THE SHARPLES COLLECTION
Family & Legal Papers
(1794-1854)

A Brief Introduction
to the
Microfilm Edition of the
Sharple Family collection

By
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From the Special Collections and Archives Department at:

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&
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The Anglo-American career of the Sharples family of artists exemplifies the artistic exchange between Britain and America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. English-born James Sharples (c. 1751-1811) built his career on drawing profile portraits in pastel and, upon spending several years in America, became known for his portraits of George and Martha Washington and other eminent Americans. Ellen Wallace Sharples (1769-1849), his third wife and former pupil, copied her husband's portraits on commission and taught herself to paint miniatures. The couple trained James's son by his second wife, Felix (c. 1786-after 1823), and their own two children, James Jr. (c. 1788-1839) and Rolinda (c. 1793-1838), all of whom followed in the footsteps of their parents and became successful portrait painters in their own right.

Ellen Sharples's diary and letter book span the years 1803 to 1836 and 1840 to 1845 respectively. The diary follows Ellen, James, Felix, James Jr., and, most of all, Rolinda through life in Bath, across the ocean to New York, and back again to Bristol. Ellen's account describes her artistic pursuits, her attention to the education of her daughter, her eager appetite for the literature of the day, her extensive travel experiences, the financial ups and downs of the Sharples's property and income, and her grief at the loss first of her husband and, later, in the letter book, her two children. As Rolinda grows to adulthood, Ellen shifts to focus on her daughter's ambitious career as a painter in oils and includes
some of Rolinda’s own diary. Rolinda, like her parents and brothers, excelled in portrait painting, but she also produced a number of scenes of modern life, mostly taken from life around Bristol. She exhibited at the Royal Academy and became an honorary member of the Society of British Artists. A disciplined and diligent artist, her own account communicates a drive and ambition beyond that of her family to excel in her chosen profession. Together, the diary and letter book offer an intimate account of the life of a cultured woman and her daughter in both England and America. In addition, the personal and legal papers of the two generations of the Sharples family present a wealth of documentation of their finances and include the wills of each family member, bank account books, receipts, and certificates of shares. A few documents relating to the Bristol Academy of Fine Arts (now the Royal West of England Academy) also survive with the Sharples material. The Bristol Academy was the principal beneficiary of Ellen’s estate, and she was involved in the institution’s founding.

The Sharples papers are of interest for several reasons. Firstly, they illuminate the transatlantic nature of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American art. Just as many American artists, beginning with Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, travelled to London to seek the professional training and advancement unavailable in America, English artists brought their artistic skills to America to take advantage of the growing demand for portraiture in the young republic. Ellen’s account demonstrates the adroitness with which she and her husband established a successful portraiture business in America. The Sharples were well educated, cultured, and genteel and adept at making acquaintances and finding commissions. Secondly, the papers offer an account of the
enterprise of art-making as a family business. Following James, the family of artists had a distinctive style of portraiture, to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to attribute portraits to an individual family member. Thirdly, on an individual level, Ellen’s writing paints a fascinating picture of an independent-minded woman, a professional artist and devoted mother, who saw herself essentially as a work in progress and continually sought to learn. James, Felix, and James Jr. remain somewhat inscrutable, as Ellen keeps them at arm’s length in her account. And finally, Ellen’s journal witnesses the fostering of Rolinda’s success as an artist, first by her parents’ instruction and, after her father’s death, her mother’s love and support. Advancing well past the practice of art as a feminine accomplishment, Rolinda’s career as a female artist in the first decades of the nineteenth century was highly unusual and an impressive achievement.¹

The characteristic portrait by James was small in scale, nine by seven inches, though large enough to be meant to be hung on a wall. The sitter was rendered in pastel in a bust- or waist-length profile or three-quarter-view on a grayish-tan textured paper.² The background was often a gradated vivid blue. The portraits exhibit a firm handling with forms carefully delineated and softly modeled. Ellen, Felix, James Jr. and Rolinda would all make copies of their father’s originals and execute originals in the same manner. In addition to copying her husband’s work in pastel, Ellen also drew heads in pencil. The


² For a brief and informative history of the profile portrait in Europe and the United States in the second half of the eighteenth century that includes the Sharples, see Ellen Miles, Saint-Alevin and the Neoclassical Profile Portrait in America (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), pp. 27-60.
two largest collections of works by the Sharples in public museums are at the Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia and the Bristol City Art Museum and Gallery. The Philadelphia collection is composed of the Sharples’s portraits of distinguished Americans. Bristol, too, houses several pastel portraits and a handful of miniatures by Ellen but also several of Rolinda’s oil portraits and subject paintings. Other works by the Sharples can be found in many other major public collections, such as the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the New-York Historical Society; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut; the Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan; the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts; and the National Portrait Gallery, London, and in many private collections.

Early life

James Sharples was born around 1851 in England. Not much is known about his family or his early life except that tradition suggests he was sent to France to study for the priesthood. He rejected this calling and returned to England to pursue a career as an artist, although how or with whom he trained is again obscure. He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1779 while living in Cambridge. He was in Bath and Bristol in 1781 according to a notice placed in the Bristol Journal that announced “Mr. Sharples, from Bath, Portrait Painter in Oil and Crayons, begs leave to inform the nobility and gentry of Bristol that he has removed from the Hartwells to Mrs. Jeffery’s, Milliner, 28 Clare

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3 See Algernon Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts: a complete dictionary of contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904 vol. 3 (London: H. Graves and Co., 1905-6), pp. 92-93. James exhibited two portraits each in 1779 and 1782, six portraits in 1783, and four portraits in 1785, including a “Newcastle lady in the character of Spring.”
Street, where upwards of one hundred specimens of known characters may be seen.”

Again, little information is available on James’s first two marriages. With his first wife, he had a son, George, who did not live with him and is mentioned only briefly in Ellen’s papers. James did remember him in his will with a legacy of £200, stating that he had already received his mother’s marriage portion. George may have been an artist as well since a G. Sharples of London exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815. With his second wife, James had a second son, Felix, who grew up with James and Ellen. James met Ellen while giving drawing classes in Bath, and they were probably married in 1787 in Lancaster. Little is known of Ellen’s early life except that she came of a Quaker family and lived in Bath. In 1788, the couple moved to Liverpool, where James Junior was probably born. By 1793, they had moved to Bath and purchased a house in Lansdown Crescent. Daughter Rolinda was most likely born there in 1793.

The United States 1794-1801

Although the exact date is unclear, the family most likely journeyed to the United States for the first time in 1794. During the passage across the Atlantic, however,

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5 George is mentioned during a visit to Liverpool after the Sharples’s return from America and subsequently while the family is in London to settle James’s will.

6 Ellen also mentions attending a boarding school in Manchester at one point in the diary.

7 See Knox, *The Sharples*, for the most thorough and comprehensive account of the Sharples’ family life and artistic careers. Knox includes several appendices with lists of known works by each of the members of the families, several excerpts from the diaries, and transcriptions of the wills. Biographical notices of each of the Sharples are also to be found in several biographical dictionaries of artists.
their ship was captured by a French privateer and the family was interned at Brest for seven months. Later, in 1803, when James reported news of war with France, Ellen briefly recalls the terrible ordeal in her diary:

War! how dreadful the sound, which ever way contemplated misery precedes, accompanies, and follows in its train. Our family have experienced; severely experienced much of its misery, and much did we witness during our seven months captivity in France, too heart rending to recall [sic].

After their release, they crossed the ocean and arrived in the United States to commence a new life.

The life of a portraitist in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in America was not always an easy one. Portraiture was a competitive field, and many artists led itinerant lives – spending time away from their families – in search of the commissions they needed to make a living. At this period in America, little professional training was available for the aspiring artist. American-born artists often travelled to London to seek training, following in the footsteps of Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley. But those that did not travel overseas could look to the example of the English and continental European artists that travelled to America. A number of English and continental European artists, in fact, emigrated to America to pursue the success that sometimes eluded them at home.

