambridge. Subsequent letters detail William's Grand Tour through continental Europe, with sojourns in Paris; several cities in Italy, including Rome; and at the imperial court of Austria-Hungary.

Major correspondents include Scroop Egerton, the Duke of Bridgewater; Sir Roger Drake; and Lord Hardwicke. Hardwicke's letters concern patronage, the Marriage Act of 1753, and the trials of the Jacobite rebels, including Lords Kilmarnock, Cromarty and Balmerino.

Other subjects represented in the correspondence include county politics and elections and local legal matters; news of Parliament and current events, including the Jacobite Rebellion and the War of the Austrian Succession; and medical remedies and receipts. There are also letters from prisoners asking for pardons or commutations, and from tenants concerning estate matters.

Additional information on the Jacobite Rebellion is found in Series III, Political and Governmental Papers.

Alphabetically arranged. General correspondence files for single letters or letter spans precede files for individual correspondents.

b.1	A-B	1746-1752, undated
b.1	Antonie, Richard	1768-1769
b.1	Bickham, Richard	1793
b.1	Bridgewater, Scroop Egerton, 1st Duke of (1681-1745)	1725-1729
b.1	Brown, Samuel and Gregory <i>2 Folders</i>	1743-1753
b.1	Burnett, Thomas	1745-1750
b.1	C	1738-1769
b.1	Calthorpe, Ja.	1736-1739
b.1	D	1746-1789
b.1	Davers, M.	no year, April 18
b.1	De la Touche, William	1791-1792
b.1	Denison, Thomas	1757
b.1	Drake, Roger	1737-1753
b.1	Duncombe, T.	1743-1753

b. 1	E-F-G	1735-1753, undated
b. 1	Firebrace, G.	1797 March 7
b. 1	Fortesque of Credan, John Fortesque Alana, 1st baron (1670-1746)	1745 December
b. 1	Gautier, Joseph	undated
b. 1	George II, King of Great Britain (1683-1760)	1737
b. 1	Gideon, Samson	1739-1742
b. 1	Grigby, Josiah	1738-1749
b. 1	Gamutt, Will	1740 June 16
b. 2	H-I	1737-1752
b. 2	Hardwicke, Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of (1690-1764) <i>4 Folders</i>	1736-1754
b. 2	Henley, John	1742-1747
b. 2	Holland, Henry Fox, 1st Baron (1705-1774)	1750-1754
b. 2	Hume-Campbell, Alexander (1708-1756)	1747-1752
b. 2	Hoden, Robert	1737-1740
b. 2	J-K-L	1739-1769, undated
b. 2	Lee, Sir Thomas, 3rd bart, (1687-1749)	1737-1745
b. 2	Lee, Thomas	1768
b. 2	Lee, Margaret (d. 1752) <i>2 Folders</i>	1748-1752
b. 2	Lee, John <i>2 Folders</i>	1730-1753
b. 2	Lee, Sir George (1700-1758)	1741-[1754?]
b. 2	Lee, William (1726-1778) <i>7 Folders</i>	1739-1753, undated
b. 3	Lee, William (1726-1778) <i>4 Folders</i>	1753-1754
b. 3	Lee, Sir William (1688-1754) <i>9 Folders</i>	1730-1754
b. 3	Lee, Sir William, 4th bart. (d. 1749) <i>2 Folders</i>	1751-1768
b. 3	Le Neve, Edward	1746-1747

