

Mary Leighton Collection

MSS 16



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compiled by Elizabeth Athens; edited by Francis Lapka

2013

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	3
Requesting Instructions	3
Administrative Information	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition	3
Conditions Governing Access	3
Conditions Governing Use	4
Preferred Citation	4
Biographical / Historical	4
Scope and Contents	5
Bibliography	5
Arrangement	6
Collection Contents	7
Selected Search Terms	13

Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Center for British Art, Rare Books and Manuscripts
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CALL NUMBER: MSS 16

CREATOR: Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864

TITLE: Mary Leighton Collection

DATES: 1824-1860

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection comprises ten original sketchbooks, albums, and scrapbooks compiled by Mary Leighton and her children, 1824-1860.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0016>

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.0016>.

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

b. box

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquired 2011, Paul Mellon Fund.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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.

Preferred Citation

Mary Leighton Collection, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund.

Biographical / Historical

Mary Leighton, née Parker, 1799–1864: Third child of Thomas Netherton Parker (1771–1848) and his wife, Sarah. Her parents must have encouraged their children's creative pursuits, as Mary and her elder brother John both became accomplished amateur artists. Their family was close friends of the Ladies of Llangollen, Eleanor Charlotte Barker (1739–1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1832), two upper-class Irish women who fled their families and established a home together in North Wales, at Plas Newydd, only fifteen miles from the Parker family estate, Sweeney Hall. Correspondence between Sarah Parker and Sarah Ponsonby, currently in the Denbighshire Record Office archives, reveals that Mary occasionally sent the ladies her drawings, many of which record the grounds of Plas Newydd and the surrounding countryside. The subjects of Mary's drawings also include prominent Grand Tour sites, satirical treatments of contemporary fashions, and thoughtful portraits of friends and family. Notably, the only portrait from life of the Ladies of Llangollen is by Mary's hand.

Mary remained an active amateur artist following her 1832 marriage to Baldwin Leighton, 7th Baronet (1805–1871), of Loton Hall. Together they had six children, whom Mary actively encouraged in drawing and painting. The work of five of their children is represented in this archive.

Reverend John Parker, 1798–1860: Elder brother of Mary Leighton. He served as rector of Llanmerewig, Montgomeryshire, and, later, as vicar of Llanyblodwel, Shropshire. Although a clergyman, John was drawn to the history of North Wales and Shropshire, and he dedicated himself to documenting its architecture and landscape, both in image and verse. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians, John blended his antiquarian and religious interests in his drawings of Welsh rood screens and fonts, and in his alterations and restorations of the churches at Llanmerewig and Llanyblodwel. He further paid tribute to the architectural and natural wonders of North Wales in his book of poetry *The Passengers, Containing the Celtic Annals* (1831). Mary illustrated one of his poems with watercolors made after his drawings; this folio is now in the National Library of Wales.

Baldwyn Leighton, 8th Baronet, 1836–1914: Eldest son of Mary Leighton. Baldwyn became a Conservative Party politician yet retained a liberal bent, as evidenced by his tracts and speeches relating to depauperization, as well as his editorial work on a volume of letters and writings by philanthropist and Liberal Party politician, Edward Denison (1840–1870). Although he seems not to have shared the abiding antiquarian interests of other members of his family, he sketched regularly—albeit clumsily—throughout his youth. Many of his drawings were copies after illustrations, while others captured the swirl of social engagements during his early adulthood. Baldwyn shared his mother's keen eye for the ridiculous, and his drawings of friends and acquaintances, including of his future wife, Eleanor Warren (1841–1914), often have a comedic tone.

Stanley Leighton, 1837–1901: Second son of Mary Leighton. As a Conservative Party politician, he served as M.P. of North Shropshire from 1876 until his death in 1901. He seemed less inclined toward politics than toward art and antiquarianism, and he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians in 1880. Stanley also served as the Vice-President of the Shropshire Archaeological Society and published essays in its *Transactions*. He was deeply committed to recording the history and architecture of Shropshire, a commitment demonstrated by his book, *Shropshire Houses Past & Present* (1901), which he both wrote and

illustrated. Stanley died shortly before the book was printed, and his wife, Jessie (née Williams-Wynn, d. 1939), provided the book's postscript.

