

Guide to the Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Collection

GEN MSS 839



by Beinecke Staff

February 2012

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	4
Immediate Source of Acquisition	4
Conditions Governing Access	4
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Processing Information	4
Robert Browning (1812-1889)	4
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)	5
Scope and Contents	5
General note	6
Arrangement	6
Collection Contents	7
Series I: Robert Browning Papers, 1835-1906	7
Series II: Elizabeth Barrett Browning Papers, 1838-1861	12
Selected Search Terms	14

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 839

CREATOR: Browning, Robert, 1812-1889

TITLE: Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning collection

DATES: 1835-1906 1850-1889

BULK DATES: 1850-1889

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.63 linear feet (7 boxes) + 1 broadside folder + 1 object storage item

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning collection is a mixed-provenance collection of material by and related to Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Series I, Robert Browning Papers, contains a few manuscripts by him, as well as many letters, most written after 1870. Recipients include Mrs. Bayne; Isabel Jane Blagden; Moncure Conway; Charles Deschamps; Frank Hill; William Charles Macready; Felix Moscheles, and William Wetmore Story. Letters to Browning include an extensive series of literary letters from J. D. Williams, as well as letters from Sophia Ann Landor and Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards. The series also contains a few photographs of the Brownings, and artwork and a commonplace book by Browning's father, Robert Browning (1781-1866). Series II, Elizabeth Barrett Browning Papers, contains manuscripts and correspondence. Manuscripts include autograph drafts of Casa Guidi Windows; Last Poems; Poems and Sonnets; and The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point. Correspondence includes letters to Hugh Stuart Boyd, Cornelius Mathews, Mary Russell Mitford and John Ruskin; the collection also contains letters from Harriet Martineau to Barrett Browning (housed in a scrapbook in Box 8).

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

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.brownings>.

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

Acquired by gift and purchase from various sources between 1932 and 1991, as noted on individual folders or on the catalog cards included with the collection.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Collection 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

Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

The Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Collection is comprised of material formerly classed as MS Vault Shelves Browning, Uncat MS Vault File Browning Elizabeth, Uncat MS Vault File Browning, Robert, Uncat MS Vault 27, Uncat MS Vault 53, Uncat MS Vault 686, and Uncat MSS 544.

This collection received a basic level of processing, including rehousing, in 2012.

The finding aid for this collection is largely compiled from individual catalog cards for each acquisition that were created at or around the time of receipt by the library. Information from the catalog cards was repurposed in the finding aid in accordance with current archival descriptive standards. Some catalog cards, filed with the collection, include more detailed descriptions of individual items and/or provenance notes. Descriptions for items not represented by catalog cards were derived from accession records, folder labels, or other available descriptive material. Some items are accompanied by transcripts or other explanatory material; this is not generally noted in the finding aid.

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Robert Browning, one of the most influential Victorian poets, was born into an Evangelical family in Camberwell in South London. Educated largely at home, Browning as a young man read and traveled widely. His father subsidized his first, relatively unsuccessful publications, including several plays and the much-ridiculed long poem *Sordello* (1840).

In 1845 he met the more successful and popular poet Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861); they eloped in September, 1846 and moved to Italy, where they spent the next fifteen years, mainly in Florence and Asolo. Browning published *Men and Women*, the collection of dramatic monologues that are now among his best-known works, in 1855. Following his wife's death in Florence in 1861, Browning returned to London and became a member of London's literary circles. *Dramatis Personae* appeared in 1864. Four years later, *The*

Ring and the Book, Browning's longest and most ambitious work, was published, and was both very popular and critically acclaimed.

In his later years, Browning traveled often, returning to Italy for several visits with his son "Pen" (Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning). "Browning Societies," reading groups that met to discuss and promote Browning's works and philosophy, were founded throughout England and the United States during the 1880s. Robert Browning died at his son's home, Ca' Rezzonico in Venice, on December 12, 1889.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, popular Victorian poet, was born in England to prosperous landowning parents and spent most of her childhood and adolescence at Hope End, the family's 500-acre estate in Herefordshire. Educated at home, Barrett began writing poetry when very young and continued to write despite frequent ill-health, publishing three collections in the 1830s as well as popular Abolitionist poems, including *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*.

