

Charlotte Cushman Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Revised and expanded by Margaret McAleer



Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2008

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Collection Summary

Title: Charlotte Cushman Papers

Span Dates: 1823-1941

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1861-1875)

ID No.: MSS17525

Creator: Cushman, Charlotte, 1816-1876

Extent: 10,000 items; 21 containers plus 1 oversize; 5.5 linear feet; 1 microfilm reel

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Actress. Correspondence; biographical and genealogical material; annotated scripts and texts of plays, poetry, and readings; newspaper clippings; reviews; and souvenir programs relating chiefly to Cushman's career in the theater.

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.

Personal Names

Bellows, Henry W. (Henry Whitney), 1814-1882--Correspondence.

Bigelow, John, 1817-1911--Correspondence.

Booth, Edwin, 1833-1893--Correspondence.

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 1806-1861--Correspondence.

Carlyle, Jane Welsh, 1801-1866--Correspondence.

Chorley, Henry Fothergill, 1808-1872--Correspondence.

Crow, Wayman, 1808-1885--Correspondence.

Cushman, Charles Augustus, 1818-1896--Correspondence.

Cushman, Charlotte, 1816-1876.

Cushman, Edwin Charles, b. 1838--Correspondence.

Cushman, Emma Crow, b. 1840?--Correspondence.

Cushman, Mary Eliza, 1793-1866--Correspondence.

Fields, James Thomas, 1817-1881--Correspondence.

Higginson, Thomas Wentworth, 1823-1911--Correspondence.

Howe, Julia Ward, 1819-1910--Correspondence.

Jackson, Helen Hunt, 1830-1885--Correspondence.

Jewsbury, Geraldine Endsor, 1812-1880--Correspondence.

Kemble, Fanny, 1809-1893--Correspondence.

King, Rufus, 1814-1876--Correspondence.

Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865--Assassination.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 1807-1882--Correspondence.

Macready, William Charles, 1793-1873--Correspondence.

Nilsson, Christine, 1843-1921--Correspondence.

Payne, John Howard, 1791-1852--Correspondence.

Seward, Anna Wharton--Correspondence.

Seward, William Henry, 1801-1872--Correspondence.

Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616--Dramatic production.

Sherman, William T. (William Tecumseh), 1820-1891--Correspondence.

Stebbins, Emma, 1815-1882--Correspondence.

Trollope, Thomas Adolphus, 1810-1892--Correspondence.

Van Buren, Martin, 1782-1862--Correspondence.

Wallack, Lester, 1820-1888--Correspondence.

Whittier, John Greenleaf, 1807-1892--Correspondence.

Organizations

United States Sanitary Commission.

Subjects

Acting.

Americans--Italy--Rome--History--19th century.

Benefit performances--United States--19th century.

Drama.

Theater--England--London--History--19th century.

Theater--United States--History--19th century.

Locations

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Foreign public opinion.

Occupations

Actresses.

Administrative Information

Provenance:

The papers of Charlotte Cushman, actress, were given to the Library of Congress by Victor N. and Louise Cushman in 1925 and 1927. Additional material was given by Charles V. B. Cushman and others via Lyman Beecher Stowe from 1949 to 1955 and by Ethel B. Clark in 1947. Other items were purchased by the Library from 1957 to 1990.

Processing History:

The papers of Charlotte Cushman were arranged and described in 1978. The collection was expanded and revised in 1997, and additions and revisions to the finding aid were made in 2008.

Transfers:

Some photographs have been transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the Charlotte Cushman Papers.

Related Material:

The papers of Jennie Lorenz in the Manuscript Division contain correspondence, notes, copies of correspondence and portraits, a thesis, and printed matter from her research on Cushman's life and career. Additional material pertaining to Cushman, including portraits, photographs, drawings of her in costume, and copies of her most important acting scripts, are located in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Many of her letters were included in the biography, *Charlotte Cushman: Her letters and Memoirs of Her Life* (1878), written by her friend, the sculptor, Emma Stebbins. A later biography by Joseph Leach, *Bright Particular Star: The Life and Times of Charlotte Cushman* (1971), was based in part on Cushman's papers at the Library.