In journeying to America, the Sharples joined this wave of European artists, some of whom remained permanently and some of whom, like the Sharples, stayed for a number

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of years before returning home. In Philadelphia and New York, where the Sharples spent much of their time, one of the most prominent of their European contemporaries was Charles Balthazar Julien Févret de Saint-Mémin who arrived in New York in 1793 and began drawing portraits in 1796. Like Sharples, Saint-Mémin specialized in the profile, but he executed the profile in black and white chalk on paper with the use of a mechanical device called a physiognotrace and then quickly copied the image onto a small copperplate, engraved, and then printed it. For the price of $25 for men and $35 for women, the client received the drawing, the copperplate, and twelve engravings. The Sharples’s price for their pastel portraits was lower than Saint-Mémin—they charged $15 for a profile and $20 for a full-face view. Among their British contemporaries was the enamellist William Russell Birch (arrived in America in 1794) and the miniaturists Robert Field (arrived in 1794), Scottish brothers Archibald and Alexander Robertson (arrived in 1791), and Irishman Walter Robertson (in America 1793-1796). Their American-born peers included easel painters Charles Willson Peale and Gilbert Stuart and miniaturists James Peale, Edward Greene Malbone, Benjamin Trott, and Anson Dickinson, to name a handful of the most talented. Upon setting up shop in America, the Sharples thus placed themselves in competition with a variety of portraitists—easel painters, miniaturists, silhouettists, and other draughtsmen. Ellen also became one of the earliest women artists to practice professionally in America. They seem, however, to

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9 See Miles, *Saint-Mémin* for a complete account of Saint-Mémin’s career. Although no mechanical devices are ever mentioned in the Sharples papers, it is possible that James did use one. Miles offers two possible sources of evidence: a quote from George Washington Parke Custis recalling James’s portrait of George Washington as “an admirable likeness, the profile taken by an instrument and critically correct” and Sharples’s offer for sale in 1800 of “polygraphick copies from any of the original Portraits in Mr. Sharples’s collection of Distinguished Characters.” (Quoted in Miles, *Saint-Mémin*, p. 59, from George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollection and Private Memoirs of Washington* (New York: Derby and
have rarely mixed with other artists as few of these artists’ names find their way into Ellen’s memoir.10

Although the artist, theatrical entrepreneur, and art historian William Dunlap is not mentioned in Ellen’s account, he is one artist with a documented acquaintance with the Sharples. Dunlap’s seminal 1834 *The History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* provides a brief source of information on the Sharples’s career in America in the 1790s. Although the exact chronology is unclear, according to Dunlap, James, with his family,

visited all the cities and town of the United States, carrying letters to persons distinguished, either military, civil, or literary, with a request to paint their portraits for his collection. This being granted, and the portrait finished in about two hours, the likeness generally induced an order for a copy, and brought as sitters all who saw it. His price for the profile was $15; and for the full-face (never so good) $20. He painted immense numbers, and most of them very valuable, for characteristic portraiture. His head quarters was New-York; and he generally travelled in a four-wheeled carriage of his own contrivance, which carried the whole family and all his implements, and was drawn by one large horse.—He was a plain, well-disposed man, and accumulated property by honest industry, and uncommon facility with his materials.11

Ellen writes years later in a letter on April 10, 1843, “There certainly is no country where talents and useful accomplishments are more appreciated nor none where greater hospitality or kindness can be shown to strangers.” As Ellen implies and Dunlap

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Jackson, 1860) and Gottesman, *Arts and Crafts in New York* v. 3 (New York: New York Historical Society, 1938, p. 15, no. 32). The advertisement also states that the charge for a polygraphic copy is $2.50.

10 In 1803, the family met Rubens Peale in Bristol when they went to see the “skeleton of the Mammoth which exceeded our expectation by its prodigious size & form” during Rubens and Rembrandt Peale’s trip to England. Rubens took the mastodon skeleton on tour around the country. See Lillian B. Miller, ed., *The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy, 1770-1870* (New York: Abbeville Press in association with The Trust for Museum Exhibitions, and the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1996), p. 36.

11 William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (New York: George P. Scott, 1834), pp. 70-71. Ellen mentions this carriage in 1803 when she recounts that “Felix brought home our small one horse phaeton made at New York on a new plan of Mr. S’s contrivance, and which, since our return to England had remained in Bristol.”
suggests, the Sharples prospered in America, with James receiving many commissions from well-known Americans. For a time, the family stayed in Philadelphia, and James is listed in Philadelphia’s city directory of 1797. He is then listed in the New York Directory for 1798 and 1799, and Dunlap records visits with the Sharples in New York in late 1797 and 1798. In 1796 or 1797, James made profile portraits of George and Martha Washington at a sitting in Philadelphia. The sittings are undocumented, but Washington paid Sharples for portraits of George Washington Parke Custis and the son of the Marquis de Lafayette in May 1796. These portraits proved to be very lucrative, as over the years all of the Sharples made and sold copies. Katherine Knox identified roughly thirty of these portraits in 1930. One of these portraits, now in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, is framed with an inscription from Eliza Parke Custis stating:

This is an Original Portrait of Genl Washington taken in 1797 – it was painted by Mr. Sharpless & is an exact likeness except the complexion Genl Washington was very fair with light brown almost auburn hair – he had not a black beard. He had artificial teeth but so well fixed, that they did not disfigure his mouth – his hair was thin, craped & dress with powder & pomatum as this profile.

Later, in 1810, on their second stay in New York, Ellen observed a lackluster Fourth of July in New York:

A full length portrait of Gen. Washington decorated with festoons of blue silk, a gilded eagle on the top, was placed upright on a kind of bier & carried on the shoulders of a great number of men; this, and a few flags, were all that constituted the show, in honour of the American Independence.

Although unimpressed at the sight, Ellen affirms the nation’s veneration of its founding father in the parade of Washington’s portrait. Scenes showing portraits of Washington festooned and garlanded just like the one that Ellen and Rolinda observed at the parade were a popular subject for embroideries. The Sharples’s own portraits also encouraged this homage to Washington.

In Philadelphia, Ellen first began to draw portraits professionally in order to supplement the family’s income by undertaking the numerous copies of portraits requested by clients. Ellen’s diary testifies that James, in fact, spent much of his time on mechanical inventions rather than seeking portrait commissions. James’s mechanical pursuits caused his wife some anxiety, as she remarks that “Mr. S. had greater talents for inventing then for bringing his inventions into use; more disposed to apply to something new. A considerable sum had been spent in experiments . . . He sanguine in their success had been agreeably excited considering the utility his inventions would be of to society, as well as very advantageous to his family.” In 1806, Ellen reflects on their time in America and claims James’s predilection for invention as one of the reasons that she commenced her own professional career:

The continual fluctuation of the funds, & other property in which our money had been invested, the uncertainty in mechanical pursuits, in which Mr. S. delighted: all had an influence in deciding me, soon after our arrival in Philadelphia, where congress there assembled, to make my drawing, which had been learnt & practised as an ornamental art for amusement, available to a useful purpose. Mr. S. was generally engaged drawing in crayons the portraits of the most distinguished Americans, foreign ministers, & other distinguished visitants from Europe. Copies were frequently required; these I undertook, & was so far successful, as to have as many commissions

as I could execute; they were thought equal to the originals, price the same: we lived in good style associating in the first society.

Bath 1803-1806 – Ellen’s Diary

The family returned to Bath in 1801 (Ellen stated, “One of the motives for our return from America was the disposal of our house in Lansdown Crescent”), and there the family resided in 1803 when Ellen’s journal begins. The surviving journal is in fact a compilation copied directly from notes at a later date, around 1841, as she describes in a letter: “I have copied, as neatly as I could, letters, &, beginnings of letters not in precise order, from the want of dates; also journals & memorandums, that had been written on paper, & in books of all sorts & sizes, & have filled up, from reminiscence long intervals of time, when other avocations had occasioned their discontinuance.” In chronicling daily activities and accomplishments in the journal, Ellen’s rhetorical style is straightforward. She often pauses, however, for reflection and commentary on books or political events. She clearly disliked idleness. Finding herself stuck waiting for a ferry to return on a day excursion out of New York with friends, she muses that “from unforeseen impediments in our progress, so opposed to the active principles of our nature, intervals will sometimes occur in which nothing has power to amuse and engage the mind, intervals which may be considered as lost time, production of nothing agreeable for the present or for future retrospection.” In some of the early years of the journal, Ellen includes a summary of a given year’s activity. These summaries illuminate her values and interests: she proudly records both her professional achievements and amateur accomplishments in lists of portraits painted, books read, completed sewing projects, and Rolinda’s educational progress.
Ellen also reveals a hunger for knowledge. In fact, the diary is more a chronicle of a reader than of an artist. Executing portraits and miniatures in watercolor on ivory – the latter a skill she taught herself in 1803 – took up much of her time as her diary testifies, but her comments characterized this activity as work.\textsuperscript{17} She also passed time doing needlework, including a few ambitious subject pieces in the early years of the journal. And she could amuse herself by “viewing prospects” with a discerning eye, enjoying scenery she often described as sublime or picturesque. On one American outing in September 1810, she “regretted that I had not brought a book as I saw little that was interesting the country being flat & uniform.” Indeed, it is her voracious reading that is extraordinary, as detailed in the appendix to this essay. Ellen was well-read and au courant with the latest writing and offers her opinions, evaluating authors such as Pope, Swift, and Gay both on their wit and talents and on their character. Her reading choices were primarily from history, philosophy, and classics rather than from fiction. Later, in New York, Ellen continued her European reading, but enjoyed the occasional American writer. Reading Washington Irving’s 1809 \textit{History of New York}, she delights in the “satirical work replete with wit & humour conveying much information of the commencement and first settlement of this city.” The diary is a portrait of a cultured, literate woman who views reading as both a pleasure and a necessity.