After she moved with her family to London in 1838, Elizabeth was introduced to several literary figures, including Mary Russell Mitford, who became a close friend and mentor. Her health worsened, however, and by 1841 she was mostly confined to her upstairs room at 50 Wimpole Street. Her 1842 poem *The Cry of the Children* raised support for one of the first child labor laws; her collection of *Poems*, which appeared two years later, was a great popular and critical success.

It was also the occasion of her meeting Robert Browning, who sent her an admiring letter; the two met in 1845, and carried on a year-long courtship before eloping in September, 1846. During this time, she wrote the now-famous *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. On hearing of her marriage, her father disinherited her, and the two never spoke again. The Brownings moved to Italy shortly after their honeymoon, settling in Florence. There, Elizabeth's health improved, and in 1849 she gave birth to the couple's only child, Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning ("Pen").

Browning continued to write and to publish. In addition to several collections of poems, in 1851 she published *Casa Guidi Windows*, a longer poem which expressed her passionate support for the Italian Risorgimento. *Aurora Leigh*, her "novel-poem" narrating the emotional and intellectual development of a woman poet, was published in 1856. It was extremely popular; nineteen editions appeared before 1885, and it was admired by many contemporaries, including George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, and Susan B. Anthony, for its outspokenness on the condition of women and the sexual "double standard."

Elizabeth's health failed rapidly after 1857. Her last publication, *Poems Before Congress* (1860), again expressed her support for the Italian revolutionaries and criticized the British for not coming to their aid. It was not well received in England. Elizabeth Barrett Browning died in Casa Guidi, Florence, on June 29, 1861. Her posthumous *Last Poems* were published by Robert Browning in 1862.

Scope and Contents

The Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Collection is a mixed-provenance collection of material by and related to Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Series I, Robert Browning Papers, contains a few manuscripts by him, as well as many letters, most written after the death of Elizabeth. Recipients include Mrs. Bayne; Isabel Jane Blagden; Moncure Conway; Charles Deschamps; Frank Hill; William Charles Macready; Felix Moscheles, and William Wetmore Story. Letters to Browning include an extensive series of literary letters from J. D. Williams, as well as letters from Sophia Ann Landor and Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards. The series also contains a few photographs of the Brownings, and artwork and a commonplace book by Browning's father, Robert Browning (1781-1866).

Series II, Elizabeth Barrett Browning Papers, contains manuscripts and correspondence. Manuscripts include autograph drafts of *Casa Guidi Windows*; *Last Poems*; *Poems and Sonnets*; and *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*. Correspondence includes letters to Hugh Stuart Boyd, Cornelius Mathews, Mary Russell Mitford and John Ruskin; the collection also contains letters from Harriet Martineau to Barrett Browning (housed in an album in Box 8).

General note

Many items in elaborate late nineteenth and early twentieth century collectors' bindings.

Arrangement

Organized into two series: I. Robert Browning Papers, 1835-1906. II. Elizabeth Barrett Browning Papers, 1838-1861.

Collection Contents

Series I: Robert Browning Papers, 1835-1906

2.79 linear feet (5 boxes)

Contents include a manuscript copy of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* annotated by Browning and the actor William Macready, and letters to numerous correspondents, including Isabel Jane Blagden, Frank Hill, Felix Moscheles, George Smith, and William Wetmore Story. The letter albums contain letters from Browning to Charles Deschamps, William Macready, Elizabeth Clementine Dodge Kinney, and George Knox Gillespie. Letters by other correspondents include an extensive series of literary letters from J. D. Williams, as well as letters to Browning from Sophia Ann Landor and Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards. (The albums also contain letters to and from Elizabeth Barrett Browning.)

Other Material includes a number of autographs; pictorial material; a commonplace book and drawings by Robert Browning's father, Robert Browning (1781-1866); and Browning's stationery case.

