

# Guide to the Backhouse and Mounsey Collection

MSS 13



YCBA Library Court. Photograph by Richard Caspole, YCBA, 2016.

compiled by Fiona Robinson; edited by Francis Lapka

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  
203-432-2814  
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**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: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0013>

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## 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 <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0013>.

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

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquired 2009, Paul Mellon Fund.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

The collection is the physical property of the Yale Center for British Art. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts.

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## Preferred Citation

Backhouse and Mounsey Collection, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund.

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## Related Material

Pease Family Collection of Sketchbooks and Exercise Books (MSS 6). Yale Center for British Art, Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts. (<http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0006>)

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## **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.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Albums

b. Vol. 1      Album of etchings, drawings, and lithographs by Edward Backhouse and others      1819-1856

*1 v. (76 leaves, with blanks); 36 cm*

Backhouse, Edward, 1808-1879, artist

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)

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- b. Vol. 2      Album of etchings, drawings, and lithographs belonging to Rachel Backhouse, of Pilmore Hall      1831-1848  
*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 Schlader, 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

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## Series II: Etchings and drawing book by Edward Backhouse Mounsey

b. 1, f. 1	<b>Cod fishing</b> <i>1 etching; 14 x 20 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Four copies.	1855
b. 1, f. 2	<b>Elephant attacked by a tiger</b> <i>1 etching; 12 x 17 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Six copies.	1854
b. 1, f. 3	<b>"Fly fishing, favorable wind, &amp; trout rising as fast as possible"</b> <i>1 etching; 17 x 23 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist 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	<b>Shipwreck</b> <i>1 etching; 17 x 23 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist One copy.	1854
b. 1, f. 5	<b>Lighthouse</b> <i>1 etching; 22 x 14 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Seven copies.	1854
b. 1, f. 6	<b>Castle and village</b> <i>1 etching; 13 x 20 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Five copies.	1855
b. 1, f. 7	<b>Shipwreck, or naval battle scene</b> <i>1 etching; 14 x 20 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Six copies.	1855
b. 1, f. 8	<b>Jericho</b> <i>1 etching; 14 x 20 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist One copy.	1855
b. 1, f. 9	<b>Ships wrecked on ice floes</b> <i>1 etching; 14 x 20 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Six copies.	1854
b. 1, f. 10	<b>A ship in arctic waters</b> <i>1 etching; 14 x 21 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911, artist Five copies.	1854



b. 1, f. 11	<b>A kayak in arctic waters</b> <i>1 etching ; 10 x 13 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 , artist Three copies.	1854
b. 1, f. 12	<b>A double-masted ship</b> <i>1 etching ; 6 x 10 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 , artist Three copies.	1854
b. 1, f. 13	<b>A ship aflame (?) on choppy waters</b> <i>1 etching ; 13 x 20 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 , artist Five copies.	1855
b. 1, f. 14	<b>A boat near shore</b> <i>1 graphite drawing ; 18 x 30 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 , artist	1847
b. 1, f. 15	<b>Drawing book</b> <i>16 leaves of graphite drawings ; 18 x 24 cm</i> Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911 , artist  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.	1852

**Series III: Copper plates by Thomas Mounsey**

b. 1, f. 16	Etched copper plate depicting a stately ivy-covered mansion <i>1 printing plate : copper ; 12 x 15 cm</i> Mounsey, Thomas, 1793-1850 , artist  Restricted fragile material. Use requires permission of the Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts.  Genres / Formats: Printing plates	1819
b. 1, f. 17	Etched copper plate depicting a lake within a hilly landscape <i>1 printing plate : copper ; 10 x 16 cm</i> Mounsey, Thomas, 1793-1850 , artist  Genres / Formats: Printing plates	1822

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## 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

### Contributors

Backhouse, Edward, 1808-1879  
Backhouse, Rachel, 1826-1898  
Mounsey, Edward Backhouse, 1840-1911  
Mounsey, Thomas, 1793-1850

### Genres / Formats

Botanical illustrations  
Children's art  
Etchings (prints)  
Graphite drawings  
Juvenilia  
Landscape drawings  
Lithographs  
Pen and ink drawings  
Printing plates  
Watercolors (paintings)

### 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