Ellen instilled this love of activity and learning in her daughter. The journal not only details her own continuing education, but also communicates her pride in her daughter and the education she is able to give to her. Rolinda’s education at home absorbed much

\textsuperscript{17} Knox includes a useful appendix which extracts all of Ellen’s entries related to her artistic pursuits
of Ellen’s attention and energy. And although the Sharples observed some gender divisions in educating Rolinda – James taught arithmetic and natural philosophy while Ellen taught reading, writing, drawing, geography, French, and needlework – Ellen strongly believed in a woman’s ability to support herself independently. Ellen gave Rolinda the means to be independent should the need arise by training her to be an artist:

I had frequently thought that every well educated female, particularly those who had only small fortunes, should at least have the power, if they did not exercise it, by the cultivation of some available talent, of obtaining the conveniences, & some of the elegances of life, & be enabled always to preserve that respectable position in society to which they had been accustomed.

In another of Ellen’s occasional but characteristic remarks on the education of women, she reacts to her feelings of helplessness in proving her husband’s will:

Going to the bank, & the Attorneys, caused me a great deal of agitation & when I had my name to write my hand shook so that it was with difficulty I could do it. Girls as well as boys should be accustomed to transact business of various kinds & to enter public banks, and offices, which would prevent the distressing sensations which women experience when obliged to do it late in life. Extreme timidity gives awkwardness and disqualifies any one from acting with perfect propriety. A proper degree of confidence & firmness is of inestimable advantage.

Rolinda learned her lessons well and echoed her mother when, in 1816, at age twenty-two she notes:

The advantages of a faithful journal are many: recording all the right & wrong actions of the day would tend to prevent the wrong actions from being so frequently committed: would not the dislike of reading I have done nothing to day of which my conscience can approve have some influence in preventing the repetition of such a day? and might not the pleasure derived from the reflection of spending a day well lead to doing so again?

(Knox, The Sharples, pp. 117-122).
Bristol, London, aboard ship, and New York 1806-1811

In 1806, the family decided to return to America. They set out on a packet ship from Bristol, but the ship struck a rock and was detained for repairs. Hearing that the peace negotiations between England and France were broken off and therefore the funds in which the Sharples had much of their money invested had fallen in value, they delayed travelling and stayed in Bristol. Felix and James, Jr., however, begged to go ahead, and they embarked on the ship once it was repaired. Aside from some months spent in London, Ellen, James, and Rolinda remained in Bristol until 1809. Although not mentioned in the diary, while in London, Ellen exhibited six miniatures or pastel portraits, including one of Washington, at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1807. At this point, Ellen departs from her monthly summaries with a dramatic daily account of their passage across the Atlantic. The family travelled probably as comfortably as was possible at the time as they had their own cabin, aboard the ship, and brought along their servant. Nevertheless, Ellen chronicles the alternate fears and boredom of the long ship voyage, which lasted almost eight weeks. At one point she describes herself as moved “up and down, backwards & forwards, sideways, & circularly.” Upon arrival in New York, she breathes a sigh of relief, noting that to “be near the shore after a long sea voyage is productive of very pleasurable sensations, all agitation and apprehension of danger long experienced suddenly ceases, & the mind reposes in tranquility. It seems like the awaking from an uneasy dream.”

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18 Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts*, p. 93
Once in New York, the family visited old friends and after searching for awhile settled into a new home. The journal returns to monthly accounts again, but Ellen paints a vivid picture of the bustling city of New York. Life continued with educating Rolinda, reading, producing portraits, social visits, and excursions into the countryside. Ellen, Rolinda, and James were reunited with James Jr., who by then was living in Albany, but Felix did not appear as he had gone down South. In 1810, James began to ail and, at the beginning of 1811, his illness worsened. As Ellen describes, she spent “the month of January in great anxiety & uneasiness, attending day and night on Mr. S. who has been extremely ill.” He died at the end of February, and Ellen felt terrible grief at his loss. On March 25, she notes:

This has been a melancholy fortnight spent in painful retrospections, & distressing anticipations. When I could apply to business was engaged in preparations for leaving New York. It has been the anxious wish of Mr. S. during his illness that in case of his death, I should return with James & Rolinda to England. He was apprehensive that war would take place between the two countries, and that we might experience inconvenience by remaining: the climate he was assured less favourable to health, the loss of which would be ill compensated by pecuniary advantages in the investment of property, & professional success that America certainly possessed.

In his will (included among the personal papers), James left lands that he owned in Pennsylvania to his son Felix “who is very partial to America and wishes to remain.” Ellen remarked that “Felix at a great distance, in Virginia, to his extreme grief arrived just too late to have the satisfaction of speaking to his father, melancholy as it would have been.” Felix returned to Virginia when Ellen, Rolinda, and James Jr. left, despite the fact that Ellen “gave to Felix most of the portraits of distinguished Americans, books, drawing apparatus colours, &c. introduced him to all our acquaintance hoping that he
would be induced to remain in New York.” He continued his portrait practice in the South; his pastel portraits executed there tend to be three-quarter-view or full face in contrast to the profiles of his father. The family also auctioned off some of their portraits according to an advertisement in the *New York Public Advertiser* on April 6, 1811: “The Collection of Original Portraits of Distinguished American Characters painted by the late James Sharples, Esq. are for sale, and may be seen at No. 3 Lispenard Street, . . .”

**Bristol 1811-1836**

The trip back across the Atlantic lasted only four and a half weeks, and Ellen’s account is less extensive than that of the journey out. The three Sharples returned to settle in Bristol in rented “drawing room apartments.” A new element to the diary begins when Ellen mentions in 1812 that “Rolinda commenced oil painting on the 21, & has since applied with great ardour, continuing other studies, & having lessons in music, practising &c.” Soon thereafter in 1813, Ellen notes that she “sat for my picture to Rolinda in oil colours as large as life, kit kat size, the first portrait she painted in oils.” Rolinda finished the portrait in a couple of months. Ellen’s monthly summaries continue to mention her own reading and describe her and her daughter’s activities – music, walks,

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19 At least some of the portraits given to Felix are in the collection of Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia.


22 The term “kit kat size” derives from the well-known group of portraits painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller of the members of the London Kit Kat Club, a group of Whigs that included such notables as Robert Walpole, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele. Kneller’s portraits were all of a uniform size and pictured the upper half of the body.
sewing, visiting — but, now, Rolinda’s work in both crayon and oil become a constant feature. By the end of the year, Rolinda returned to paint her mother again “large as life, kit kat size; she, now much improved in painting, having become discontented with the one executed in Jan. 7.” The portrait reproduced as the frontispiece to this essay is likely Rolinda’s second portrait of her mother. She also painted a self-portrait (c. 1814; Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery) and a double portrait entitled *The Artist and Her Mother* (c. 1816; Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery).