Organized into five subseries: *Catalog Cards*, containing copies of the catalog cards for many items in the series; *Manuscripts*, alphabetically arranged. *Letters by Robert Browning* is alphabetically arranged by recipient, followed by letter books and albums containing multiple letters by and to both Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. These are followed by *Letters by Others*, alphabetically arranged by correspondent; and *Other Material*, which is unarranged.

b. 1	Catalog Cards	
b. 1	Catalog cards 2 Folders	undated
	Manuscripts	
b. 1	<i>A Blot in the 'Scutcheon</i> : manuscript copy by Sarianna Browning, annotated by Robert Browning and William Macready	1842, 1884
b. 1	<i>Paracelsus</i> : Browning's copy of the first edition (1835), with extensive annotations by him in preparation for the 1849 edition Tinker 408	1835, undated
b. 1	<i>Wagner gave six concerts</i> : autograph manuscript, signed, of a four-line stanza	1877 May 21
	Letters by Robert Browning	
b. 2	Letter: to William Allingham Accompanied by a note from Elizabeth Barrett Browning	1858 November 8
b. 2	Letter: to Madame Belloc	1881 March 18
b. 2	Letter: in the third person to Messrs. Bimell and Son	1886 March 3
b. 2	Letters: to Isabel Jane Blagden... 3 Folders	1859-1868, undated
b. 2	Letter: to Gerald Blunt...	1881 March 16
b. 2	Letter: to Robert ("Pen") Browning	1871 October 17

Letters by Robert Browning (continued)

b. 2	Letters: to Moncure Conway <i>2 Folders</i>	1868, undated
b. 2	Letter: to John W. Field	1881 December 20
b. 2	Letter: to Frederick Gard Fleay	1887 July 20
b. 2	Letters: to Charles S. Francis	1856-1860
b. 2	Letter: to Frederick J. Furnivall Accompanied by two envelopes.	1885 November 17
b. 2	Letter: to Alexander B. Grosart	1875 February 24
b. 2	Letter: to Miss Haworth	[1844?]
b. 2	Letter: to Miss Haworth	1847 June 29
b. 2	Letter: to Emily Hickey	1883 July 20
b. 2	Letters: to Emily Hickey	1887
b. 2	Letters: to Frank Hill Concerning the 1843 production of <i>A Blot on the 'Scutcheon</i> . Accompanied by letters to Mrs. Frank Hill, 1885 March and 1885 April.	1884-1885
b. 2	Letter: to George Stillman Hillard	1875 March 1
b. 2	Letter: to John Edwin Howard Accompanied by a copy of Howard's marriage certificate, 1890; his death certificate, 1897 June 28, and a printed obituary	1884 February 1
b. 2	Letter: to Anna Brownell Murphy Jameson	1847 April 1
b. 2	Letter: to Mr. Kingsland	1877 November 10
b. 2	Letter: to Charles Kingsley Accompanied by photograph of Browning inscribed to Kingsley, 1867.	1867 July 13
b. 2	Letter: to Mrs. Kinney	1871 January 6
b. 2	Letters: to the Reverend Robert E. Landor	1864
b. 2	Letter: to Miss Lewis	1886 November 16
b. 2	Letter: to Mrs. Lewis	1876 May 9
b. 2	Letter: to Mrs. Lippincott	1875 June 28
b. 2	Letters: to Lady Cecil Chetwynd-Talbot, Marchioness of Lothian	1867
b. 2	Letter: to Samuel Lucas	1860 January 17
b. 2	Letter: to William Charles Macready	1837 June 15

Letters by Robert Browning (continued)

b. 2	Letter: to Mrs. Matthews	1863 April 22
b. 2	Letters: to Felix Moscheles Volume containing six letters on the subjects of art and literature, with a copy of a poem by Anacreon in Browning's hand, and a translation by him.	1867-1889
b. 2	Letter: to Felix Moscheles Contains Browning's translation of Horace, <i>Sermones</i> l.2.11 Accompanied by a facsimile of the letter.	1887 November 30
b. 2	Letter: to Lord Mount-Temple Accompanied by small pen-and-ink sketch.	1887 April 2
b. 2	Letter: to Dante Gabriel Rossetti	1855 October 23
b. 2	Letter: to John Ruskin	1856 October 3
b. 2	Letter: to Richard Herne Shepherd	1867 February 1
b. 2	Letters: to George Smith Concerning the legal aspects of <i>Red Cotton Night-Cap Country</i> . Accompanied by a letter from John Duke Cambridge to Browning, annotated by Browning, 1873 March 26; and the manuscript of the <i>Advertisement</i> to the poem.	1873
b. 2	Letter: to Gordon Smith	1877 January 16
b. 2	Letters: to Edith Story <i>2 Folders</i> Includes one letter signed by "Pen" Browning.	1865, 1872
b. 3	Letter: to Mrs. William Story	undated
b. 3	Letters: to William Wetmore Story	1861-1864, 1884
b. 3	Letter: to Mrs. Ward	1887 November 30
b. 3	Letters: to Helen Zimmern	1876-1882
b. 3	Letter: to "Sir John"	1863 May 21
b. 3	Letter: to "Powell"	undated
b. 3	Letter: to an unidentified recipient	1875 June 16
b. 3	Letter: to an unidentified recipient	1880 December 18
b. 3	Letter: to an unidentified recipient	1885 April 5
b. 3	Letter: to an unidentified recipient	undated