Copyright Status:

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Charlotte Cushman is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions:

The papers of Charlotte Cushman are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm:

A microfilm edition of a *Hamlet* prompt book is available on one reel from the Library's Photoduplication Service for purchase subject to the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.). The microfilm consists of a negative copy and is housed in the Photoduplication Service.

Preferred Citation:

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Charlotte Cushman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1816, July 23	Born, Boston, Mass.
1835	Operatic debut as Countess Almaviva in <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i> , Tremont Theatre, Boston, Mass. Strained voice during performance at the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans, La.; turned to acting
1836	First performance as Lady Macbeth in a benefit production of <i>Macbeth</i> , New Orleans, La. Debut, Bowery Theatre, New York, N.Y., as Lady Macbeth
1837	First appeared as Meg Merrilies in <i>Guy Mannering</i>
1842-1844	Stage manager, Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, Pa.
1844	Toured with William Charles Macready Went to England
1845	Debut in London, England, as Bianca in <i>Fazio</i> at the Princess Theatre
1849-1852	Toured in America
1852	Announced retirement and moved to England
1857	Returned to America to appear as Cardinal Wolsey in <i>Henry VIII</i> , Burton's Theatre, New York, N.Y.
1858-1870	Lived in semi-retirement, Rome, Italy
1860	Performed in New Haven, Conn.
1863	Gave series of performances on behalf of the United States Sanitary Commission
1874	Farewell performance at Booth's Theater, New York, N.Y.
1875	Farewell performance in Boston, Mass. Last appearance on stage, Easton, Pa.

1876, Feb. 18 Died, Boston, Mass.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Charlotte Saunders Cushman (1816-1876) span the years 1823-1941, with the bulk of material dating from 1861 to 1875, the period of her greatest acclaim. The papers document her acting career through correspondence; biographical notes, including recollections dictated by Cushman in 1875; annotated scripts of plays, poetry, and other texts used for performances; a comprehensive collection of newspaper clippings; and programs from her theatrical performances and readings. They are arranged into seven series: [Bound Correspondence](#), [Unbound Correspondence](#), [Playscripts](#), [Readings](#), [Newspaper Clippings](#), [Miscellany](#), and [Oversize](#). A letter and fragment of a letter added to the collection in 1997 are contained in an [Addition](#).

The correspondence, [bound](#) and [unbound](#), includes a large number of letters which reveal the close relationships among various members of Cushman's family. The letters touch on all facets of their lives and reflect Cushman's role as "head" of the family. Most of the correspondence is between Cushman and her older brother, Charles Augustus; her mother, Mary Eliza; and Edwin C., a nephew whom she adopted. A letter from Charles, written after Cushman's death, contains a biographical sketch of her career based on his memory and diaries. A few letters to and from Cushman's sister, Susan, and aunt, Charlotte Saunders, are also found in the papers.

Charlotte Cushman surrounded herself with people who shared her artistic interests. Although much of her correspondence with friends and acquaintances is filled with news of events and personalities in the theatrical and literary world, it also provides a record of the difficulties which Cushman encountered in establishing and maintaining a career as an actress. A number of letters concern financial investments; others are from admirers and people seeking financial assistance or advice on pursuing careers on the stage.

Cushman returned to Rome following a tour for the benefit of the United States Sanitary Commission at the end of the 1863. She was deeply interested in the Civil War, and her papers contain a letter from Rufus King, United States minister in Rome, written on 27 April 1865 sending her a copy of a dispatch containing news of Lincoln's assassination; the attempted assassination of her friend and confidant, William H. Seward; the death of Seward's son, Frederick; and the general sense of horror which prevailed in the United States in the aftermath of these events. Upon receiving the news of the assassination, Americans living in Rome met to decide on a course of action. The record of their meeting and the resolutions which they adopted are included in the collection under the title "The Americans in Rome" signed by Edward S. Lacy. Sallie Mercer's telegram of 29 June 1863 to William Henry Seward inquiring "The Rebels are expected here, What shall Sallie do?" is also found in the papers. The telegram had amused Seward so much that he showed it to Lincoln.

