Sophia, Electress of Hanover, Letter Book and Commonplace Book, 1659-1706: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1598
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Sophia, Electress of Hanover (1630-1714), was the twelfth of thirteen children born to Frederick V of the Palatinate and Elizabeth Stuart (1596-1662), eldest daughter of James VI and I: she was born at The Hague and spent much of her early life in Holland, where she received a high level of education. In 1658, she married Ernst August (1629-98) of Brunswick-Lüneberg with whom she had several children. Sophia's court at Herrenhausen, near the city of Hanover, was a considerable centre for cultural life, where the annual Carneval, begun by Ernst August, was continued by Sophia. With the death, infertility or Catholic conversion of many candidates with stronger claims, Sophia's regal ambitions came closer and closer to the Stuarts, of whom she was eventually the final representative: for more than a decade, from the death of Queen Anne's son the Duke of Gloucester in 1700 to her own death in June 1714, Sophia was heir to the British throne. But because she died less than two months before Anne, the title was inherited by her son George Louis (Georg Ludwig), better known to English history as George I, founder of the House of Hanover in England.

This collection consists of a letter book with unpublished letters and a commonplace book likely compiled by or for Sophia, Electress of Hanover (1630-1714), granddaughter of James I of England, around 1700.

Although not written in her hand, the volume of about 185 letters (387 pages), all in French (the court language of Hanover), perhaps made around the year 1700 (there is nothing later than 1702), were likely compiled for her use. They constitute a significant collection of documentary evidence for the political and, to a lesser extent, the literary culture of her court, and that of other European courts as well. They include letters to and from her husband Ernst August; his numerous brothers; her siblings such as Elisabeth Abbess of Herfort and Prince Rupert of the Rhine; advisers and ministers such as Otto Grotius, Ezekiel Spanheim and Count von Wartenburg; and letters such as the anonymous one from London written in 1701 (pages 282-286) on the debate about the succession. This last one is possibly from John Toland, with whom we know she and her daughter were familiar: in 1701 Toland travelled to present to Sophia a copy of the Act of Settlement, and had long conversations with her and her daughter the Queen of Prussia. Also included is an extract from Camden's Britannia (pages 246-247). Although much of Sophia's correspondence has been published this collection of almost 200 letters to her seems to be unknown.

The commonplace book (426 pages), compiled mostly by the same hand (with two different hands adding other matter at the end), also includes a long account of the Carnival at Herrenhausen court in 1702 (subtitled "Trimalcion Moderne"), which continued the tradition begun by Duke Ernst August even after his death. There are a few letters here, too, but the majority of the volume is composed of verses, literary anecdotes, and historical and political matters. Among the more significant pieces – given the expectations of Sophia and her eldest son with regard to the British throne – are an account of a meeting of William III of England with the Electors at the Hague (page 13), and a long section on the rules governing the accession to the throne made by the Westminster Parliament (pages 36-44). Also included is a lengthy word list of English words, with translations into German (pages 391-424). The book is primarily in French with some Italian, German, and English.
Access and Use

Access

Open for research.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Custodial History

Both volumes have a small early 19th century book label reading "Louisa Catherine Sligo," likely Louisa Catherine Browne (née Howe, 1767-1817), wife of the first Marquess of Sligo (1756-1809). Her father was Richard, Earl Howe (1726-99), who was in turn the son of Emanuel Viscount Howe and his wife Mary Sophia Charlotte Kielmansegge. Lady Howe (1695-1782) was the eldest child of Charlotte Sophia Kielmansegge, Countess of Darlington (1675-1725), natural daughter of Ernst August, elector of Hanover, Sophia's husband.

Provenance and Acquisition

Purchase, 2018. AM 2018-87

Appraisal

No materials were removed from the collection during 2018 processing beyond routine appraisal practices.

Processing and Other Information

Encoding

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit 2018-07-25T15:03-0400

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings
- Hanover, House of--Sources.
- Mothers of kings and rulers—Great Britain--Sources.
- Monarchy—Great Britain—History—17th century--Sources.
- Monarchy—Great Britain—History—18th century--Sources.
- Women—Germany—History—17th century--Sources.
- Women—Germany—History—18th century--Sources.
- Europe--Politics and government--1648-1715--Sources.
- Germany—Court and courtiers—History—17th century--Sources.
- Germany—Court and courtiers—History—18th century--Sources.
- Germany—Kings and rulers—Sources.
- Germany—History—1648-1740--Sources.
- Great Britain—Kings and rulers—Succession—History—17th century--Sources.
- Great Britain—Kings and rulers—Succession—History—18th century--Sources.
- Great Britain--Politics and government--1660-1714--Sources.
- Correspondence--17th century.
- Correspondence--18th century.
- European history
- Women's studies
Contents List

