



# The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

## **Stillie manuscripts**

ca. 1889

MssCol 2777

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Smith, Alexander Howland

**Title:** Stillie manuscripts

**Date:** ca. 1889

**Size:** .5 linear feet (3 v.)

**Source:** 202 items: Purchase, Stillie, James, 1890

**Abstract:** Alexander Howland Smith, known as "Antique" Smith, was a forger from Edinburgh, Scotland. Before he was imprisoned in 1893, he had made hundreds of forged documents, in particular, letters and manuscripts of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott. Collection known as the Stillie Manuscripts consists of 202 numbered forgeries. Volume 1 (items 1-49) contains documents related to Scottish history, including those signed by James VI, Charles I, Mary Stuart, and John Knox. Volumes 2 and 3 (items 50-202) contain forgeries of letters and manuscripts of Robert Burns. Complete list of the manuscripts in the three volumes can be found in the Lenox Library's Twenty-first Annual Report for the Year 1890 which accompanies Volume 1.

**Preferred citation:** Stillie manuscripts, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

### **Creator History**

Alexander Howland Smith, known as "Antique" Smith, was a forger from Edinburgh, Scotland. Before he was imprisoned in 1893, he had made hundreds of forged documents, in particular, letters and manuscripts of Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott.

### **Custodial History**

Collection was purchased from James Stillie, an Edinburgh bookseller by John S. Kennedy, president of the Lenox Library, in 1890. Kennedy presented the collection to the Lenox Library and the manuscripts were exhibited in December of that year. After several forgeries of Burns manuscripts were exposed in

Edinburgh in 1892, the collection was sent to the British Museum for examination and the documents were found to be forgeries by "Antique" Smith. Manuscripts were returned to the Lenox Library and added to the collections of The New York Public Library after the consolidation of the Astor, Lenox, and Tilden collections.

## **Scope and Content Note**

Collection known as the Stillie Manuscripts consists of 202 numbered forgeries. Volume 1 (items 1-49) contains documents related to Scottish history, including those signed by James VI, Charles I, Mary Stuart, and John Knox. Volumes 2 and 3 (items 50-202) contain forgeries of letters and manuscripts of Robert Burns. Complete list of the manuscripts in the three volumes can be found in the Lenox Library's Twenty-first Annual Report for the Year 1890 which accompanies Volume 1.

**Arrangement:** Volume 1: Scottish History; Volume 2, 3: Robert Burns

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Forgery of manuscripts

### **Geographic Names**

Scotland -- History -- Sources -- Forgeries

### **Names**

Smith, Alexander Howland

Burns, Robert, 1759-1796

Kennedy, John S. (John Stewart), 1830-1909

Stillie, James

Lenox Library