In Bristol, James Jr. made a living by continuing to execute small-scale portraits in the family’s style. In December of 1813, for example, Ellen notes that “[t]he portraits in crayons executed by my son [James] are much admired, he has had many commissions, generally going out to draw.” Rolinda’s full-size oils depart from the family’s characteristic crayon portraits. By taking up oil painting, Rolinda embarked on a much more ambitious career than that of her parents or her brothers. While Ellen’s account characterizes her work as part of a cultured life, full of travel, reading, drawing, sewing, walks, and social visits, Rolinda’s chronicle focuses almost exclusively on her art as a profession and a career, an unusual path for a female artist. Ellen had described her own drawing as “learned & practised as an ornamental art for amusement, available to a useful purpose,” but she describes Rolinda as “pursuing her profession with the greatest ardour, most desirous to attain excellence.” Ellen is pleased by her daughter’s talent and ambition in painting, writing in December 1813:

23 See Kathryn Metz, “Ellen and Rolinda Sharples: mother and daughter painters” *Woman’s Art Journal* volume 16 (Spring/Summer 1995), pp. 3-11 for an excellent account of Rolinda’s career as a woman artist.
It is very delightful to me to see her always cheerful and happy, ardently engaged in various intellectual pursuits, particularly that of painting, for which she has a decided taste. Exercising it as a profession she views as attended with every kind of advantage. The employment itself is a positive pleasure; It procures in exchange many articles of utility & luxury that otherwise wd be regarded as extravagance the persons she draws entertain her whilst sitting, become her friends and continue to be so, ever after meeting her with smiling countenances and kind greetings, and invarious ways show her attention, and contribute to her amusement. The view in perspective is to her equally pleasing. less dependance on capricious fortune, attainment of excellence not only in portrait painting, but in the higher branches of art, and the consequent approval of the good, the wise, the learned & ingenious.

In May of 1814, the family made an extended stay in London. Unlike past visits there, when art exhibitions figured occasionally, on this sojourn, Ellen, Rolinda, and James Jr. visited several museums and art exhibitions, presumably desired by Rolinda. These visits afford a window on the London art world at the time and for the first time in the journal, Ellen mentions viewing works of art by her contemporaries. The three spent “6 hours in the morning very agreeably at the Royal Exhibition. The pleasure with which James & Rolinda viewed the pictures, and the advantage they would probably derive from attentively observing them, gave me an additional interest to seek out the various beauties in the works of the most distinguished artists.” Along with some visits to smaller exhibitions, they arranged to purchase plaster casts to take home to Clifton to serve as models for drawing. They went to “Turners gallery where we greatly admired a picture of a storm, finished in a coarse style, but which at a proper distance had a wonderful effect; some of the sea pieces we thought possessed considerable merit, many of his pictures we did not like.” Later, they spent “a few hours most delightfully at the British Institution viewing the paintings of Hogarth, Gainsborough, Wilson, Mengs, and Zophany.”

They viewed the Parthenon sculptures, or “Lord Elgins Marbles,” at Burlington House:

On our first entrance these fragments of antiquity had the appearance of old lumbering stones, but on viewing each some great excellency was discovered, and the
longer viewed appeared the more admirable, perfectly like nature; some of them supposed to have been the work of Praxitiles, or Phidias, I forget which. These had been brought from Athens, most of them taken from the ruins of the Parthenon, the beautiful Temple of Minerva.

Again, for the first time, they approach other artists, making their way to the “rooms of most of the fashionable portrait painters.” Ellen is interested in the prices that these painters charged for their pictures, and she carefully notes that Sir Thomas Lawrence charged “80, 100, 150, 200, & 300 guineas for the different sizes,” while the prices of others ranged “from 45, 50, to 200 guineas.” They also visit Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, the two American painters who had successfully established themselves in London as history painters:

Visited West’s, and the two Reinagles, much pleased with the paintings of Philip R. & finding that he gave lessons, at 2 guineas each, appointed a morning for Rolinda to wait upon him. We spent a whole morning there, & she received instructions that have been extremely advantageous to her. Mr R. bestowed uncommon attention, omitting no information that he considered would be useful, employing me the whole time she was practising to write down the instructions according to his dictation: his daughter, a pleasing girl, was copying a landscape. We were extremely delighted at Mr. Copleys with the brilliancy of colouring, and high finishing of his historical pictures which excited our highest admiration and wonder. The old gentleman was exceedingly polite, showed us his earlier productions, a Titian, and conversed with us a considerable time.

Rolinda’s instruction with Philip Reinagle, an animal and landscape painter who had become a full member of the Royal Academy the year before, is her only recorded art instruction besides that which she received from her parents.

After 1814, the journal alternates between Rolinda’s diary, copied by Ellen “from my dear Rolinda’s Diaries or rather occasional Memorandums written in books of various sizes her numerous pursuits, & very active life being opposed to a regular noting down of the occurrences of each, as she had intended,” and Ellen’s summaries of her daughter’s
life. In both cases, Rolinda's life as an artist dominates. Rolinda worked steadily and
diligently almost every day on her painting. Members of her social circle often came and
sat for various figures in her compositions. Although she and her mother occupied
themselves with music, visiting, and reading, her primary concern was her art.

From 1816 until her death, Rolinda executed a number of ambitious and sizable scenes of
modern life – among them are *Cloak Room at the Clifton Assembly Rooms* (1817-18;
Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery), *The Market* (1820; location unknown), *Rowanham
Ferry* (1820-22; location unknown), *A Mouse* (1822-24; location unknown), *Stoppage of
the Bank* (1825-27; Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery), *Clifton Race Course* (1830-
36; Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery), *The Trial of Colonel Brereton After the
Bristol Riots* (1832-34; Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery).\(^{24}\) For these scenes of
modern life, Rolinda often made preliminary sketches from life in order to achieve an
accurate depiction of her subject.

Although Rolinda's subject matter was regional and she and her family only visited
London twice during the years she was painting in oils, she, like any ambitious artist,
looked to London as the center of the art world. In 1820, the Royal Academy accepted
Rolinda's submission of *The Market* (1820) and four small pictures.\(^{25}\) *The Market*
attracted crowds similar to those around that year's offerings by some of Rolinda's most
eminent contemporaries, David Wilkie, William Mulready, and Charles Robert Leslie. In

\(^{24}\) A number of the paintings listed that are in the collection of the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery are
reproduced in Metz, "Ellen and Rolinda Sharples: Mother and Daughter Painters."
1822, she exhibited *Rownham Ferry* and a smaller picture of Chepstow Castle, and in 1824, she sent *A Mouse!*, which attracted favorable notice. In 1825, she began exhibiting at the new formed Society of British Artists and exhibited there eight times until her death. In fact, she was unanimously elected an Honorary Member of the Society of British Artists in 1827, the highest honor bestowed by the Society on a female artist. A copy of the letter is included by Ellen in the diary. But Rolinda looked only partially to London for professional advancement. Several of her paintings also toured to the major regional cities. *A Mouse!* and *The Market*, for example, were exhibited in Carlisle in 1824. Other paintings were shown in Liverpool, Dublin, Southampton, Leeds, Birmingham, and Bristol.26

Rolinda’s diary additionally gives witness to the difficulties of being an artist and the vagaries of selling pictures when she describes her experience with a Dr. Mackey, “a gentleman of large fortune,” who purchased *The Market* after viewing it at the Society of British Artists in 1825 and *Rownham Ferry* each for 100 guineas and *A Mouse!* for 50 guineas. Mackey commissioned another painting from Rolinda, and she chose the subject of “suspension of payment at a bank.” She diligently completed this ambitious picture two years later in 1827 and exhibited it at the Society of British Artists. She learned, however, that Mackey lost his money by speculating in Mexican Bonds. After this disappointment, she returned to more portrait commissions, even though the bank picture was displayed in Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, and finally Bristol. Other than selling

25 The four paintings were two entitled *Shells* and *Eliza at work* and *Portrait of a lady*. See Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts*, p. 93.
the painting of Chepstow Castle to a Mr. Warne, Rolinda did not sell any of her other subject pictures. It is notable, however, that she sold her paintings at a price competitive with the contemporaries she had met in London. The paintings remained in Ellen’s possession until her death, when she bequeathed many of them to the Bristol Fine Arts Academy (now the Royal West of England Academy). The Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery purchased many of the Sharples’s works from the Royal West of England Academy in 1931. A list of some of these works is given in a letter between P.W.S. Miles, executor of Ellen’s will and vice president of the Bristol Fine Arts Academy, to R.B. Ward among Ellen’s legal papers (15395/24 (b)).