Letter Book, 1659-1702

Size: 387 pages (over 200 blank)
Dimensions: 35 x 22.5 cm

Physical Characteristics: bound in early 18th century calf or sheep

Description: Volume includes about 185 letters, plus two extracts. The following is an inventory of the letters and their associated page numbers:

Page 1: headed 'Plusieurs lettres de Smid et autres'
1. unsigned letter [presumably from 'Smid'], Brussels, 31 March 1677 [see also page 277]
3: from the same? Hague, 17 May 1677
8: from the same? Hague, 21 June 1677
10: from the same? Presumably to Ernst August, undated
15: from the same? To Sophia, Petershaguen, 5 July 1700
18: from the same? To Sophia, Petershaguen, 28 July 1700
22: from Anne de Dona to Sophia, undated
24: from Prince Rupert Palatin, undated
25: 2 letters from Henrietta Maria of England, to her niece (Sophia), one dated from Colombe, 15 Aug, no year
26: Reply from Johann Friedrich (1625-79) to his brother Ernst August, Hanover, 6 Nov/27 Oct 1668
29: Reply to the same, undated
31: 2 letters from Johann Friedrich, Hamburg 20/10 July 1654 and Hertzberg, 2 Jun/23 May 1659
33: 2 letters from Christian Ludwig, the first to 'Monsieur', undated ; the second to his mother, dated from the Army, 23 July 1693
38: 2 letters from Georg Wilhelm, the first to 'Monsieur', 20 Jul no year ; the second to the Duchess, Celle, 3 Apr, no year
39: letters of Ernst August, all to anonymous recipients, most undated; one (page 41) 'touchant Lisolette' [i.e. Liselotte, Duchess of Orléans, Sophia's niece]
46: letter (from Ernst August?) from the field of battle before Treves, 11 Aug 1675
49: response of Louis XIV to the Elector Palatine, 1 Sep 1673
51: 2 letters of the Marquis de Bethune. Heidelberg, 17 Feb, and Paris, 3 Jan, no year , to Madame (i.e. Sophia?)
55: from Marie Elisabeth, Princesse de Deux Ponts, Paris, 23 May 1700
56: 2 letters of Anne de Mantoue Palatine [i.e. Anne Gonzaga, wife of S's elder brother Edward], 19 March 1679 and undated
60: 4 letters of J.H. de Bourbon. Versailles, 9 Feb 1690; Versailles, 14 July no year ; Chambor [= Chambery?] 20 Sep 1685; Versailles 1 Dec 1685
65: from Prince Charles of Brunswick-Luneburg to M. le President Grote [i.e. Otto Grote, minister to Johann Friedrich], Procopia, 12 Nov 1689
67: from the same to Mme la Duchesse his mother, Batteshim [sic] 1 Feb 1689
68: from the same, near Belgrade, 5 Aug/26 Jul no year
69: from the same, undated
70: from the Duc de Grammont to the Elector Palatine, undated
71: 2 letters of Prince Friedrich to his mother, 1 Sep 1689 and Ausbourg, 12 Jan 1690
74: to the Electress of Brandenburg [i.e. Sophia Charlotte, 'Figuelotte', daughter of Sophia], from her brother, Vienna 16 Apr 1697
76: to the same, from Kreuznach, 5 Sep 1697
78: presumably from the same to the same, Paris, Jun 1695
80: same to same? du camp vers la hauteur de Sabia, 13 Oct 1698
81: same to same?, Hammel, 7/17 Feb 1692
82: same to same? (signed Maximilian Guillaume), Venice, 20 May 1689
83: 4 letters from Prince Christian of Brunswick, Vienna, 2/12 Oct 1697; army, 25 Jun 1693; army, 13/3 Aug 1695; camp devant Namur, 10 Jul 1695