b. 3	Liptrott, Bexworth	1752 November 8
b. 3	M	1731-1789, undated
b. 3	Maddox, Isaac, bp. of Worcester (1688-1754)	1740-1752
b. 3	Marlborough, Sarah Jennings Churchill, Duchess of (1660-1744)	1744 August
b. 3	Melmoth, William	1745-1750
b. 3	Moss, Alexander	1752-1753
b. 3	N-R	1741-1759, undated
b. 3	Norfolk, Mary Blount Howard, Duchess of (1702-1773)	1744-1745
b. 3	Onslow, Arthur	1737-1751
b. 3	Owen, Thomas	1750-1753
b. 4	Parker, Thomas (1695?-1784)	1740-1749
b. 4	Perkins, Hutton	1741-1748
b. 4	Reynolds, Isaac	1735-1736
b. 4	Rooke, Mav	1791 October
b. 4	Scott, George Lewis (1708-1780)	1751-1752
b. 4	Schaw, Frederick Bridges	1752 December
b. 4	S	1737-1783, undated
b. 4	Sherwin, John	1750
b. 4	Skyner, John	1743-1753
b. 4	Snow, Robert and Thomas	1741-1752
b. 4	Somerset	1738-1744
b. 4	Staines, John	1751-1753
b. 4	Stanyan, Grace	[1753?]
b. 4	Swale, John	1748-1752
b. 4	T-V	1738-1751
b. 4	Taafe, Jacob?	1748-1751
b. 4	Twinor, John	1736-1737
b. 4	Vernon, Anne (Lee) (d. 1742) <i>2 Folders</i>	1724-1742

b. 4	Vernon, Edward (b. 1670)	1738-1739
b. 4	Vernon, George Venables <i>2 Folders</i>	1739-1752
b. 4	W-Z	1743-1754
b. 4	Ward, Philip	1739-1746
b. 4	Waller, John <i>2 Folders</i>	1768-1770
b. 4	Williams, Hutchins and Judith	1736-1742
b. 4	Wilmot, Robert	1738 June 10
b. 4	Unidentified	1750, undated
b. 4	Wrappers	1740-1752, undated

Series II: Financial Papers, 1700-1796*2.9 linear feet (5 boxes)*

Series II, *Financial Papers*, contains accounts, bills and receipts, memoranda, and other financial records. The subseries *Personal Accounts* documents the finances of Sir William Lee and of his extended family. The papers in *Court Accounts* record financial data for assize and circuit courts in Norwich and other places.

Arranged in two subseries: *Personal Accounts* and *Court Accounts*.

Personal Accounts		
b. 5	Personal <i>6 Folders</i>	1700-1754, undated
b. 5	Personal Financial <i>6 Folders</i>	1700-1796, undated
b. 5	Personal Bills and Receipts <i>2 Folders</i>	1700-1740
b. 6	Personal Bills and Receipts <i>5 Folders</i>	1741-1796, undated
b. 6	Account Book with Snow and Co.	1743-1764
b. 6	Melmoth Account Book	1717-1740
b. 6	Melmoth-Lee Account Book	1730-1739
b. 6	Household Accounts	1754-1796
Court Accounts		
b. 6	Court Accounts <i>3 Folders</i>	1700-1740
b. 7	Court Accounts <i>12 Folders</i>	1741-1754
b. 8	Court Accounts	1755-1760
b. 8	Assize Accounts <i>2 Folders</i>	1738-1753
b. 8	Norwich Circuit Receipts <i>3 Folders</i>	1737-1744
b. 9	Court Procedures <i>7 Folders</i>	1700-1754, undated
b. 9	Lawyers' Bill for Services	1784

Series III: Political and Governmental Papers, 1700-1770*0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)*

Series III contains notes and papers documenting Sir William Lee's political activities and interests.. Many of the papers relate to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 and its aftermath. There are also two folders on prison conditions.

Documents are arranged by subject and then chronologically.

b. 9	Elections and Local Government <i>5 Folders</i>	1700-1754
b. 10	Elections and Local Government <i>4 Folders</i>	undated
b. 10	Parliamentary and Political <i>2 Folders</i>	1734-1745
b. 11	Parliamentary and Political <i>2 Folders</i>	1746-1754
b. 11	The "45"	1746-1750
b. 11	Felonies and Violence <i>7 Folders</i>	1700-1754, undated
b. 11	Prison Conditions <i>2 Folders</i>	1734-1745, undated
b. 11	Libel and Censorship	1736-1770

Series IV: Personal and Family Papers, 1588-1796*1.88 linear feet (5 boxes)*

Series IV, *Personal and Family Papers*, contains notes, legal documents, accounts, rental books, and other papers roughly sorted by subject. Many may be concerned with investments or holdings of the Lee family.