In 1831, Rolinda deviates from her usual terse entries to give a lengthy and detailed account of the Bristol Reform Riots. These took place in October after the House of Lords defeated the Reform Bill that would eventually pass in 1832 and enfranchise a much greater percentage of the male population. Bristol was the site of one of the most violent riots that occurred after the Bill’s initial failure. In the wake of the riots, Rolinda embarked on one of her most ambitious paintings with The Trial of Colonel Brereton After the Bristol Riots (1832-34), a canvas almost six feet long with over one hundred portraits that include many identifiable residents of Bristol. Colonel Brereton was the commander of the local troops who failed to stop the rioting and was then court martialed. Rolinda attended the trial on several different days and noted that “I had taken pencil sketches of poor Brereton, whose earthly tribunal was so dreadfully terminated.”

26 See Paula Gillett, Worlds of art: painters in Victorian society (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, c1990) for an account of the art world in Britain in the nineteenth century.
Brereton committed suicide two days after the trial began. Rolinda worked steadily on the Court Martial painting for several years alongside her portrait commissions.

The Letter Book 1836-1849

Rolinda’s diary account ceases in 1836, and as Ellen’s letters poignantly make clear, Rolinda died of breast cancer in 1838 and James of tuberculosis the year after in 1839. Ellen’s letters demonstrate her despondency at the death of her children and her attempt to find solace in a stoic outlook. In 1840, in the first letter, she writes to her friend Miss Serjeant in admonishment for her reproach that Ellen lacked sympathy for her friend’s misfortune. Ellen reminds her

that in my recent losses, my feelings must have been agonizing; for you knew how uniformly exemplary were the affectionate kindness of my dear highly gifted son & daughter to their mother, how devoted she was, placing all her happiness in them. . . . Now near 72, with enfeebled health, & many of the infirmities that, with equal pace, accompany advancing age: what is there for me but, as much as possible, to temper my mind to patient acquiescence?

As she explains in an 1843 letter to Miss Pigott, Ellen patiently continued to read. In an interesting show of allegiance to her former home, she responds to Fanny Trollope’s 1832 Domestic Manners of the Americans, drawing on her memory of reading it years before: “It is a long time since I read it and have forgotten much but that it was very satirical. From all her subsequent publications it may be judged that whatever of good there was in the country or its inhabitants would escape her or be slightly glanced at. Col. Maxwell’s Run through the U. States I prefer to any work on America.” She concludes that “Mrs. T. offended every American reader.” This letter touchingly reveals Ellen at the end of her life in the same spirit as in her younger years despite her loneliness.
Time and occupation has a wonderful power in restoring tranquility. I am becoming reconciled to a solitary life. Books afford me consolation and amusement, as does study & learning something new. They are recreations to active occupation much of which greatly interests me as I think I am still engaged, as I used to be, for those that were dear to me, though never again to be cheered by their presence & approval.

**Personal and Legal Papers**

Throughout the journal, Ellen touches upon family finances. In the first few years covered by the journal, the Sharples had invested money in "the funds," which often caused anxiety as the value of the funds fluctuated. After James’s death, Ellen briefly describes her "deliberation & a great deal of agitation & anxiety lest I should act wrong, and thereby injure my family" at selling the exchequer bills that James had purchased to buy "Navy 5 per cents" instead. For almost every financial transaction mentioned in Ellen’s account – the sale of the Bath house, renting a house in Bristol, purchasing Navy stock, giving money to Felix after James’s death – a material document can be found among the financial and legal papers.

The will of each family member is included with the exception of Felix, whose date and place of death is untraced. James’s will attests to the professional success of the family on both sides of the Atlantic, although it is possible that James or Ellen had inherited some of their fortune. James left £5000 in a bank account in England and $5000 in an account in the United States to Ellen. He also bequeathed £500 and lands in Pennsylvania to Felix and £1000 each to James Jr. and Rolinda. As mentioned before, he also included a legacy of £200 for his oldest son George, mentioning that George had inherited money at his mother’s death.
After James's death, Ellen, Rolinda, and James Jr. all increased their small fortune through investment in shares. Rolinda left her fortune to Ellen and James Jr.; James Jr., shortly after Rolinda's death, left his entire estate to Ellen. Many of the papers date to 1849-50 and deal with the settling of Ellen's estate after her death. Although the Bristol Academy of Fine Arts is only mentioned once by Ellen in a letter in which she hopes that "to all lovers of taste it will afford an elegance ever varied & delightful source of amusement," she gave £2000 when the institution was founded in 1845. In her will, aside from a number of legacies (the largest was £1000 to her nephew William Sharples) and the bestowal of her possessions on her servant, Ellen left the residual of her estate, over £4000, to the Bristol Academy of Fine Arts. In an address that provides an appropriate last word on the life and career of Ellen Sharples, J.S. Harford, the President of the Bristol Academy and one of the executors of Ellen's will, stated in his address to the members of the Bristol Academy in 1858:

I found in [Ellen Sharples] a most courteous, kind and intelligent lady, animated, in spite of advancing years, by that genuine enthusiasm in favour of the Fine Arts which had led her to form the munificent scheme of becoming the patroness—I might almost say foundress—of this Academy. . . . She alluded with much feeling to the loss of an accomplished daughter, who, had she lived, would of course have inherited her property; but it appeared to console her that she had now thought of a mode of disposing of it by means of which she hoped to confer a lasting Benefit on Art and on its professors.  

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Select Bibliography


Arnold Wilson, “The Sharples family of painters” *Antiques* v. 100 (November 1971), pp. 740-4
Appendix

Books mentioned in Ellen Sharples’s diary and letter book

Note: Books are listed as identified by Ellen Sharples and in the order in which they appear for Ellen and Rolinda respectively. Books occasionally appear in the list more than once if the subsequent mention occurs at a lengthy interval from the first.