Letters by Robert Browning (continued)

b. 3	Album of letters by Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Contents include 17 letters from Robert Browning to Mrs. Bayne; 9 letters from Robert Browning to Charles Deschamps; 5 letters from Robert Browning to William Charles Macready; and 2 letters by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The album also includes portraits of both Brownings and of several recipients.	1835-1889, undated
b. 3	Autograph Letters of Elizabeth B. Barrett and Robert Browning Contents include 3 letters from Robert Browning to Elizabeth Clementine Dodge Kinney, and 4 letters from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her; single letters from Robert Browning to George Knox Gillespie and Thomas Hutchinson; and a letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Sophia Cotterell. The album also includes portraits of both Brownings.	1844-1889, undated
b. 4	<i>T.B.I.Y.T.B--The Pundits to William Lyon Phelps, June 18, 1933</i> Case containing 13 autograph letters by Robert Browning, including letters to Isa Blagden, Miss Hickey, and William Charles Macready; an autograph excerpt from <i>The Founder of the Feast</i> ; and 2 letters and a fragment by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.	1841-1889, undated

Letters by Others

	<i>Autographs. Browning. Correspondence</i> Stored in: Oversize, Box 8 Large album containing letters to Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Contents include 61 letters and 11 autograph manuscripts sent by J. D. Williams to Robert Browning; 9 letters from Elizabeth Sophia Landor to Robert Browning; 9 letters from Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards to Robert Browning; 7 letters from the Earl of Carnarvon to Robert Browning; and 11 Harriet Martineau letters sent to Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1844 and 1845. In addition, the album contains many single letters addressed to Robert Browning; portraits, photographs and illustrations; biographical sketches and other descriptive material; and an auction catalog. For complete information, consult the card set that accompanies the volume.	1844-1889, undated
b. 4	Letter: Browning, Fannie Barrett to Miss Harris	undated
b. 4	Letters: Browning, Robert Wiedemann to William Lyon Phelps	1904, 1906
b. 4	Letters: Browning, Sarianna to Miss Harris	1894
b. 4	Letters: Paul, Charles Kegan to Robert Browning	1883

Other Material

b. 4	Autograph address book kept by Robert Browning	undated
b. 4	Autograph inscription in Greek from Plato's <i>Republic</i>	undated
b. 4	Autographs, clipped from letters	undated
b. 4	Autographs of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning Daggett autograph collection	1861

Other Material (continued)

b. 4	Corrections and notes in Browning's hand in Thomas Powell's <i>A Dream of Arcady</i>	1848
b. 4	Portraits, photographs, and caricatures of Robert Browning Accompanied by a photograph of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and a photograph of a room in Casa Guidi.	undated
b. 4	Views of Camberwell and Hatcham See also: Broadside folder, 9	undated
b. 4	Browning, Robert, 1781-1866: commonplace book	undated
b. 4	Browning, Robert, 1781-1866: original drawing with note	undated
b. 4	Browning, Robert, 1781-1866: collection of 50 pen, pencil and ink sketches	undated
b. 5 Object storage	Browning, Robert: wooden stationery case containing blank stationery printed with Browning's address: 29, DeVere Gardens, W.	undated

Series II: Elizabeth Barrett Browning Papers, 1838-1861*0.83 linear feet (2 boxes)*

Contents include autograph drafts of *Casa Guidi Windows*, *Last Poems*, and *Poems and Sonnets*; as well as letters to Hugh Stuart Boyd, Thomas Carlyle, Cornelius Mathews, and John Ruskin. Other letters by and to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, including letters to Clementine Dodge Kinney and letters from Harriet Martineau, are located in the letter albums in Boxes 3 and 8 of this collection.