89: 3 letters from Prince Ernst August of Brunswick, Jouin, 22 Jun, no year; au camp de Wemmel, 15 Aug, no year; camp de Wemmel, 3 Aug, no year
97: reply of the Elector Palatine to the Princess Palatine, Friderisbourg 10/20 Jul 1674
99: reply of the same to the Marquis de Bethune, Friderisbourg, 6 Mar 1674
102: from the Elector Palatine to M. de la Grange, intendant d'Alsace, 'Fral' [sic], 5/15 Apr 1680
104: reply of M. de Turaine to the Elector Palatine, undated
105: from the Princess Palatine to the Elector Palatine, undated
107: from the Elector Palatine to his sister the Abbess of Herfort, 16 Mar 1678
117: letter from Fontainebleau, 9 Oct 1694
119: letter 'pour Mr l'Avocat de la Merde à H', Paris, 25 Jan 1695
124: 'plusieurs' letters of the Princesse de Vaudémont. 1st is from Milan, 1699. Includes at least 28 letters, some undated but clearly a sequence written from Milan, 1699-1701. She must be Anne Elisabeth de Lorraine, wife of Charles Henri, styled Prince de Vaudémont, who was Governor of Milan 1698-1706
227: Louise Palatine to the Duchess of Mecklenburg, undated
229: from the Duchesse des Ursins, undated
233: from Prince Elector of Brunswick (i.e. Georg Ludwig, George I of England) to his mother, camp de Heppinguen, 26 Jul/5 Aug 1693
235: anonymous and undated letter (possibly the same to the same) from Lisbon, 21 Sep 1700
238: short letter from the Abbé de Bellebat to Sieur Fouquet
239: Mme d'Angoulême or Mme Sevron to the same
239: unknown to the same
239: Mme du Plessis Belliere ('Bellievre') to the same
241: Sieur Fouquet to a demoiselle
242: extract from a letter sent from Fontainebleau
242: Mme Fouquet to her brother in law
243: Mme de Valantinois to Sieur Fouquet
244: unascribed letter, Paris, 21 Dec 1663
246: extract (in English) from Camden's Britannia (1637 edition)
247: extract (in French) from a historical work
248: from a lady signed 'S.D.', presumably Sophia Dorothea, undated
249: from Georg Ludwig, written from London, 31 Dec 1680/10 Jan 1681
251: from the same, Potsdam, 7/17 Jul, no year
253: from the Princesse des Ursins, Rome, 1st day of the year 1701
256: from the same, Rome, 15 May 1701
258: from Elizabeth, to 'ma chere Tante', Nancy, 24 Feb, no year
259: from Spanheim on the death of the Margrave Charles of Brandenburg, Berlin, 27 Jul 1695
260: from Amelia, dowager Princess of Orange
261: from Prince Rupert, Whitehall, 4 Dec 1681
262: from Philippe, undated (about the wounding of his son)
264: from M. de Fontenelle to a young Swedish lady (partly in verse)
273: letter signed 'Klenke', from Krakow, 28 Jul 1697
274: from G.D. Schmidt, Petershaguen, 1/11 Jul 1699
276: from the same[?], 21 Feb, no year
279: letter from London, 6/17 May 1701, about the succession and a privately-circulated pamphlet on the subject. Possibly by John Toland
281: letter in Italian apparently from Cat. D'Este di Savoia, Torino, 25 Jul 1694
282: from St[oeu]r. Marie de Brinon [religious, 1631-1701], 22 Feb 1698
286: from Sophie Charlotte of Prussia [Sophia's daughter], Berlin, 15 Oct, no year Mentions Mme Klenck