Books read by Ellen Sharples

Bruces Travels; Cox’s Travels; Blackstone’s Commentaries; Barruels Memoirs; Swinbourns Travels; Looking Glass; Tales of the Castle; Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy; Walpole’s Anecdotes of painting; Shakespeare Hamlet; Ferguson’s History of Civil Society; a Botanical work; Locke on the Understanding; Humes Essays; Chesterfields Letters; Popes Letters; Virgil’s Aeneid & Eclogues in Latin; Cicero; Letters of Lord Bolingbroke; Dean Swift; Gay’s Fables; Whicherly; Brown’s Vulgar Errors; Miser and Family; Women as they Are; Mrs. Parsons; Dr. Darwins Botanic Garden; Murphys Tacitus; Dr. Cogan’s Philosophical Treatise of the Passions; Manners of the Ancient Germans by Tacitus; The Dialogue on Oratory, supposed to be written by Tacitus; Homers Iliad; Rambler; Reid, on the Intellectual powers of Man; Yorkes Mural Nights, or Elements of Civil Knowledge; Stewarts Philosophy of the Mind; Cogan, the Rhine, or a Journey from Utrect to Frankfort; Belsham’s Essays; 1 vol. on the Art of Prolonging Life by Christopher W. Hufeland; Blackstone; Cicero’s Orations [in Latin]; Kniggs Philosophy; Bonycastle’s Astronomy; Denon’s Travels; Alison on Taste;
Savory’s Letters on Egypt; The Rhine or a Journey from Utrech to Frankfort by Dr. Cogan; Reid on the Intellectual Powers of the Mind; Stewarts Philosophy of the Mind; Falconers Dissertation on the Passions; Belshams Essays; Art of prolonging Life by Hufeland; Armstrong on the Art of Preserving Health; More’s Strictures on Female Education; York; Stewart; Pope; The Iliad; Driden’s Virgil; 3 vols. Travels of Anacharsis; 3 vols. Roman History in French; Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments; Smith’s Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages; 1 vol. Rolin’s Method of Teaching & Studying The Belles Letters; Publick Characters for 1800-1801; Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations; Le Sage’s Atlas; Bigland’s Letters on History; Prozzie’s Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson; Cato on an Essay on Old Age by Cicero, translated by Melmoth; Reid on the Active Powers of the Mind; Pindar and other poems translated by West; a Plato oration said to have been composed by Aspacia; West’s Dissertations on the Olympic Games; Townsend’s Journey through Spain; Miss Burney’s Cecilia; Cato; the tragedies of Eschylus, translated by Potter and in the Idler; tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides; Miss Edgeworth’s Irish Bulls; Zimmerman on Solitude; Horace; Cicero’s Orations; Life of Cicero, translated by Melmoth; Townsend’s Travels; Sophocles translated by Franklin; Piozzi’s Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson; Idler Dr. Johnson; Zimmerman on National Pride, Addison’s Anecdotes; Cours de Literature par la Harpe; Racine, La Thebaide; La Harpe; Gil Blas; Poetry of Sappho, Bion, Moschus, and Muscus; Anacreon translated by Fawkes; Chapitals Chemistry; Ann of St. Ives; Miss Edgeworth’s Leonora; French Dialogues; St. Pierre’s Etudes de la Nature; Roman and English History; Milton’s Paradise Lost; Rambler, Heroditus’s History of Egypt and Greece; Miss Edgeworth’s Practical Education; Dr. Beddoes Hygeia; Chattertons work;
Life of Buonaparte; History of Charles the 12th; Bloomfields Rural Tales, Ballads and Songs; Castle Rackrent; Greaves's Invalid, with obvious means of Enjoying Health and Long Life; Bellois Anecdotes of Literature, and Scarce Books; Bath Characters; Miseries of Human Life; Giffords Juvenal; Crabbs Poems; Esprella's Letters; Dr. Aikins Letters on a course of English Poetry; Dr. Young's Night Thoughts; a Vol. of Poetry containing Hesiod, Fawkes Thioritus, Anacreon, Bion, Moschus, Sappho, Muscus & Apollonius, Rhodius, Lucretius & Graingers Tibullus; Lucians Pharsalia; Quintilians Institute of an Orator; Miss Edgworths Tales of Fashionable Life; Madam Rolands Appeal to Posterity; 3 vols. of Private Memoirs relative to the Last Year of the Reign of Lewis the 16, Late King of France, by Bertrand de Mollville; one vol. Moore's History of the French Revolution; first vol. Knickerbokers History of New York; 2d. vol. of Moores History of the French Revolution; 2 vol. of the History of the Revolution by an unknown author; vol. of Poems by Sir William Jones, chiefly Translations from the Asiatic Languages; Duanes History; Bethams Biographical Dictionary of celebrated women; 2d vol of Knickerbokers History of New York; 1st Number of Medical and Philosophical Register; Women their Condition and Influence in Society, by Alexander Segur translated from the French; Calibs in Search of a Wife, by Mrs. N Moore; Vattels Law of Nations; Haleys Life of Cooper; a vol. of Count Rumford's Essays; Life of Elizabeth Smith; Livy's Roman History; Bigland's Letters on History; Dr. Heberdens Commentaries on the History, and Cure of Diseases; Joices Philosophy; first Lecture in Desaguliers Philosophy; Mr. Graves Spiritual Quixote; Life of Bonaparte; Henry Kirke Whites Letters and Poems; Life of Commodore Prebble; Lay of the Last Minstrel; Cambells Pleasures of Hope; Pliny's Letters; Plutarch's Lives; History of Peter the Great; Miseries of Human Life; 2 vols.
Mother & Daughter; 3 vols. Belinda; Roscoe’s Life of Lorenzo de Medici; Beauties of Burke; Salmangudy; 2 vols. Nature & Art Mrs. Inchbald; 2d. vl. Salmangundy; Townsends Travels in Spain; 4 vols. Leo 10th; Montalbert by Charlotte Smith; Watts on the Improvement of the Mind; Historic Gallery; 4 vols. Anacharses Travels in Greece; 3 vols. Bryan Perdue; Duncan Ciceros Orations; Lamberts Travels in Canada & the U. States; Essay sur la Litterature ou Idee General de L’Art Oratoire; 5 & 6 vol. of Historic Gallery; Bigland; Philosophical Wanderer; Miss Edgeworths Letters to Literary Ladies; 1st & part of the 2d. vol. of Murphys Tacitus; 3 vols. of Price on the Picturesque; 3d & 4th vols. of Tacitus; Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds; Gibbons Roman History; Lady of the Lake; 3 cantos Lay of the Last Minstrel; 2d vol. Biglands His. of Europe; 1st vol Biglands essays; Fresnoys Art of Painting, translated by Mason; Fox His. of the Early part of the Reign of James the First; Burdens Life of Bonaparte; Kotzebues Historical, Literary & Political Anecdotes, & Miscellanies; Joice; Cavallos Philosophyl Three vols. Winter in London; Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle; Gibbon; Ghiour a poem by Lord Byronl Kennets Roman Antiquities; Southbys Metrical Poems; Kotzebues Travels; 3 vols. Patronage Miss Edgeworth; Madoc a poem by Southby; 4th vol. Patronage; 3 vols. Md La Baronne de Stael Notstein; Drummonds Academical Questions; The Heroine; Life of Lackington; Stewarts Philosophical Essays; Irvings Elements of Composition; History of Malta; Quintus Curtus; Life of Alexander; A Treatise on the Madrass System of Education; Walsingham; 1st vol. Md. de Staels Germany; Lady Morgans France; Lady Morgans Italy; Walter Scots novel; The Spy by Cooper; Dr Channings Analyses of the Life of Bonaparte; Thoughts on Power & greatness; Mrs. Trollops Domestic Manners of America; Basil Halls Naval Life; Miss Pigott, Records
of the Palace & the Cottage; Mrs. Trollope; Col. Maxwell’s Run through the U. States;

The Private Correspondence of a Woman of Fashion

Books read by Rolinda Sharples, including books read out loud to her mother, Ellen
Mavor’s Natural History; Mad. Genlis Tales of the Castle; Paul & Virginia [in
French]; The Iliad; Beauties of History; Gays Fables; Sandford & Merton; Telemaque [in
French]; Julius Caesar; 6 vols. of Evenings at Home; Geographical Grammar; Chaptal’s
Chemistry; Catron’s and Rouille’s Roman History; Pope’s Letters; The Speaker;
Robinson Crusoe; the 6 first books of Telemache; Masons Natural History, Mythology;
Gullivers Travels; Travels of Anacharsis; Homer’s Odyssey; Cook’s Voyages; The Iliad;
The Odyssey; Mad. Genlis Theatre of Education; Lady W. Montague Letters; Pindar’s
odes; French Roman History; Greek and Roman History; Kniggs Philosophy; Euripides;
Evenings at Home; Sandford and Merton; Tales of the Castle; Children’s Friend;
Mitford’s Grecian History; Blackstone’s Commentaries; Euclid; Theatre of Education;
Juvenile Trials; Miss Edgworth’s Popular Tales; Mode of Teaching Language to Man by
N.F. Duseis [??]; Elegant Extracts; 2 vols. Scientifick Dialogues; Goldsmiths Abridgment
of the Roman History; Conversations on Chemistry; Livy’s Roman History; 4 vols.
Anacharses Travels in Greece; 3 vols. Bryan Perdue; Duncan Ciceros Orations; Lamberts
Travels in Canada & the U. States; Essay sur la Litterature ou Idee General de L’Art
Oratoire; 5 & 6 vol. of Historic Gallery; Bigland; Philosophical Wanderer’ Miss
Edgworths Letters to Literary Ladies; 1st & part of the 2d. vol. of Murphys Tacitus; 3
vols. of Price on the Picturesque; Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds; Gibbons Roman History;
Drummonds Academical Questions; The Heroine; Life of Lackington; Stewarts
Philosophical Essays; Irving's Elements of Composition; History of Malta; Useful Knowledge; Walter Scott's novel; The Spy by Cooper; Dr Channing's Analyses of the Life of Bonaparte; Thoughts on Power & greatness; Basil Hall's; Landers Travels; Mrs. Trollop's Domestic Manners of America; Refugees in America; Mrs. Lee Canterbury Tales; Euclid
CONTENTS OF THE REELS

REEL 1:
Archive Ref.  Description
B19720       The Diary of Ellen Sharples (1803-1836)
B19721       The Letterbook of Ellen Sharples (1840-1945)

Personal & Legal Papers:
15395/2 (b)  1795-1796
Statement of Account; James Sharples with S. & M. Fisher.

15395/2 (c)  1801 September 10
Promissory note; William Porter to James Sharples, 100 Guineas with interest payable
within 12 months.

15395/2 (d)  1806 June 21
Memorandum of Agreement between James Sharples and John Crate for the sale of No.
2, Grosvenor Place, Bath.

