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Holding a piece of English history (SCRC Behind the Scenes)

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In 1969 my parents and I made the first of many trips to England and Europe. My dad decided that I should study the history of the different countries so that I would have some appreciation for what I was going to see.

I remember reading about the king who had six wives, the queen who burned so many people at the stake, and the queen who never married. The period that I became obsessed with was the Tudor era with Henry VIII, Mary I [better known as Bloody Mary], and Elizabeth I.

Here it is forty-two years later and the fascination with the period has not subsided. I still devour any book, particularly on Elizabeth Tudor, that I can get my hands on. I am preparing to finally complete my undergraduate studies and am thinking that I may just have to go for a masters degree in English history. Why not put my 40+ year obsession to good use?

What does this have to do with Special Collections you ask? Well, yesterday our director asked me to scan a couple of documents – one of which was in a protective sleeve. I glanced at the document and realized I was looking at the signature of a queen. The signature was a bold Marie R.

I then looked at the other document he had asked me to scan and it was the statement authenticating the signature as that of Mary Queen of Scots. I looked at the letter with the royal signature and could not help but wonder what was going on in the life of the ill-fated Scottish queen at the time she signed this piece of parchment.

As I read the supporting paperwork, it turns out that this particular letter was written to Lord Gray and was actually Mary’s edict of toleration for religious worship. I most certainly was holding history in my hands.

I have known for many years that I am a hopeless Anglophile but my presence in SCRC and the treasures it holds truly reinforces that knowledge. I am excited to see what will surface next to quench my desire for more Tudor history!
One Response to “Holding a piece of English history”

1. **Lynda Kachurek** Says:  
November 21st, 2011 at 9:33 am

Those “a-ha” moments make all the other, less exciting ones worth it. When I was doing research at Simancas in Spain, the first day I was there, they handed me a folio of letters from Queen Elizabeth I, including her signature and wax seal. It was at that moment I began to realize Archives (and preserving documents like that for others to “discover”) was where I wanted to be....

Thanks for the post and sharing your story!

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Her Edit of Religious Toleration on her Marriage to Darley.

1717 MARY STUART (1542-1587). Queen of Scots. Executed by order of Queen Elizabeth.

LETTER SIGNED "MARIE R." TO LORD GRAY.

1 page, folio. Edinburgh, 16th July, 1565. With full transcript.

(See Illustration, Plate No. XI.)

A most important historical letter, being the Queen's edict of toleration for religious worship. It was called forth to quell the opposition of the Scotch church to her marriage to Darley, which took place thirteen days later (29th July). This act of toleration did not reconcile the Kirk authorities, but it allayed the fears of the more moderate. The letter concludes with the Queen's command that Lord Gray should attend on her with his friends.

The text of the letter appears to be a letter to Lord Gray, dated 16th July, 1565. It is written in Latin and requests Lord Gray to attend upon the Queen with his friends.

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The letter is quite authentic, and the signature is genuine. The handwriting is probably that of one of the secretaries generally attendant on the Queen.

After the letter, there is a note in the margin that states: "This is a very ordinary Scotish scrawl, and is not to be identified, being probably that of a quite unimportant person."