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.

Access: Advance notice required.

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