15395/1 (j)  1808 April 16
Account for sale of stock; Barclay, Tritton & Bevan, bankers of London, to James Sharples at No. 5, Bethell Place, Camberwell, London.

15395/2 (e) 1810 March 31
Copy letter; [James Sharples,] No. 3, Lespinard Street, New York, to Barclay & Co. re deposit of two Bills of Exchange.

15395/1 (b) 1810 June 6
Letter; Barclay, Tritton & Bevan, to James Sharples re his account and transfer of stock.

15395/1 (c) 1810 August 2
Letter; Barclay, Tritton & Bevan, to James Sharples re two bills on Glyn & Co.

15395/2 (f) 1811 March 5
Letter; Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co. to James Sharples at No. 3, Lespinard Street, New York, re drawing of Exchequer Bills.

15395/1 (k) 1811 April 30
Notorial Attestation under the seal of William Bleecker, Public Notary in and for the State of New York, of power of attorney given by Ellen Sharples to Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co.

15395/2 (g) 1811 May 27
Receipt; Felix Sharples to Ellen Sharples, his mother, for £217 being part of his father's legacy.

15395/1 (l) 1811 July 23
Probate of the Will of James Sharples.

15395/1 (m) 1811 July 24
Account for expenses of obtaining Probate of James Sharples.

15395/2 (h) 1811 July 24
Bill of Exchange; Ellen Sharples to Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co. requesting payment of above to Messrs. Turner, Bush & Turner.

15395/2 (h.1) 1811 July 24
Receipt for payment of the above.

15395/3 (b) 1811 July 26
Annuities Share Certificate; Ellen Sharples.

15395/1 (o.1-3) 1811 July 31 and October 16
Stamp Office Receipts for Legacy Duty on Estate of James Sharples, signed by George Sharples, Rolinda Sharples, and James Sharples (jnr.).
Annuities Share Certificates; Ellen Sharples, James Sharples and Rolinda Sharples.

Letter; William Sharples, Liverpool to Ellen Sharples.

Extract of Accounts; Mrs. Ellen Sharples.

Annuities Share Certificate; Ellen Sharples.

Letter; Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co., to Ellen Sharples re sale of stock, Navy 5%.

Receipt for sale of the above.

Note re sale of Navy stock.
Copies of Bills of Exchange and Copy Notorial Attestation re payment of £283 sterling;
Felix Thomas Sharples, Northampton County, Virginia.

15395/2 (k)  1816 March 23
Letter; Felix Sharples, Baltimore, Maryland to his mother Ellen Sharples, Bristol.

15395/1 (g)  1820 October 4
Letter; Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co. to Mrs. Ellen Sharples re sale of stock.

15395/3 (g-h)  1825 August 11 & 17
Annuities Share Certificates; Miss Rolinda Sharples.

15395/1 (h)  1827 February 16
Letter; Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co. to Mrs. Ellen Sharples with annexed statement of
account of Miss Rolinda Sharples for 1825-1827.

15395/11  1827 May 23
Note of sale of 3% Consols; Messrs Barclay & Co. for Miss Rolinda Sharples.

15395/1 (n)  1831 May 18
Agreement; John Moulton Bence of Cribbs Lodge, Gloucester and Ellen Sharples, for
one year's tenancy of No. 3, St. Vincent's Parade, Clifton, Bristol.
Share Certificates; Clifton Suspension Bridge, Miss Rolinda Sharples.

Probate of Will of Rolinda Sharples.

Letter; Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co., to Mrs. Ellen Sharples re sale of stock sold for Ellen and James Sharples, Executors of Miss Rolinda Sharples' Estate.

Letter; Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co., to Mrs. Ellen Sharples with annexed statement of account for 1827-1838.

Letter; Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co., to Ellen Sharples re payments to Estate of Rolinda Sharples.

Probate of Will of James Sharples (jnr.)

Letter; Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co., to Ellen Sharples re sale of stock.
Statement of Account; Ellen Sharples with Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co.

Account of purchase of stock; Barclay & Co., for Ellen Sharples.

Circular letter; Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co. to Ellen Sharples re reduction of interest on government Annuities.

Annuities Share Certificates; Ellen Sharples.

Draft Deed of Covenant; Bristol Academy of Fine Arts, Messrs. J.S. Harford, P.W.S. Miles and others with Mrs. Ellen Sharples.

Letter; P.W.S. Miles to Messrs. Osborne & Ward re Deed, above.

Draft Instructions for the Will of Ellen Sharples.
15395/24 (b) 1845 September 25
Letter; P.W.S. Miles to R.B. Ward, Esq. re list of pictures Mrs. Sharples wishes to leave to the Academy of Fine Arts.

15395/24 (a) 1845 September 30
Draft Codicil to the Will of Ellen Sharples.

15395/26 1846 November 13
Bill sent to P.W.S. Miles, Bristol Academy for the Fine Arts, Trustees with Mrs. Sharples.

15395/27 N.D.
Estate of Mrs. Ellen Sharples deceased. who died 14 March 1849 - Particulars of Legacies bequeathed by the Will.

15395/29 (b) 1849 March 16
Letter; J.S. Harford to Messrs. Osborne & Ward re no recollection of being named an Executor to Mrs. Ellen Sharples' Will.

15395/51 (a-b) 1849 March 21/1849 August 28
Bill & Receipt; George Fox, Undertaker, to the Executors.
15395/25 1849 March 22

15395/30 1849 March 22
Letter; Great Western Railway to Messrs. Osborne, Ward & Co. re particulars of shares held by the late Ellen Sharples.

15395/31 (a-d) 1849 March 22
Four copies of Valuation of goods of the late Ellen Sharples by John Fargus & Son, Valuers.

15395/32 1849 March 22
Valuation of the paintings bequeathed to Maria Johnson by the late Ellen Sharples by John Fargus & Son.

15395/33 1849 March 22
Copy valuation of the furniture, plate, linen, china, etc. bequeathed to Maria Johnson by the late Ellen Sharples.

15395/47 1849 March 25/1849 July 5
Bill and Receipt; Mrs. H. Wright for 7 weeks nursing attendance on Ellen Sharples.
15395/34 1849 March 31


15395/35 1849 April 5

Draft copy of Deposition of Probate of Codicil to Ellen Sharples' Will.

15395/37 1849 May 11th/1852 Feb 28

Bill and receipt; George Fox to Executors of the late Ellen Sharples for cutting inscriptions.

15395/29 (a) 1849 May 13

Letter; P.W.S. Miles to R.B. Ward re his inability to find Mrs. [Elizabeth] Sharples named in the Will.

15395/38 (a) 1849 May 17

Probate of the Will of Ellen Sharples.

**REEL 2:**

15395/38 (b) N.D.

Copy of the Will of Ellen Sharples with Codicil.
Draft of Particulars and Value of Property for Probate.

Account of the Residuary Estate of Mrs. Ellen Sharples.

Letter; George Fox, Undertaker to J. Hill re Mrs. Sharples’ wishes for inscriptions on the family grave.

Draft of Legacy Receipt - Stamps and Taxes re Maria Johnson (now Serjeant).

Copy letter; Meredith Reeve & Co. to Messrs. Osborne Ward & Co. re registration of Probate with Messrs Barclay & Co.

Letter; Great Western Railway Company to Osborne Ward & Co. re registration of Probate.
Letter; Executors to the Great Western Railway Company requesting the transfer of shares to Maria Johnson.

15395/43 1849 May 31

Extract from the Parish Register Book of Burials with details of the burial of Ellen Sharples.

15395/44 1849 June 21

Copy letter; Meredith Reeves & Co. to Messrs. Osborne Ward & Co. re particulars of Stocks.

15395/48 1849 June 25

Receipt; Elizabeth Sharples to the Executors for payment of one quarters' Annuity, £5.5s.

15395/46 1849 July 2

Receipt; Maria Johnson to the Executors for payment of £40 on account of her legacy.

15395/49 1849 August 21

Letter; Peter & Maria Serjeant (late Johnson) to the Executors requesting the transfer of shares to the names of trustees.

15395/50 (a-c) 1849 August 25

Draft Memorandum of a meeting of the Executors with statements of accounts.
15395/52 (a-b) 1849 August 31
Bill & Receipt; John Fargus & Son for Valuation of the goods of the late Ellen Sharples.

15395/45 (a) 1849 September
Letter; Osborne Ward & Co. to J.S. Harford, requesting him to visit the bank when next in Bristol to execute certain Powers of Attorney.

