

Archives and Special Collections

Dickinson College

Carlisle, PA

COLLECTION REGISTER

Name: **Fergusson, Elizabeth Graeme (1737-1801)** **MC 2006.3**

Materials: Commonplace Book (1770-1787)

Volume: .25 linear feet (1 Document Box)

Donation: Doug and Virginia Turnbull, 1980

Usage: There are no usage restrictions on these materials.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (sometimes spelled “Ferguson”) was born in Philadelphia on February 3, 1737. She was the daughter of Thomas Graeme, a prominent physician, and Ann Diggs, step-daughter of Sir William Keith. Raised on the large estate of Graeme Park, Elizabeth was well-educated by her parents and tutors, and she composed poems, letters, songs, travel accounts, and impromptus. She wrote under a variety of pen names, frequently using the pseudonym Laura.

After a broken engagement with William Franklin, the son of Benjamin Franklin, Elizabeth’s parents sent her to England and Scotland in 1764 to revive her poor health. There she composed a travel journal that was later circulated among her friends. Achieving some notoriety abroad, Elizabeth met members of the Penn family, novelist Laurence Sterne, King George III, and Dr. John Fothergill.

When her mother and her sister Jane Young died in 1765, Elizabeth returned to Philadelphia. Inspired by the French, she organized her acquaintances into a weekly literary salon, known as her “Attic Evenings.” During these gatherings, Elizabeth entertained the intellectual and cultural leaders of Philadelphia society, including John Dickinson, Jacob Duché, Francis Hopkinson, Dr. Benjamin Rush, and Annis Boudinot Stockton. To divert her mind from her broken engagement, Elizabeth translated Abbé Francois Fénelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus* and paraphrased the Bible’s book of Psalms in verse. Elizabeth also helped to raise Anna and John Young, the two children of her deceased sister Jane. Like her Aunt Elizabeth, Anna Young also wrote poetry about politics, women, and courtship. She married Dr. William Smith in 1775. Elizabeth maintained a strong correspondence with her niece and mentee until Anna died in 1780 from complications of childbirth.

On April 21, 1772, Elizabeth married a Scotsman, Henry Hugh Fergusson, whom she had met at one of her “Attic Evenings.” Henry was ten years her junior with Tory political leanings. The couple took possession of Graeme Park after Dr. Graeme’s death in September 1772. In September 1775, Henry traveled to England, returning two years later with General

Howe's army in the midst of the Revolution. With her loyalty under suspicion due to her husband's support of the British, Elizabeth gave generously to the American cause. She wrote about her separation from her husband during this time in a poem titled "The Country Mouse and the City Mouse," which is included under the title "County Mouse" on page 33 of this commonplace book. Persuaded by her husband to do so, Elizabeth also mediated two messages across war lines, one of which was a bribe attempt that triggered a scandal that stripped Elizabeth of her reputation as a patriot.

In the spring of 1778, Henry's property, including Graeme Park, was confiscated as punishment for his treason. He returned to England and separated from his wife permanently. Elizabeth attempted to regain her family's estate and her reputation. In 1791, the Pennsylvania court returned Graeme Park to Elizabeth. She then lived a quiet life with her friend Eliza Stedman, publishing some of her writings in periodicals such as *The Pennsylvania Magazine* or *American Monthly Museum*, *Columbian Magazine*, and *Pennsylvania Packet*. She sold Graeme Park to her late niece Anna's husband, Dr. William Smith, who sold off pieces of the property through the 1790s. Elizabeth died on February 23, 1801 in Horsham, Pennsylvania, near Graeme Park, while tended by Dr. Benjamin Rush.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

This collection contains a commonplace book compiled by Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson in 1787 for fellow poet Annis Boudinot Stockton. The book is indicative of the thriving salon culture Elizabeth directed after returning from England to Philadelphia in 1765. The commonplace book is indexed and contains handwritten poems, transcriptions of letters, and other writings by Elizabeth and others, in addition to Elizabeth's commentaries. The pieces in the book date from 1770 to 1787.

The first section of the commonplace book contains roughly 30 to 35 poems by Elizabeth (under the pen names Laura, Salmon Gundy, and Betsy), and those of some of her contemporaries, including Henry Hugh Fergusson and Francis Hopkinson. The commonplace book begins with a collection of odes, many of which are included in the index but are not contained in the commonplace book. The remainder of this first section contains miscellaneous neoclassical poems and a number of elegies written about the deaths of Elizabeth's friends.

The second part of the commonplace book features the works of Elizabeth's niece, Anna Young Smith (1756-1780), who used the pen name Sylvia. These writings, however, are not in Anna's own hand, but were transcribed by Elizabeth. Anna's writings reveal a high regard for her aunt. These pieces include poems and letters of apology, love, and elegy. The most famous of these writings is a poem about the Battle of Lexington in 1775 titled "An Elegy: To the Memory of the American Volenters Who fell in the Engagment between the Massachussetts-Bay Militia And the British Troops." Elizabeth concluded her book with copies of several letters about Anna's pregnancy and childbirth.