Organized into three subseries: *Catalog Cards*, containing copies of the catalog cards for many items in the series; *Manuscripts*, alphabetically arranged; and *Letters by Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, alphabetically arranged by recipient.

Catalog Cards		
b. 6	Catalog cards	undated
Manuscripts		
b. 6	<i>Carlyle</i> : autograph manuscript by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and H. H. Horne	undated
b. 6	<i>Casa Guidi Windows, Part I</i> : autograph manuscript This draft is titled <i>A Meditation in Tuscany</i> .	1850-1851
b. 6	<i>Casa Guidi Windows, Part II</i> : autograph manuscript This draft is titled <i>Casa Guidi Windows, second Part</i> .	1850-1851
b. 6	<i>Last Poems</i> : autograph manuscript Accompanied by typed list of contents.	1850-1861
b. 6	<i>Loved Once</i> : autograph manuscript	[1844?]
b. 6	Notebook containing drafts of poems and paraphrases in the hand of Elizabeth Barrett Browning Accompanied by typed list of contents.	1849-1861
b. 6	Poems and Sonnets: autograph manuscripts Accompanied by typed list of contents.	1838-1850
b. 6	<i>The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point</i> : autograph manuscript	1846-1847
b. 7	<i>A Sabbath on the Sea</i> : autograph manuscript, signed	[1845?]
b. 7	<i>Stanzas Addressed to Miss Landon, Suggested by Her Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans</i> : autograph manuscript, signed with initials and addressed to Leticia Elizabeth Landon ("L.E.L.")	1835 November 7
Letters by Elizabeth Barrett Browning		
b. 7	Letter: extract, in another hand, to Isabella Jane Blagden	undated
b. 7	Letter: to Hugh Stuart Boyd Lengthy letter on subjects including the idea for <i>A Dream of Exile</i> ; Ossian; and animal magnetism. Bound with a portrait of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and a lock of her hair.	1843 December 12
b. 7	Letter: to Hugh Stuart Boyd	undated

Letters by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (continued)

b. 7	Letter: to Madame Braun	[1860]
b. 7	Letters: to Thomas Carlyle	1844 August
b. 7	Letter: to R. H. Horne	1843 July 13
b. 7	Letter: to Anna Brownell Jameson Tinker 396.	undated
b. 7	Letters: to James Jackson Jarves Accompanied by a carte de visite of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her son ("Pen").	1856-1857, undated
b. 7	Letter: to John Kenyon	[before 1845]
b. 7	Letter: to Cornelius Mathews Lengthy letter mentioning her correspondence with Robert Browning; Thomas Hood's illness; and Harriet Martineau and Miss Mitford.	1845 April 30
b. 7	Letter: to Mary Russell Mitford	[1851] September 24
b. 7	Letter: to John Ruskin	[1859?] May 1
b. 7	Letter: in the third person, to Messrs. Saunders and Oakley	undated
b. 7	Letter: in French, to an unidentified recipient	undated
b. 7	Letter: fragment, signed	undated
Oversize		
b. 8 Oversize	Autographs. Browning. Correspondence	1844-1889, undated
b. 9 Broadside folder	View of Camberwell and caricature of Robert Browning	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

Authors, English -- 19th century -- Archives
English drama -- 19th century
English literature -- 19th century
English poetry -- 19th century
Women authors

Genres / Formats

Bindings (gathered matter components) -- 19th century
Bindings (gathered matter components) -- 20th Century
Commonplace books -- Great Britain -- 19th century
Drawings (visual works) -- Great Britain -- 19th century
Scrapbooks -- Great Britain -- 19th century

Names

Blagden, Isa, 1816-1873
Boyd, Hugh Stuart, 1781-1848
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 1806-1861
Browning, Robert, 1812-1889
Conway, Moncure Daniel, 1832-1907
Deschamps, Charles William, 1848-1908
Edwards, Amelia B., 1831-1892
Hill, Frank Harrison, 1830-1910
Landor, Sophia Ann
Macready, William Charles, 1793-1873
Martineau, Harriet, 1802-1876
Mathews, Cornelius, 1817-1889
Mitford, Mary Russell, 1787-1855
Moscheles, Felix, 1833-1917
Ruskin, John, 1819-1900
Story, William Wetmore, 1819-1895
Williams, J. D., Rev.

Contributors

Browning, Robert, 1812-1889
Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 1806-1861