Documents are arranged by subject.

b. 12	Land <i>11 Folders</i>	1588-1754, undated
b. 13	Debt <i>13 Folders</i>	1700-1796, undated
b. 14	Commercial <i>8 Folders</i>	1734-1748, undated
b. 14	Maritime (including insurance) <i>6 Folders</i>	1732-1748, undated
b. 14	Inheritance <i>4 Folders</i>	1700-1733
b. 15	Inheritance <i>13 Folders</i>	1734-1796
b. 16	Inheritance <i>5 Folders</i>	undated

Series V: Notes on Reading and Other Papers, 1750, undated*0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)*

Series V consists almost entirely of notes in Sir William Lee's hand on various subjects; many appear to be summaries of the contents of books, pamphlets and cases. There are also a notebook containing a catalog of Lee's library and a folder of medicinal recipes in various hands.

Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.

b. 16

b. 17	Catalogue of library	1750
b. 17	History and Geography	undated
b. 17	Legal <i>4 Folders</i>	undated
b. 17	Literary	undated
b. 17	Medical and Scientific	undated
b. 17	Playing Cards and Architectural Drawing	undated
b. 17	Poetry	undated
b. 17	Political	undated
b. 17	Recipes	undated
b. 17	Religion and Philosophy	undated
b. 18	Religion and Philosophy <i>7 Folders</i>	undated

Series VI: Miscellaneous Legal Papers and Documents, 1700-1770

0.63 linear feet (2 boxes)

Contents include notes, legal documents including petitions and sentences, and other papers related to legal questions. The folder on "Marriage" primarily concerns the 1753 Marriage Act and its effects on clandestine marriages.

Arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material.

b. 18

b. 19	Colonial	1737-1770, undated
b. 19	Ecclesiastical Cases <i>2 Folders</i>	1743-1753, undated
b. 19	Marriage	1736-1753, undated
b. 19	Military	1742-1745, undated
b. 19	Social Problems	1737, undated
b. 20	Miscellaneous and unidentified <i>14 Folders</i>	1700-1754, undated

Series VII: Printed Materials, 1745-1814

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Pamphlets, broadsides, Parliamentary speeches and other ephemeral printed items.

Arranged in no particular order.

b. 21

Lee Printed
18 Folders

1745-1814

Series VIII: 2002 Addition (02.5.8), 1695-1776

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

The series contains financial and legal documents relating to the sale by Sir William Lee of the Fresh Wharf Estate on the River Thames in London.

Arranged in no particular order.

b. 22

Fresh Wharf Estate papers
5 Folders

1695-1776

Series IX: Oversize, 1602-1806*8.53 linear feet (6 boxes)*

This series contains oversize legal and financial documents, both manuscript and printed, including judgements, contracts, wills, pleadings, and writs.

Arranged in no particular order.

b. 23	1602-1704 <i>12 Folders</i>	1602-1704
b. 24	1708-1740 <i>33 Folders</i>	1708-1740
b. 25	1740-1752 <i>50 Folders</i>	1740-1752
b. 26	1753-1789, undated <i>30 Folders</i>	1753-1789, undated
b. 27	1708 <i>1 Folder</i>	1708
b. 28	1719-1806, undated <i>6 Folders</i>	1719-1806, undated

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

Administration of estates -- Great Britain
Austrian Succession, War of, 1740-1748
Families -- England -- Domestic relations
Farm tenancy -- Economic aspects -- Great Britain
Grand tours (Education)
Jacobite Rebellion, 1745-1746
Landlord and tenant -- Great Britain
Law -- Great Britain
Medicine -- Great Britain
Prisoners -- Great Britain
Private libraries -- England -- Catalogs

Geographic Names

Europe -- Description and travel
Great Britain -- History -- 1714-1837
Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 1714-1727
Great Britain -- Politics and government -- 1727-1760

Occupations

Judges -- Great Britain

Names

Bridgewater, Scroop Egerton, Duke of, 1681-1745
Drake, Roger, Sir
Hardwicke, Philip Yorke, Earl of, 1690-1764
Lee, William, 1729-1778
Lee, William, Sir, 1688-1754

Families

Lee family