

Charles Godfrey Leland letters to George Henry Boker

Ms. Coll. 1070

Finding aid prepared by Clémence Scouten.

Last updated on April 14, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 May 6

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	3
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Related Materials	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	6
Collection Inventory.....	7
Letters from Charles Godfrey Leland to George Henry Boker.....	7
Sculley Bradley materials.....	7

Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Leland, Charles Godfrey, 1824-1903
Title	Charles Godfrey Leland letters to George Henry Boker
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1070
Date [bulk]	1869-1870
Date [inclusive]	1861-1937
Extent	0.2 linear feet (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903) was a humorist and folklorist from Philadelphia. The collection consists of fourteen illustrated letters written to George Henry Boker which document one year of Leland's trip to Europe from 1869 to 1870; transcriptions of the letters; and an article by donor and scholar Sculley Bradley about the collection.

Biography/History

Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903) was a humorist and folklorist from Philadelphia. Born August 15, 1824, Leland was the son of Henry and Charlotte Frost Leland in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was

educated in private schools, at Princeton University, and in universities in Heidelberg and Munich, and in Paris, where he became involved in the Revolution of 1848. After returning to the United States, he worked briefly in the field of law before moving towards a career in journalism. He wrote for many newspapers and eventually served as editor for the *Philadelphia Press*. A strong supporter of the Union during the Civil War, Leland enlisted in the Union Army and served at the battle of Gettysburg. Leland was interested in folklore, folk linguistics, gypsies, fairies, and witches; and he published books and articles on American and European languages and folk traditions. He achieved recognition as the author of the comic *Breitmann's Ballads* and *Arcadia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, a classic of neo-Paganism.

In 1869, Leland's father died and Leland traveled to Europe, in part to supervise an official English edition of *Breitmann's Ballads* in Great Britain where it had become a minor literary sensation. During the years 1869 to 1870, he wrote to his childhood friend, George Henry Boker. He returned to Philadelphia in 1879 and established the Industrial Art School. In 1888, he moved to Italy where he remained until his death on March 20, 1903.

Scope and Contents

In 1869, Charles Godfrey Leland took advantage of a small inheritance to resign his post as editor of the *Philadelphia Press* and go abroad. His health was poor, and on the verge of a nervous collapse, he set sail in May 1869.

According to Sculley Bradley:

It was only natural that he should correspond with George Henry Boker, who had been his bosom friend from boyhood, and who was now deeply concerned about his health. Boker had been instrumental in securing his appointment as editor of the *Press* and since Leland's return to Philadelphia, they had been much together. The depth of their friendship is reflected in the intimacy of these letters, so frankly revealing of the natures of both men. These letters were not available for the use of Leland's biographer, Mrs. Elizabeth Robins Pennell. They therefore shed new light upon the life and character of Hans Breitmann, who has recently been given increased attention both by critics of American poetry and by those interested in the development of American humor. Since Boker and Leland were intimately acquainted not only with the "Philadelphia Group," but with most of the literary circle in the East, the references, casual or extended, to other literary men, are to be regarded as authentic and revelatory. There are many such references among these letters. This correspondence also has value as being a typical reaction of a cultivated and highly civilized American of his day to the culture, literature and social life of the European countries which he visited. His attitudes are in strong and interesting contrast to those of *Innocents Abroad*. In this and in many other respects, the letters shed light on American social history. They are also of enormous interest in showing, in intimate correspondence, the attitudes and interests of two of the most cultivated Americans of that day. The points of view, the type of humor and the revelation of the personal lives of such men is reflected in a manner sometimes startling and always instructive. Another very interesting aspect of these letters lies in the intimate picture of various members of the London literary circle and literary people on the continent whom Leland met. The illustrations which Leland made for these letters are intrinsically valuable as works of art and derive additional value from Leland's important connection in the development of the teaching of the arts and crafts in America. There is, of course, a very interesting revelation of the differences between publishing conditions in America and in England, together with much detail bearing upon Leland's own poetic work. The

correspondence has a homogenous quality as the unified record of a single journey of the author over a period of one year. This journey is recorded as the last episode of Leland's *Memoirs*, but the record of the letters is very much more detailed and intimate. (The above taken in its entirety from "Uncollected Letters of Charles Godfrey Leland," an unpublished article by Sculley Bradley located in folder 5).

The collection consists of fourteen illustrated letters. The illustrations include beautiful and highly illuminated capital D's in the salutations as well as fourteen sketches in pen and ink, of which a good many show fine color work. The collection also contains a transcription of the letters, probably completed by Sculley Bradley and an article written by Bradley entitled, "Uncollected Letters of Charles Godfrey Leland," which had been submitted for publication sometime before 1937.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 May 6

Finding aid prepared by Clémence Scouten.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Gift of E. Sculley Bradley.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Charles Godfrey Leland papers

At Princeton University: Charles Godfrey Leland Collection, 1841-1902

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence
- Illuminations (visual works)
- Sketches

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Europe--Description and travel

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Boker, George H. (George Henry), 1823-1890

SUBJECT(S)

- Voyages and travels

Collection Inventory

LETTERS FROM CHARLES GODFREY LELAND TO GEORGE HENRY BOKER, 1861-1870 (BULK, 1869-1870) .

	Box	Folder
1869 May-December.	1	1
1870 February-April.	1	2
May-October 1870, 1870 May-October.	1	3

SCULLEY BRADLEY MATERIALS, UNDATED.

	Box	Folder
Transcription of Leland letters, circa 1937.	1	4
"Uncollected letters of Charles Godfrey Leland," article written by Sculley Bradley about the Leland letters, circa 1937.	1	5