Frances Christina Leighton, d. 1930 Eldest daughter of Mary Leighton. Frances inherited her mother's aptitude as an artist, and her drawings reveal an easy facility with watercolor. In 1862 she married Reverend Edward George Baldwin Childe (1818–1898), heir to Kyre Park, Worcestershire. Frances shared the antiquarian interests of her mother, uncle, and brother Stanley, and she edited or otherwise aided in the publication of registers and local histories of Shropshire and Worcestershire. Perhaps the best known of these publications is *The Kyre Park Charters* (Oxford, 1905), which offers a detailed history of the estate and the parishes of which it was part.

Isabella Leighton, d. 1911: Second daughter of Mary Leighton. In 1857 Isabella married the much older Conservative Party politician Beriah Botfield (1807–1863), whose fortune came from his family's foundry and coalmines. He was a devoted art collector and bibliophile, even installing a printing press at his home, Norton Hall, in Northamptonshire. Isabella later married Liberal Party politician Alfred Seymour (1824–1888).

Charlotte Leighton, d. 1928: Third daughter of Mary Leighton. Charlotte married late in life to William Henry Adelbert Feilding (1836–1895), after whom the city of Feilding, North Island, New Zealand, is named. As a Director of the Emigrants' and Colonists' Aid Corporation, William oversaw the acquisition of land on which the original colony developed. Due to his work in emigration policy William traveled widely, as did Charlotte after their marriage, and her diary of an 1895 trip to Canada, New Zealand, and Singapore is in the UK National Archives. It was on this trip that William fell ill with cholera and died in Bangkok, where he was buried. Following his death, Charlotte compiled William's memoirs, maintained a commonplace book of the Feilding family, and shepherded his posthumous reputation.

Scope and Contents

The collection comprises ten original sketchbooks, albums, and scrapbooks compiled by Mary Leighton (1799–1864) and her children. They cover the period 1824–1860, and were intended for private, family use. The materials provide a compelling example of the role of drawing and album-keeping in Victorian England. More than simple pastimes, these activities helped families such as the Leightons to locate themselves in the social order. The drawings contained in these ten sketchbooks and scrapbooks often portray the estates of acquaintances, picturesque landscapes, and portraits that—along with the maps, prints, and other materials in the volumes—track the family's circulation in society. Through the drawings and ephemera they created and preserved, Mary and her children placed themselves within a well-educated and well-traveled social network that spread far beyond the borders of their native Shropshire.

These materials sketch not only a social identity but also help construct a national one. Their depictions of the Welsh countryside, for example, may appear as pure paeans to the sublimity of the landscape, yet they also suggest the importance of Wales to a broader British identity. In his book *The Passengers*, Mary's brother John Parker laments Wales' long-lost independence while arguing that "the only fair prospect for Wales . . . is a closer, more intimate union with England" (47). Mary's drawings of the Menai and Conway suspension bridges, which facilitated tourism and commerce in Wales, may be understood as promoting such a view. So may her sons' drawings of such historical figures as Llewellyn and William Wallace, who are perhaps included in the scrapbooks not so much as Celtic leaders, but as British heroes.

The volumes' construction of identity reflects a fascinating intersection of the public with the domestic, revealing the family's interests in, and relation to, the broader world through this personal and private medium. References to contemporary and historical political events jostle with tender or comic depictions of family and friends; illustrations from published books and periodicals are transformed into children's drawing exercises. Together these materials trace the boundary between the public and domestic realms in the first half of the nineteenth century, while at the same time conveying its permeability.

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged chronologically.