290: from the same, Berlin, 5 Oct, no year
291: from Marie de Brinon, 2 Jul, no year
297: reply to Marie de Brinon, undated
299: from [Ezekiel] Spanheim, Rome, 11/21 Jan 1662[?]
308: from Carlo Maurizio Votta [or Vota], S.J., Warsaw, 15 Aug 1699
309: from 'N[?]' de Bourbon', Chambor, 30 Sep 1684
310: from the same, Versailles, 5 Jul, no year
311: from [unknown], Turin, 31 Jan, no year
313: from the same?, Turin, 27 Mar, no year
314: from the same?, Turin, 22 Jun, no year
315: from the Earl of Portland [then British Ambassador to France], Paris, 24 Feb 1698
316: from Elizabeth Charlotte [i.e. her niece Liselotte, Duchess d'Orléans], St Cloud, 2 Oct 1689
321: from Louisa Maria Palatine, undated
322: from cousin Louise, undated
323: from the Duchess of Savoy[?], undated
324: from 'A.D.M.P.', 24 Apr 1679
325: from the same, 22 May 1679
326: from the same, 6 Nov 1680
329: from [her sister?], 28 Sep 1682
330: from the same?, undated
330: from 'de Bourbon', Paris, 28 Dec, no year
334: from the same, Paris, 21 Oct, no year
335: from the same, Paris, 24 Oct 1679
339: from the same, Paris, 5 Jan 1680
340: from the same, undated
341: from the same, Chambor, 29 Sep 1682
342: from J.H. de Bourbon, Versailles, 12 Jan 1687
344: from the same, undated
346: from Wassenaer, The Hague, 7 Jul 1666
346: from De Mailly Lascaris Zace, undated
347: from J. Arlington (presumably Isabella, Countess of Arlington, 1668-1723)
348: from S. Ripperda, Paris, 10 Feb 1661
349: from Louis à R, Saumur, 10 May, no year
350: from the same? (signed 'L.A.R.'), Caen, 8 Aug 1659
353: from the same? (signed 'L. de R.'), to Monseigneur, Caen, 8 Aug 1659
356: from Brosseauat, Paris, 1 Feb 1700
357: from Charles de Lorraine, Nancy, 22 Dec 1699
358: from Louise D.S., Berlin, 18 Jan 1700
359: from Duke Charles de Lorraine to the Elector Palatine, Remnich, 14 Jul 1677
360: from Anne, Duchess d'Enghien (d. of Anna Gonzaga), undated
361: from Anna Gonzaga of Mantua, Princess Palatine, undated
363: from Elizabeth, Princesse de Zollem
363: from the Queen of Denmark [i.e. Sophia Amalia, sister of Ernst August], Copenhagen, 27 Jun 1665
364: from Duke Christian Louis of Brunswick, undated
365: from Mme la Princesse de Zollem, [Bergen-op-Zoom?], 12 Oct, no year
367: from Mr. de Grotius [i.e. Otto Grotius], The Hague, 29 Jun 1660
369: from M.A. Konigsmarck [i.e. Maria Aurora, sister of Philipp], Hamburg, 21 Dec 1692
370: from 'S.', her 'fille et servante' [presumably Sophia Dorothea], who is 'battu des coups de l'Amour et de la fortune', undated
371: from Charlotte [to 'ma chere Tante'], Modena, 26 Feb, no year
372: from Spanheim, about the Princesse de Vaudemont, Brussels, 12 Jan 1698
377: reply from Sophia to the letter of the Princesse de Vaudemont, Hanover, 12 Jan 1701
382: from the Princesse des Ursins, about M. Offenport de Rome, undated
383: from [Samuel] Chappuzeau, Celle, 12 Feb 1701
384: from [Count Kolbe von] Wartenburg, Potsdam, 18 Oct 1701
386: from Frederic Guillaume P.R. [her grandson], Berlin, 29 Jan 1702