The date and authorship of each piece in the commonplace book is indicated if known. For the sake of brevity, the initials EGF have been used to indicate Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson, and the initials AYS have been used to indicate Anna Young Smith. In cases where either woman wrote a piece using a pen name, that name also has been included in the item description and placed in quotation marks.

In addition to the commonplace book itself, this collection also includes a typed transcription of the commonplace book created by Cassandra Wargo.

More information regarding Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson is available in the following resources:

Marian S. Carson Collection of Manuscripts. Library of Congress. Washington, DC.
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2003/ms003008.pdf>

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson Collection. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia.

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson Papers. Bucks County Historical Society. Doylestown, PA.

Graeme Park Collection, Manuscript Group 366. Pennsylvania State Archives.
Harrisburg, PA. <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/BAH/DAM/mg/mg366.htm>

Ousterhout, Anne M. *The Most Learned Woman in America: A Life of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.

Slotten, Martha C. "The Culture of Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson (1737-1801)." Masters thesis, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, 1980.

William Smith Papers. University of Pennsylvania Archives. Philadelphia.
<http://www.archives.upenn.edu/faids/upt/upt50/smithwm.html>

COLLECTION INVENTORY

BOX 1 - MC 2006.3

COMMONPLACE BOOK

Folder 01) Commonplace Book

PART I. Writings of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (EGF)

Page 0	"Extract from 110 address in praise of Poetry"	undated
Page 3	"Ode to Spring," EGF as "Laura"	Apr. 1773
Page 5	"Ode to Melancholy," EGF as "Laura"	July 22, 1773
Page 8	"The Recluse: The Music Farewell to Lochaber," EGF as "Laura"	May 1774
Page 11	"Ode to Health and Complement," [EGF]	1770
Page 13	"Hymn to Morning: Music a Dawng Hope," EGF as "Laura"	undated

BOX 1 - MC 2006.3 (cont.)

COMMONPLACE BOOK (cont.)

Folder 01) Commonplace Book (cont.)

PART I. Writings of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (EGF)

Page 15	“Ode to the Evening: Music Bush above Fragrances,” EGF as “Laura”	May 1777
Page 17	“Hallelujah Hymn,” [EGF]	undated
Page 19	“Ode to Sensibility,” EGF as “Laura”	1770
Page 24	“French Verses” by “the late King of Prussia,” translated by EGF as Betsy Graeme	undated
Page 25	“The Same translated another way,” EGF as “Laura”	undated
Page 26	“In Favour of the Souls Immortality in Opposition to the Former,” EGF as “Laura”	Oct. 24, 1784
Page 27	“The Rose Bank Lifes Emblem,” [EGF]	undated
Page 28	“A Spinning Frolic Song,” [EGF]	1782
Page 30	“On the unmolested State Birds Enjoy in The Sequestered Shades of Graeme Park,” EGF as “Laura”	undated
Page 31	Verses to a Married Gentleman who made a Laura Some very good Penns,” [EGF] to Mr. [Samuel?] Powel	July 13, 1777
Page 33	“The Country Mouse,” [EGF]	Dec. 7, 1777
Page 36	“Lines on a Gentlemans Country Pent in Scotld,” [Henry Hugh] Fergusson	1776
Page 37	“Green Vale,” Henry [Hugh] Fergusson	undated
Page 41	“Lines Written upon being at the Hermitage belonging to the Duke of Athol at Dunkeld,” EGF as “Laura”	1765
Page 44	“In Memory of Mr. James Bremner” by Francis Hopkinson	undated

BOX 1 - MC 2006.3 (cont.)

COMMONPLACE BOOK (cont.)

Folder 01) Commonplace Book (cont.)

PART I. Writings of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (EGF)

Page 46	“Verses written in Immitation of Miltons Il Pensiroso,” [Francis] Hopkinson	1757
Page 51	“The Cock Fight An Elegy,” Francis Hopkinson	undated
Page 54	“A Letter on the Peace From a Lady to Mr. B,” EGF to Elias Boudinot	Apr. 17, 1783
Page 59	“Extract from the 13 page of the 2d Volume of Dr. Ramry’s Histry of the Revolution in South Carolina”	undated
Page 61	“The Continental Medly an Epigram,” EGF as “Salomongundy” & “Laura,” from the <i>Columbian Magazine</i>	undated
Page 63	“On The Discvry of a new Star by Mr. Herschell, The great optican at Bath, And by Him Calld the Georgian Sidus,” EGF as “Laura”	Jan. 6, 1784
Page 66	“Verses said to be Written by Major Andre,” [Major John Andre]	undated
Page 67	“Lines on the Death of the Unfortunate Major Andre,” EGF as “Laura”	Aug. 1781
Page 68	“On the Death of Leopald Prince of Brunswick,” EGF as “Laura”	c.Apr. 27, 1785
Page 69	“On the Death of Connsellor Stockton of Princeton By an intimate Friend”	undated
Page 70	“On The Death of Anthony Beneget,” EGF	undated
Page 71	“To the Memry of my valuable Friend Dr John Fothergill,” [EGF]	c.Jan. 8, 1782

BOX 1 - MC 2006.3 (cont.)