Collection Contents

- b. Vol. 1 **Sketchbook** 1824
1 volume (approximately 30 drawings); 15 x 24 cm. Bound in contemporary red half roan and gray boards.
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864
- Inscribed "Mary Parker / Sweeney at Oswestry— / 1824" on front pastedown. The sketchbook contains graphite and watercolor sketches of scenes in the vicinity of her family's home, Sweeney Hall, in Oswestry, Shropshire, on the border of Wales. It also includes sketches of picturesque sites from North Wales, such as the Llyn Peninsula and the countryside about Conwy. Mary displays a marked interest in Gothic architecture, as well as in recent technological developments, seen in her sketches of the Conwy Suspension Bridge and of the construction of the Menai Bridge at Anglesey. The two structures, both designed by Thomas Telford (1757–1834) and completed in 1826, were among the first suspension bridges in the world.
- Subjects:
Suspension bridges
- Geographic Names:
Oswestry (England)
Wales, North
- Genres / Formats:
Graphite drawings
Sketchbooks
Watercolors (paintings)
-
- b. Vol. 2 **Album** 1827
1 volume (approximately 220 drawings); 32 x 25 cm. Bound in contemporary half roan and marbled boards.
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864, artist
- Inscribed "Drawings by Mary Parker Lady Leighton" on front pastedown. Leighton made the album during an extensive tour of the Rhineland, Switzerland, and northern Italy, in the company of her mother and brother. The journal and drawings of the tour by her brother, John Parker, are at the National Library, Aberystwyth. See: Parry, Edward, "The Revd John Parker: 'a warm partizan of Gothic art'", *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, vol. 64, (2020), pp. 90-114.
- The album contains graphite and watercolor sketches of scenes in Wales and Switzerland. Welsh scenes include pencil drawings of a bow-meeting at Hawarden Castle and of the Erbistock Rectory, both in North Wales. Swiss scenes focus on such popular tourist destinations as Lake Morat, Lake Thun, the Upper Grinewald Glacier, and the Drachenfels. Most of her Swiss sketches are in watercolor over graphite, with two unfinished drawings including notations that describe the scenes' missing colors and light effects. The scrapbook also includes sketches of domestic scenes; character studies; portraits, including one of her mother reading; copies after Old Masters; and drawings of architectural ornament. These last reflect a shared interest with her elder brother, John Parker, a clergyman and antiquarian.
- Genres / Formats:
Graphite drawings
Pen and ink drawings
Portraits

Watercolors (paintings)

Subjects:

Decoration and ornament

Geographic Names:

Switzerland
Wales, North

Names:

Parker, John, 1798-1860

b. Vol. 3

Album

circa 1826-1829

1 volume (approximately 90 drawings, 102 prints, 1 pressed and mounted insect); 27 x 21 cm. Bound in contemporary half roan and marbled boards.

Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864, artist

Contains numerous caricatures in pen-and-ink and watercolor; many of these satirize contemporary women's fashion. Mary's comic drawings are interspersed with landscapes, copies after Old Masters, and prints clipped from various sources. Among these are twenty-three lithographs from Keller and Füssli's *Collection des costumes de la Suisse* (Zurich, n.d.); seven illustrations from an unidentified volume of natural history; satirical prints; an article on the construction of the Thames Tunnel, dated 1 July 1828; and bust portraits of contemporary figures. These include the Archbishop of Canterbury Reverend Charles Manners-Sutton (1755-1828), Irish lawyer Daniel O'Donnell (1775-1845), and journalist William Cobbett (1763-1835), suggesting that Mary may have followed developments leading to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. The final images in the scrapbook—pages taken from what appears to be a children's book that cast Catholicism in pejorative terms—underscores Mary's attention to matters both political and ecclesiastical.

Genres / Formats:

Caricatures
Engravings (prints)
Graphite drawings
Pen and ink drawings
Watercolors (paintings)

Subjects:

Catholic emancipation
Catholics -- Great Britain
Clothing and dress
Fashion -- Great Britain

b. Vol. 4

Album

circa 1826-1854

1 volume (approximately 90 drawings, 2 prints, 3 travel passes); 28 x 23 cm. Bound in contemporary red half roan and marbled boards.

Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864, artist

Parker, John, 1798-1860, artist

Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930, artist

Inscribed at front: "Mary Parker, 1829." Album reveals Mary's ongoing interest in comic scenes, picturesque views, and fine art. It includes drawings from key tourist sites, such as Northern Italy's Lago Maggiore and Switzerland's Lake Lucerne, as well as a series of copies after works in the British Museum. These drawings occasionally identify the collection from which the artworks come; many are from the bequests of Reverend Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode (1730-1799) and Richard Payne Knight (1751-1824). Her copies include drawings after

artworks by such figures as Ludolf Backhuysen, Jan van der Meer, Carlo Maratti, and Giuseppe Cesari d'Arpino, among others. In addition to drawings and copies in her own hand, she includes two etchings of ecclesiastical ornament and a graphite drawing by her brother, John Parker. Though the scrapbook focuses on her life before marriage, it also features a watercolor sketch of Halston Chapel in Shropshire by her daughter, Frances.

Genres / Formats:

Graphite drawings
Pen and ink drawings
Watercolors (paintings)

Geographic Names:

Italy -- Pictorial works
Switzerland -- Pictorial works

Names:

Cracherode, Clayton Mordaunt, 1730-1799
Knight, Richard Payne, 1751-1824

b. Vol. 5

Album

circa 1846-1853

1 volume (approximately 60 drawings; 1 annotated map); 36.5 x 23 cm. Bound in contemporary half roan and marbled boards.

Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864
Leighton, Stanley, 1837-1901
Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897

Bound by Shrewsbury bookseller R. Davies, the scrapbook features drawings primarily by Baldwyn and Stanley. These provide a clear sense of how Mary guided her children in art instruction, encouraging them to copy from illustrations. Though the original sources for the drawings are unclear, the family must have had in its possession at least one illustrated copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*, from which Baldwyn drew two scenes. Stanley seems to have been interested as well in social types, as evidenced by a series of drawings that portray, among others, a dandy, a sailor, and third-class passengers. Drawings from life include Baldwyn's portraits of the Cuthbert children, Frances's drawing of the cupola of St. George's, and an unattributed watercolor of ice skaters and men engaged in the winter sport of curling. Folded into the scrapbook is also a map of Scotland, with a detailed itinerary of Mary and her husband's August 1846 tour.

Genres / Formats:

Children's art
Graphite drawings
Portraits
Watercolors (paintings)

Geographic Names:

Scotland -- Pictorial works

Subjects:

Drawing -- Study and teaching

b. Vol. 6

Album

1825-1851

1 volume (55 drawings; 1 pressed and mounted flower); 29.5 x 24.5 cm. Bound in contemporary red half roan and marbled boards.

Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897
Leighton, Stanley, 1837-1901

Leighton, Isabella, d. 1911
Leighton, Charlotte, d. 1928
Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864

Inscribed at front: "Baldwin Leighton, Loton Park, Shrewsbury, Augst. 1846"; but whether this is Mary's husband or son is uncertain. Though the younger Leighton took the spelling "Baldwyn" in contrast to his father's "Baldwin," in his youth he seems to have alternated between the two. The scrapbook again reveals the children's practice of copying from book and journal illustrations to develop their skills. Included among the drawings are Baldwyn's awkward copy of the engraving "General Tom Thumb Got up as Frederick the Great," published in an 1845 issue of *The Illustrated London News*; Frances's adept reproduction of David Wilkie's *The Enthusiast*, drawn from *The Wilkie Gallery* (London, 1848-50); and Isabella's drawing after a print of George Stubbs's *Mambrino* (1794).

Genres / Formats:

Children's art
Graphite drawings
Pen and ink drawings
Watercolors (paintings)

Subjects:

Drawing -- Study and teaching

b. Vol. 7

Album

circa 1847-1852

1 volume (approximately 50 drawings; 1 silhouette) ; ; 23 x 19 cm. Bound in contemporary half roan and marbled boards.

Leighton, Stanley, 1837-1901
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864
Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930
Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897
Leighton, Isabella, d. 1911
Leighton, Charlotte, d. 1928

Inscribed "Mary Leighton / Scraps from her Children / Loton Park 1847-50" on front pastedown. Drawings by Baldwyn, Stanley, and Frances comprise much of the scrapbook, with only a few additions by Charlotte and Isabella. There is also a loose silhouette interleaved among the pages, captioned "Eton 1852," which portrays Baldwyn during his study there. Drawings by Baldwyn and Stanley focus on notable battles and include figures from contemporary campaigns—such as soldiers from the Anglo-Sikh Wars—as well as historical ones waged by Sir William Wallace and Jack Cade. Frances's drawings possess a more delicate sensibility, often depicting romanticized views of peasant life. Among them is her 1850 graphite and watercolor drawing of a flower-seller, inscribed with a passage from Carlo Pepoli's *La pastorella dell'Alpi*, which was set to music by Gioachino Rossini in 1835. In view of errors in the Italian, the passage was likely written from memory.

Subjects:

Battles -- Pictorial works
Peasants -- Pictorial works

Genres / Formats:

Children's art
Graphite drawings
Watercolors (paintings)

b. Vol. 8

Album

circa 1850?

1 volume (55 prints, journal illustrations, and business cards; 7 drawings; 1 embossed Royal Coat of Arms); 24 x 19 cm.

Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897

Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864

Scrapbook features prints clipped from various sources; several business cards from shops in London, Florence, and Chiavenna; and a small group of drawings by Mary and Baldwyn. The collection of prints is peculiar in its range of subjects: among portraits, picturesque scenes, and fine-art reproductions, there are several newspaper engravings that suggest especially lurid stories. The most notable include the beheading of a prisoner—an undated journal illustration, likely for a report on the First Opium War—and an image of two men fishing a body from a pond, published in *The Morning Chronicle* and *The Observer* in November 1823. The engraving illustrated an article reporting the sensational murder that year of William Weare, who was killed by a gambling acquaintance. The case gained notoriety for the gruesome circumstances surrounding his death.