The [playscripts](#) in the collection contain Cushman's best-known roles, including Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, Cardinal Wolsey, and Queen Katherine, and her most popular role, Meg Merrilies, from Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*. In addition there are holograph copies of *The Actress of Padua*, *Hope of the Family*, and a *Lesson of the Heart*. Some of the plays are annotated to show stage directions, and prompt books are included for *The Actress of Padua*.

[Newspaper clippings](#) in the collection provide a record of the public's reaction to her performances. There are numerous articles tracing her life and genealogical background. Reviews chronicle her career almost performance by performance. In a letter of 2 March 1845 to her mother, she mentions she had collected a "lot of newspapers which could tell you in much better language . . . of my brilliant and triumphant success in London."

Correspondents in the collection include Henry Bellows, John Bigelow (1817-1911), Edwin Booth, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Jane Welsh Carlyle, Henry Fothergill Chorley, Emma Crow, Wayman

Crow, Charles Augustus Cushman, Edwin C. Cushman, Mary Eliza Cushman, J. T. Fields, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Julia Ward Howe, Helen Hunt Jackson, Geraldine Endors Jewsbury, Fanny Kemble, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, William Charles Macready, Christine Nilsson, John Howard Payne, Anna Seward, William Henry Seward, William T. Sherman, Emma Stebbins, Thomas Adolphus Trollope, Martin Van Buren, Lester Wallack, and John Greenleaf Whittier.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in eight series:

- [Bound Correspondence, 1824-1876](#)
- [Unbound Correspondence, 1828-1941](#)
- [Playscripts, 1823-1871](#)
- [Readings, 1874-1890](#)
- [Newspaper Clippings, 1846-1939](#)
- [Miscellany, 1848-1905](#)
- [Addition, 1852](#)
- [Oversize, 1823-1871](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-15	<u>Bound Correspondence, 1824-1876</u> Letters to and from Cushman, biographical data, readings, and theater programs. Letters from Cushman are arranged chronologically in volumes 1-8. Letters to her are arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent in volumes 9-14. Biographical data, readings, and theater programs are mounted in volume 15.
BOX 16	<u>Unbound Correspondence, 1828-1941</u> Letters to and from Cushman and members of her family. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 17	<u>Playscripts, 1823-1871</u> Playscripts and prompt books. Arranged alphabetically by title.
BOX 18	<u>Readings, 1874-1890</u> Poetry and other texts used for performances. Arranged alphabetically by title. A list of titles is appended to the register.
BOX 19-20	<u>Newspaper Clippings, 1846-1939</u> Clippings, some annotated, covering most of Cushman's career. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 20-21	<u>Miscellany, 1848-1905</u> Poems, notebooks, theater programs, sheet music, writings, and memorabilia. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 21	<u>Addition, 1852</u> Letter and fragment of a letter from Cushman, added to the papers in 1997. Arranged chronologically.
BOX OV 1	<u>Oversize, 1823-1871</u> Oversize material consisting of a theater playbill, playscript, and prompt book. Described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-15	Bound Correspondence, 1824-1876 Letters to and from Cushman, biographical data, readings, and theater programs. Letters from Cushman are arranged chronologically in volumes 1-8. Letters to her are arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent in volumes 9-14. Biographical data, readings, and theater programs are mounted in volume 15.
BOX 1	Letters from Cushman
BOX 1	1832, Oct. 2-1861, 24 Dec., preceded by genealogical material
BOX 2	1862, Jan. 3-1864, Dec. 30
BOX 3	1865, Jan.5-1868, Oct. 4
BOX 4	1868, Oct. 9-1870, Nov. 28
BOX 5	1870, Nov. 29-1872, June 7
BOX 6	1872, June 28-1874, Dec. 29
BOX 7	1875, Jan.4-1876, Feb. 13
BOX 8	Undated letters and writings by Cushman
BOX 9	Letters to Cushman
BOX 9	A-Cha
BOX 10	Che-Cushman
BOX 11	D-J
BOX 12	K-R
BOX 13	S
BOX 14	T-V
BOX 15	Biographical data, readings, and theater programs
BOX 16	Unbound Correspondence, 1828-1941 Letters to and from Cushman and members of her family. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 16	1828-1941, n.d. (21 folders)
BOX 17	Playscripts, 1823-1871 Playscripts and prompt books. Arranged alphabetically by title.
BOX 17	<i>The Actress of Padua</i> (4 folders)
BOX 17	<i>Guy Mannering</i> <u>See Oversize</u>
BOX 17	<i>Hamlet</i> Available on microfilm (negative copy only). Shelf no. 16,717
BOX 17	<i>Henry VIII</i>