15395/45 (b) N.D.
Note with names of the Executors and amount of £1,927.14.2 written.

15395/53 (a) 1849 September 4
Letter; Peter & Maria Serjeant to Osborne Ward & Co. requesting payment of the balance due from the Estate.

15395/53 (c) N.D.
Note of balance payable to Mr. & Mrs. Serjeant.

15395/28 1849 September 4
Account; Mrs. Maria Serjeant (late Maria Johnson) with the Executors of Mrs. Ellen Sharples.

15395/54 1849 September 5
Letter; J.G. Barrow describing his visit to see Elizabeth Sharples.

15395/55 (a) 1849 September 6
Receipt; John & Celia Milton to the Executors for £10 legacy.

15395/55 (b) 1849 September 6
Receipt; Fanny Osborne to the Executors for £19 19s legacy.

15395/56 1849 September 8

15395/57 1849 September 8
Letter; Globe Insurance re Annuity as above.

15395/58 (a-b) N.D.
Memorandum of terms offered by various insurance companies for £25 Annuity.

15395/59 1849 September 10
Letter; Royal Insurance Office, Liverpool to A.B. Saville, Bristol re terms of Annuity.

15395/60 1849 September 14
Receipt; Elizabeth Sharples to Meredith Reeve & Co. for payment of one quarters' Annuity.
15395/61 1849 September 28
Letter; Henry Abbott to F. Ward re tenancy on house at St. Vincent's Parade.

15395/62 (a-e) 1849 October 2 & 29
Certificates of Share Annuities to the Executors.

15395/63 (a-b) 1849 October 3
Great Western Railway Company - Two Share Transfer Certificates, from Ellen Sharples to the names of John Bateman and James Serjeant [Trustees of Maria Serjeant].

15395/64 1849 October 5
Letter; P. & M. Serjeant to Mr. Ward, requesting payment of the money due.

15395/65 (b) 1849 October 9
Bill; John Edwards to Henry Abbott, for repairing windows at the residence of the late Mrs. Sharples, St. Vincent's Parade.

15395/65 (a) 1849 October 12
Letter; Henry Abbott to F. Ward, re liability for cost of repairs to windows at St. Vincent's Parade.

15395/65 (c) 1849 October 12
Receipt; Henry Abbott to the Executors for rent of No. 3 St. Vincent's Parade.

15395/66 (a-d) 1849 October 17-November 6
Receipts for payment of rates and taxes.

15395/67 (a) 1849 October 19
Statement of Account; Bristol Bank, for sale of stock for the Executors.

15395/67 (b-c) 1849 October 23/1849 March 22
Legacy Receipt - Stamps and Taxes; Estate of Ellen Sharples re Maria Johnson (now Serjeant) for bequest of wearing apparel, furniture, etc. along with valuation of the goods by John Fargus.

15395/68 1849 October 23
Legacy Receipt - Stamps and Taxes; Estate of Ellen Sharples re Maria Johnson (now Serjeant) for bequest of Shares in the Great Western Railway.

15395/69 1849 October 23
Legacy Receipt - Stamps and Taxes; Estate of Ellen Sharples re Maria Johnson (now Serjeant) for bequest of a Pecuniary legacy of £500.

15395/71 1849 October 24
Letter; P.W.S. Miles to Mr. Ward re cheque for £462.18.6 being signed and returned.
15395/53 (b) 1849 October 25
Account of balance of £462.18.6 paid to Peter Lang Serjeant.

15395/72 1849 October 26
Letter, P. & M. Serjeant to P. Ward, acknowledging receipt of the balance of £462.18.6 paid.

15395/73 (a-b) 1849 December 8
Residuary Account - Inland Revenue (original and draft).

15395/70 1849 December 13
Annuity Receipt - Stamps and Taxes for £25 Annuity paid to Elizabeth Sharples.

15395/74 1849 December 13
Memorandum of instructions by F.R. Ward re the Estate.

15395/75 1849 December 13
Letter, Mrs. Maria Serjeant to F.R. Ward, re misunderstanding on shares in the Great Western Railway Company.

15395/76 1849 December 14
Receipt; Elizabeth Sharples to Meredith Reeve & Co. for payment of one quarter's annuity.

15395/77 1850 January
Copy of Residuary Estate for the Academy.

15395/78 1850 January 2
Letter; P.W.S. Miles to F. Ward requesting a statement of account of the balance of the Estate to the Academy for a meeting.

15395/79 1850 January 29
Letter; Maria Serjeant to F. Ward re date of birth of Ellen Sharples and thanking for the help with the Great Western Railway Company.

15395/80 1850 January 30
Letter; Bristol Savings Bank to Osborne Ward & Co. re purchase of Annuity in the names of Trustees.

15395/81 1850 February 1
Letter; G.S. Jeffreys to Osborne Ward & Co. re Elizabeth Sharples.

15395/82 1850 February 9
Letter; Elizabeth Sharples to Osborne Ward & Co. re her Annuity.
15395/83 1850 February 13
Letter; Elizabeth Sharples to Osborne Ward & Co. consenting to purchase of government Annuity.

15395/84 1850 March 11
Letter; Elizabeth Sharples to Osborne Ward & Co. re payment of Annuity.

15395/85 1850 March 12
Letter; Saving's Bank, Bristol to Osborne Ward & Co. re payment of Elizabeth Sharples' Annuity.

15395/89 1850 March 13 & March 28
Bill & Receipt; Minister of Clifton to the Executors, fee for liberty to erect a monument in the memory of the late Mrs. E. Sharples in Clifton Church.

15395/90 1850 March 13 & March 28
Bill & Receipt; Thomas Tyley to the Executors, charge for marble tablet erected in Clifton Church.

15395/86 (a) 1850 March 14
Letter; P.W.S. Miles to F. Ward returning cheque for £231.16.5 signed for purchase of Annuity for Elizabeth Sharples.
15395/87 1850 March 14
Receipt; Elizabeth Sharples to Meredith Reeve & Co. for payment of proportion of Annuity.

15395/88 1850 March 16
Duplicate, Bristol Savings Bank Certificate of Purchase of Annuity for Elizabeth Sharples.

15395/91 (a) 1850 June 20
Letter; Elizabeth Sharples to Osborne & Ward re problems with payment of Annuity.

15395/91 (b) N.D.
Memorandum re proposition to Elizabeth Sharples to change annuity payment from quarterly to half yearly.

15395/93 1850 July 4
Letter; Maria Serjeant to Osborne & Ward, on behalf of her sister Fanny Osborne re unpaid legacies to the children of Fanny Osborne.

15395/94 1850 July 5
Letter; J.S. Harford to F. Ward, re unpaid legacies.
15395/92  1850 July
Receipt; Fanny Osborne to the Trustees of the Bristol Academy for the payment of £10 legacy.

15395/95  1852 September 11
Minutes of Annual Meeting of the Bristol Academy for the Promotion of the Fine Arts.

15395/96  1854 January 10
Letter; Arthur John Knapp, Bristol [addressee unknown] expressing concerns over the affairs of the Bristol Academy of Fine Arts.

15395/97-118
Miscellaneous Papers - notes, bills, etc.

15395/1 (a)  1794-1824
Bank Book; Barclay, Tritton & Bevan, Bankers of London with James Sharples, Esq.

15395/2 (a)  1811-1820

15395/6  1820-1838
Bank Book; Elton, Baillie, Tyndale, Palmer & Edwards with Mrs. Ellen Sharples
15395/3 (a) 1825-1827
Bank Book; Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co. with Mrs. Ellen Sharples.

15395/4 (a) 1825-1829
Bank Book; Barclay, Tritton, Bevan & Co. with Miss Rolinda Sharples.

15395/5 1827-1839
Bank Book; Mr. James Sharples & Mrs. Ellen Sharples with Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co.

15395/7 1834-1837
Bank Book; Elton, Baillie, Ames & Co. with Miss Rolinda Sharples.

15395/8 1838-1849
Bank Book; Baillie, Ames, Baillie & Co. with Mrs. Ellen Sharples.

15395/9 1840-1847
Bank Book; Mrs. Ellen Sharples with Barclay, Bevan, Tritton & Co.

15395/10 1845-1850
Bank Book; Miles, Harford & Co. with Mrs. Ellen Sharples.
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