Genres / Formats:

- Clippings
- Engravings (prints)
- Graphite drawings
- Portraits
- Scrapbooks
- Trade cards
- Watercolors (paintings)

b. Vol. 9

Sketchbook

circa 1854-1859

1 volume (75 drawings, 2 poems); 29 x 25 cm.

Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897

Sketchbook features drawings from Baldwyn Leighton's social engagements in Cheshire at Arley Hall, estate of Rowland Eyles Egerton-Warburton (1804–1891), and Tabley Hall, estate of George Fleming Warren, 2nd Baron De Tabley (1811–1887). Warren and his wife would become Baldwyn's in-laws on his 1864 marriage to their daughter, Eleanor (1841–1914). The drawings seem primarily by Baldwyn's hand and portray amateur theatricals and practical jokes, such as Lord Shawcross "got up as a drunken man" and an episode in which a "daemon" attempts to frighten Lady Egerton. Other drawings feature scenes from parties and celebrations, including a watercolor depicting the attendees of the November 1858 costume ball at Capesthorpe Hall. While many of the drawings have a comic or even pointedly satiric tone, others are more sober portraits, often of women. These drawings, which feature such sitters as Eleanor's sister Catherine and her aunt Anna Cottin, may be by one of Baldwyn's sisters, or by Eleanor herself.

Genres / Formats:

- Graphite drawings
- Pen and ink drawings
- Watercolors (paintings)

Subjects:

- Amusements -- Great Britain
- Balls (Parties)
- Cheshire (England) -- Social life and customs

Names:

- Egerton-Warburton, R. E. (Rowland Eyles), 1804-1891
- Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897
- Leighton, Eleanor, 1841-1914

Warren, John Byrne Leicester, Baron de Tabley, 1835-1895

b. Vol. 10

A Recollection of Ireland in December 1860.

1860

1 volume (15 drawings; 1 photograph); 11.5 x 24.5 cm. Contemporary morocco binding with gilt-ruled border.

Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930

Unlike the other volumes in the collection, this sketchbook was created to document a specific event. Inscribed "A Recollection of Ireland / in December 1860 / To Charlotte Leighton, / form her affecate sister F.," the sketchbook includes watercolors that document the siblings' trip to Ireland. It begins with an image of Thornhill—likely the home of the Leightons' Irish hosts—and includes tourist sites featuring both natural and architectural wonders. Judging from the order of the drawings, the travelers appear to have begun their tour in County Monaghan in the north and traveled as far south as County Wicklow. The final image in the sketchbook is a group photograph of the traveling party, whose members are identified by annotations on the facing page.

Geographic Names:

Ireland

Genres / Formats:

Watercolors (paintings)

Names:

Leighton, Charlotte, d. 1928

Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930

Families:

Thornhill family

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

Amusements -- Great Britain
Battles -- Pictorial works
Catholic emancipation -- Great Britain
Clothing and dress -- Great Britain
Decoration and ornament
Drawing -- Study and teaching
Fashion -- Great Britain
Peasants -- Pictorial works
Suspension bridges

Contributors

Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864
Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897
Leighton, Charlotte, d. 1928
Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930
Leighton, Isabella, d. 1911
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864
Leighton, Stanley, 1837-1901
Parker, John, 1798-1860

Geographic Names

Ireland -- Pictorial works
Italy -- Pictorial works
Oswestry (England)
Scotland -- Pictorial works
Switzerland -- Pictorial works
Wales, North -- Pictorial works

Genres / Formats

Caricatures
Children's art
Engravings (prints)
Graphite drawings
Pen and ink drawings
Portraits
Sketchbooks
Trade cards
Watercolors (paintings)

Names

Cracherode, Clayton Mordaunt, 1730-1799 --
Art collections
Knight, Richard Payne, 1751-1824 -- Art
collections
Leighton, Baldwyn, Sir, 1836-1897
Leighton, Charlotte, d. 1928
Leighton, Frances Christina, d. 1930
Leighton, Isabella, d. 1911
Leighton, Mary, Lady, -1864
Leighton, Stanley, 1837-1901
Parker, John, 1798-1860