Playscripts, 1823-1871

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 17	<i>Hope of the Family</i> and <i>Julius Caesar</i>
BOX 17	<i>A Lesson of the Heart, or Aged Forty</i>
BOX 18	<i>Macbeth</i>
BOX 18	<i>Mary Queen of Scots</i>
BOX 18	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
BOX 18	Readings, 1874-1890 Poetry and other texts used for performances. Arranged alphabetically by title. A list of titles is appended to the register.
BOX 18	A-Y <u>See appendix for list of readings</u> (9 folders)
BOX 19-20	Newspaper Clippings, 1846-1939 Clippings, some annotated, covering most of Cushman's career. Arranged alphabetically by subject.
BOX 19	Arcadian Club, New York, N.Y., 1874
BOX 19	Background and genealogy, 1859-1922, n.d.
BOX 19	Charity, 1874, n.d.
BOX 19	Charlotte Cushman clubs, Boston, Mass., and Philadelphia, Pa., n.d.
BOX 19	Charlotte Cushman School, Boston, Mass., n.d.
BOX 19	Colleagues, 1872-1875, n.d.
BOX 19	Crow, Wayman, 1878-1885, n.d.
BOX 19	Family members, n.d.
BOX 19	Final appearance tour, 1874-1875, n.d.
BOX 19	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., Cushman holdings, 1936
BOX 19	Jackson, Helen Hunt (Saxe Holm), 1874, n.d.
BOX 19	Kindergarten Association, Boston, Mass., n.d.
BOX 19	Miscellaneous articles regarding Cushman, 1858-1937, n.d.
BOX 19	Miscellaneous topics, 1875-1923, n.d.
BOX 19	Notices, 1871-1872, n.d.
BOX 19	Obituaries, 1876 (2 folders)
BOX 19	Poetry, 1872-1939, n.d.
BOX 19	Published photographs, drawings, and caricatures of Cushman, 1915, n.d.
BOX 20	Reviews
BOX 20	<i>Duchess Eleanour</i> , n.d.
BOX 20	General, 1849-1874, n.d.
BOX 20	<i>Guy Mannering</i> , 1849-1873
BOX 20	<i>Henry VIII</i> As Cardinal Wolsey, n.d.
BOX 20	As Queen Katherine, 1871-1872, n.d.
BOX 20	<i>Macbeth</i> , 1872-1873, n.d.
BOX 20	Miscellaneous roles from other Shakespearean plays, 1861, n.d.
BOX 20	Readings, 1872-1874, n.d.