Commonplace Book, 1670-1706

Size: 426 pages (120 blank)
Dimensions: 31 x 19.5 cm
Physical Characteristics: bound in early 18th century calf or sheep

Description: The following is an inventory of entries and their associated page numbers:
1: anecdote of Racine and the actress Champmelé
1: on the death of M. Pelisson
2: the King to the Prince de Marillac[?]
2: Mlle. Bernard of Rouen to the King, on her pension
3: On the author of Andronic and Tiridate (i.e. J.G. de Campistron, 1656-1723)
3-4: long anecdote of a man imprisoned by Richelieu
5: anecdote of the comedienne La Dancourt (1663-1725), with an epigram on her
5: verses in Spanish, with note at foot that they might have been written about Madame l'Electrice de Brandebourg
6: Dying words of the dauphine to the Duc de Bourgogne
6: anecdote of Pavillon about the marriage of an Englishman and a French woman
7: Articles presented to the 'R.P.R. de Paris' by the ecclesiastical deputies (24 articles, ends on page 13)
13: On the meeting of the Electors with William III of England at The Hague
16: Extract from a book on the voyage of the King of England to Holland
17: Anecdote of Louis XIV and the Bishop of Noyon and Mme de Maintenon
18: Words of the Cardinal Primat to the King of Poland
20: Anecdote about two novices, and the harsh treatment of them by their Abbess
22: Letter to the Bishop of Senlis signed Agnes Marie
23: Examples of divorces concluded without prejudice to the honour of the repudiated wives or their children (ends page 28)
28: Story of an abbé who fell in love with a married woman
31: Calculations of the number of the Beast (as in Revelation), based on letters having various number values in phrases such as 'L'Antechrist Romain'
32: Catalogue of new books published by Pierre Marteau at Cologne [a notorious fictional publisher]
36: Rules made by the Parliament of England on the subject of the succession (ends p. 44)
44: Extract from Lord Herbert's Religion Laique, translated by Sr Chevreau (ends p. 69)
71: History of the Bishop of Gap
74: Account of the carnival at Hannover, 1702, subtitled 'Trimalcion Moderne'. The Hannover carnival was begun by Ernst August and continued at Herrenhausen by Sophia (ends? page 96)
96: Timandre instruit par son Genie; traduction du Grec faite par Mr. le Comte Albert dans sa prison
118: A Warsovie le 30 May 1702 - on the celebrations for Charles XII's 20th birthday
121: 'La troupe de la Reine de Prusse', from Mlle de Pelniz to 'Mad. De Kilmensec'
124: 'Cy commence le premier livre du premier Volume des Chroniques d'Angleterre' – begins with the Norman Conquest
130: from Mr. Schmidt to Sophia, n.d.
133: On the death of M. de St Evremont, 9/20 Sep 1703
134: Epitaphs on St Evremond
135: Story of a young deaf and dumb man who recovered his faculties at Chartres, recounted 7 Jul 1703
137: 'Le Roi, passé'
139: Dialogue headed 'Pollichinelle' between Polichinelle and Le Voisin
146: Religion de la reine Christine de Suede
149: Anonymous: an answer demanded by Sophia, 'hier au soir des vers faits par Monsieur de Boisdavid dans sa maladie' [i.e. Anton Simon, marquis de Bois-David, d. 1706, Huguenot soldier]
152: Histoire, traduit de la lettre de S.A.R. Madame, de Versaille le 10 d'Octobre 1706 [mostly in verse]
154: Historiette [in prose], about an English gentleman
157: On the origin of the word 'blaze' (from the Flemish)
157: On Monsieur de Polignac and others
158: 16 lines of verse in four stanzas, beginning 'Consolés vous peoples François'
159: Extrait (possibly from a letter), dated at end Hanover, 5 Aug 1699; on the Duchess of Modena
162: Extrait (apparently from a letter to Sophia), undated; begins with Lt Gen de Schoulenberg
177: Extrait (again, apparently to Sophia), from Hanover, 17 Jan 1701. Begins: 'Il a toujours été naturel à Votre Majesté d'allier la Majesté avec les Graces'
181: 'Avanture tragique arrive en Perigord', about a certain M. Bertin
188: Unsigned letter from Madrid, 24 Apr 1698, about the departure of the King for Toledo
197: Memoire sur le Portugal. [Ends page 232]
232: Memoire addressed to Louis Baron de Zels from his father the Elector Palatine
234: On the Marquis de Keristan, a Breton gentleman [ends page 256]
256: Exhortations delivered to recipients of various decorations: Jarretiere Bleue, Le Petit George, Grand Collier [etc]; in Latin and French
261: Story of a young gentleman of Touraine
275: Relation of the Christian death of the Duchesse d'Orléans
284: Entry of the King of Spain to Madrid, 14 April (no year) – i.e. Felipe V (Philippe, duc d'Anjou)
291: Portrait of the King of Spain, Philippe 5e
292: Relation of the marriage of the Duchess of Modena, Princess of Brunswick
300: Oraison Funebre de Made. Tiquet
320: Account of the first audiences of M. de Spanheim at Versailles, 8/18 Feb 1698
342: Portrait of the queen of Spain by the Princesse de Vaudémont
342: Plea of an English lady against her husband, to prove that she was not his husband (partly relates to the scandal of Lady Inchiquin and her marriage to Lord Howard of Escrick)

344: Reasons given by the Duchess of York for embracing the Roman religion, written in her own hand. Dated at end from St James's, London, 20 Aug 1670

353: Extract from the relation of M. Spanheim, Paris, 28 Feb/10 Mar 1698


Later entries:
363: [in a different hand] Undated letter, apparently signed 'Coste', to 'Madame' – apparently not to Sophia

367: Compendio del Trattato della Sfera [in Italian] – ends page 389

391: 'Etymologie of Germain and English Words' – alphabetical word list of English words with translations into German, and some further explanations and (imaginative) etymologies, usually in French. Ends p. 424

425: Sur le Roy Louis 15. Fait en 1732 [four lines of verse]

425: Chanson sur le Marechal de Coigni et Bell-Isle sur l'affaire de la Salme pres de l'Abaye de Clausen en 1735 [32 lines of verse in 8 stanzas]