COMMONPLACE BOOK (cont.)

Folder 01) Commonplace Book (cont.)

PART I. Writings of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (EGF)

- Page 74 "Epitaph to the Memry of Dr. Charles Ridgly of Dover," c.Nov.1785
EGF as "Laura"
- Page 76 "To the Memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Martin," EGF as c.Jan. 1787
"Laura"
- Page 80 "To the Memory of Miss Rebekah Langly of the Lisles Oct. 7, 1787
at Bethem," [EGF]
- Page 82 "Lines Spoke Extempore by a young Lady On Saving a undated
Drawing by Charlotte over the Tomb of Werter,"
"Juliania" Extract from an English Magazine
- Page 82 "Answerd by Mrs. Fergusson," EGF undated
- Page 83 "On the Minds being Occupyd by one Subject," EGF as undated
"Laura"
- Page 84 "The Interrogation," EGF as "Laura" undated
- Page 85 "To The Knight of the Silver Moon," EGF as "Laura" Nov. 16, 1785
- Page 90 "Reply to Hard Money By a Continental Bill," EGF Jan.1779

PART II. Writings of Anna Young Smith (AYS)

- Page 115 Letter from EGF as "Laura" to Mrs. [Anna Boudinot] 1787
Stockton
- Page 116 "An Ode to Gratitude Inscrid to Miss Eliza Graeme By 1770
her neice Anna young,"
- Page 119 "Occasional Verses on the Anversary of the Death of c.1775
my Grand Father Dr Thomas Graeme," [AYS]
- Page 121 "Copy of a Letter from Anna Young to Her Aunt On Nov. 24, 1772
leaving Her," AYS to EGF

BOX 1 - MC 2006.3 (cont.)

COMMONPLACE BOOK (cont.)

Folder 01) Commonplace Book (cont.)

PART II. Writings of Anna Young Smith (AYS)

Page 125	“Extract of a Letter From Anna Young to her Aunt inclosing a Copy of Verses”	June 14, 1775
Page 126	“Lines Occasiond by walking One Summers Evening In the Churchyard of Wicacoe Church in the Environs of Philadl,” AYS as “Sylvia”	June 14, 1775
Page 135	“By the Same on Reading Dr. Swift’s Poems,” AYS as “Sylvia”	1774
Page 137	“Ode to Sensibility” by AYS as Sylvia	1774
Page 140	“Lines adressed to a lively young Lady of Sylvia’s intimate Acquaintance,” AYS as “Sylvia”	1774
Page 143	“Epistle to Damon who was absent on a Journy with a Friend written at the age of Eighteen,” AYS as “Sylvia” to Damon [Dr. William Smith]	Sep. 9, 1774
Page 148	“A Song By the Same,” AYS as “Sylvia”	Nov. 25, 1774
Page 150	“An Ode to Sleep,” [AYS]	1775
Page 155	“An Ode to Damon,” AYS as “Sylvia”	July 6, 1775
Page 159	“Epistle to Damon on presenting Him with a Small writing Desk And to Her Care,” AYS as “Sylvia” to Damon [Dr. William Smith]	1775
Page 161	“An Elegy: To the Memory of the American Volenters Who fell in the Engagment between the Massachussetts-Bay Militia And the British Troops,” AYS as “Sylvia”	May 2, 1775
Page 167	“An Elegy to the Memory of Doctor Warren” by [Benjamin] Rush From the Philadelphia Paper	[1775]
Page 168	“An Elegy to the Memory of Doctor Warren,” AYS as “Sylvia”	June 28, 1775
Page 173	“An Ode to Liberty,” AYS as “Sylvia”	1775

BOX 1 - MC 2006.3 (cont.)

COMMONPLACE BOOK (cont.)

Folder 01) Commonplace Book (cont.)

PART II. Writings of Anna Young Smith (AYS)

Page 179	“Lines on the Anneversry of Anna Youngs Mariage after She had been married Three years,” AYS	Nov. 1778
Page 184	“Copy of a Letter From Anny Smith to Mrs F When she was near laying Inn of her first Child,” AYS to EGF	Aug. 25, 1776
Page 185	“A Letter on her Recovry from her laying Inn,” AYS to EGF	Sep. 25, 1777
Page 192	“Extract of a Letter from Mrs Smith to her aunt when She was in Allenton,” AYS to EGF	Dec. 1777
Page 193	“This dear Child Died,” EGF	Dec.1, 1787

Folder 02) Photocopy of Commonplace Book

Folder 03) Transcription of Commonplace Book

This collection register was prepared by Cassandra Wargo, 2006.