Newspaper Clippings, 1846-1939

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 20	Scrapbook, 1846-1885, n.d.
BOX 20	Theosophy, n.d.
BOX 20-21	Miscellany, 1848-1905 Poems, notebooks, theater programs, sheet music, writings, and memorabilia. Arranged alphabetically by type of material.
BOX 20	Memorabilia, 1874, n.d.
BOX 21	Mounted playbill, Washington Theater, Washington, D.C., 1861 <u>See Oversize</u>
BOX 21	Notebooks containing notes, addresses, lists, and poetry, 1855-1905
BOX 21	Printed matter, 1848-1893, n.d.
BOX 21	Programs, 1872-1881, n.d.
BOX 21	Sheet music for <i>Henry VIII</i> , n.d.
BOX 21	Writings
BOX 21	Poetry
BOX 21	By Cushman, n.d.
BOX 21	By others, 1850-1873, n.d.
BOX 21	Unidentified manuscripts
BOX 21	"Notes on Andrew Johnson," n.d.
BOX 21	"Three Great Bills," n.d.
BOX 21	Untitled, n.d.
BOX 21	Addition, 1852 Letter and fragment of a letter from Cushman, added to the papers in 1997. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 21	Letter and fragment of a letter, 1852, n.d.
BOX OV 1	Oversize, 1823-1871 Oversize material consisting of a theater playbill, playscript, and prompt book. Described according to the series, containers, and folders from which the items were removed.
BOX OV 1	Playscripts
BOX OV 1	Guy Mannering, 1823, 1871, undated (Container 17)
BOX OV 2	Miscellany
BOX OV 2	Mounted playbill, Washington Theater, Washington, D.C., 1861 (Container 21)

Appendix: List of Readings in Container 18

- "Address to the Deity"
- "After Blenheim"
- "The Annuity"
- "At the Grindstone"
- "Auld Robin Gray"
- "Avenging Childe"

- "The Battle of Ivory"
- "The Battle of Naseby"
- "The Bells of Shandon"
- "Betsy and I Are Out"
- "Betsy Destroys the Paper"
- "Births, Mrs. Meek, of a Son"
- "The Black Regiment"
- "The Bapteesement O' the Bairn"
- "Barriboola Ghu"
- "Brothers, and a Sermon"
- "The Burial of Sir John Moore"
- "The Charge of the Light Brigade"
- "Claribel's Prayer"
- "Count Gismond"
- "The Cry of the Children"
- "Dara"
- "Deacon Jones's Experience"
- "The Death of th' Owd Squire"
- "De Profundis"
- "Desire"
- "Epistle to a Young Friend"
- "The Execution of Montrose"
- "Father Malloy "
- "The Flight of the Goddess"
- "The Forging of the Anchor "
- "Fridolin"
- "From the Dodge Club"
- "A Funeral March"
- "A Glance Behind the Curtain"
- "God"
- "The Grandmother"
- "The Gridiron"
- "Halbert of Lyne"
- "He Giveth His Beloved Sleep"
- "Herve Riel"
- "Horatius"
- "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix"
- "Ipse Dixit"
- "James Melville's Child"
- "John and Tribbie's Dispute"
- "John Gilpin"
- "Kentucky Belle"
- "Lady Clara Vere de Vere"
- "Lady Clare"
- "Lady of Shalott"
- "Last Prayer of Mary Queen of Scots"
- "Lochinvar"
- "Locksley Hall"
- "The Lost, Found"
- "Love"
- "The Man Who Hath Not Music in Himself"
- "Mansie Wauch's First and Last Play"
- "Mary Maloney's Philosophy"
- "Massachusetts to Virginia"

- "Molly Carew"
- "The New Church Organ"
- "Nicodemus at Night"
- "The Northern Farmer"
- "Old and Blind"
- "Old Daniel Gray"
- "The Old Man's Dreams"
- "The Parable of the Lost Sheep"
- "Poor Little Jim"
- "The Pretty Girl of Loch Dan"
- "Ring Out, Wild Bells"
- "Roman Pilgrims"
- "Romance of the Swan's Nest"
- "The Sailor's Wife"
- "The Secret of a Happy Day"
- "Sir Galahad"
- "Sister Helen"
- "The Sister of Charity"
- "A Song for the Ragged Schools of London"
- "Virginia"
- "The Warden of the Cinque-Ports"
- "The Whitby Fishing Smak"
- "Will the New Year Come Tonight?"
- "Willy Gilliland"
- "The Witch's Daughter"
- "The Woman of Three Cows"
- "The Young Gray Head"