

# John Toole Collection Finding Aid MS067

John Toole Collection (MS067)

1838-1959



## Title Statement

John Toole Collection Finding Aid MS067

**Author:** Debby Waller

## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Local History and Special Collections Branch, Alexandria Library

717 Queen Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

Business Number: 703-746-1791

lhsc@alexlibraryva.org

URL: <http://alexlibraryva.org/lhsc>



Fall 1992

### Notes

Revised April 2019.

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2023-12-15 14:27:18 +0000.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

MS067

### Unit Date

1838-1959

### Text

02 (Assorted Box)

### Language

English .

### Extent

.095 Cubic Feet 4 folders

### Repository

Local History and Special Collections Branch, Alexandria Library

## Administrative Information

## Preferred Citation

[Item identification], John Toole Collection, MS067, Alexandria Library, Local History and Special Collections, Alexandria, Virginia.

## Biographical / Historical

John Toole (originally O'Toole) was born in County Wicklow, near Dublin, Ireland in 1815, the eldest son of Michael O'Toole, a chemistry professor in Dublin. After his father died in an explosion during a chemistry experiment, John Toole was sent with his sister, Anne, and his brother, Jeremiah, to an uncle who lived in Charlottesville, Va. He attended the University of Virginia for a brief period, but chose to apply his artistic talents to a career in painting. At the end of 1836, he married Mary Jane Suddarth (1817-1902), daughter of Richard Pleasants and Martha Parker Suddarth. The couple made their home at North Garden, VA, near Charlottesville, and had six children:

George Henry (1837-1856)

Mary Jane (Jennie) (1841-1917)

John Legrand (1843-1872)

Anne Leitch (Nannie) (1847-1862)

Sarah Alice (1850-1932)

William (1853-1854)

Known today as a primitive artist, Toole devoted his life to painting. Although he painted landscapes, miniatures, and historical subjects, he was primarily a portraitist and made his living from such work. From his letters, family descent, and inventories, over 300 paintings have been identified. He established a respected reputation in the local Virginia area, and was also a member of the Masons. In 1860, Toole died of consumption in the home of his mother. His family moved to the Washington, D. C. area following his death.

## Content Description

The collection contains handwritten abstracts/summaries of letters dated 1838-1857 held in the University of Virginia. These are mainly written by John Toole to his wife, Mary Jane Suddarth Toole, but also other including his children, George and Jennie Toole, and a friend, Tom Moore. The letters concern Toole's experiences and accomplishments as a traveling portraitist, his children's education, John and Jennie's letters to their mother from the Virginia Military Institute and Petersburg Female College, respectively, and other family matters.

The rest of the collection contains genealogical and biographical notes about the Toole family and their descendants, a list of sitters (by county) compiled from his letters, canvas measurements of his paintings, and a published pamphlet of the John Toole Exhibition, December 1959.

## Related Materials

For a list of all the known paintings by John Toole, his original poems, and the abstracts of his family's letters, see his biography: O'Neal, William B. *Primitive Into Painter. The Life and Letters of John Toole*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1960. (See Lloyd House card catalog).

## Keywords

Virginia -- Artists

Genealogy

Toole, John, 1815-1860

Toole, Mary Jane Suddarth, 1817-1902

## Existence and Location of Originals

The original letters, scrapbooks, manuscripts, and books of John Toole are located at the library of the University of Virginia. John Toole's portraits are a part of the permanent collections of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Charlottesville, VA and the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C..

## Arrangement

The miscellaneous genealogical and biographical notes are not in any order. The letters are filed chronologically followed by miscellaneous information on the sitters and the John Toole Exhibition pamphlet from December 1959.

## **Description of Subordinate Components**

### **Biographical and genealogical notes and news clippings: Toole, Via, Barnes, Hobbs, and Suddarth Families. Majority undated**

**Unit Date** 1955-1967, Undated

**Text** 02 (Assorted Box)

**Container** 67-1 (folder)

### **Notes on Correspondence**

**Unit Date** 1838-1857

**Text** 02 (Assorted Box)

**Container** 67-2 (folder)

### **Exhibition Pamphlet: University of Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, December 9-30**

**Unit Date** 1959

**Text** 02 (Assorted Box)

**Container** 67-3 (folder)

### **Sitters File: Includes list of sitters by county, canvas measurements of paintings, correspondence and genealogical information on sitters, and Inventory of 2123 Wisconsin Avenue, by Cyril J. Smith**

**Unit Date** December 12, 1854

**Text** 02 (Assorted Box)

**Container** 67-4 (folder)