

# The Devil's Steeplechase

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n.d, c.1830

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## Title Statement

The Devil's SteeplechaseThe Devil's Steeplechase MSS 16787

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## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library  
P.O. Box 400110  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110  
URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>

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## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:44:11 +0000.

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

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

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

MSS 16787

### Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

### Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1530

### Unit Date

n.d, c.1830

### Mixed Materials

BW 54 (box)

### Container

1 (folder)

### Language

English

### Extent

.03 Cubic Feet one letter-sized folder

### Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

## Administrative Information

### **Conditions Governing Access**

The collection is open for research use.

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition**

This collection was purchased from White Fox Rare Books and Antiques by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 1 May 2022.

### **Preferred Citation**

MSS 16787, The Devil's Steeplechase, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

## **Content Description**

This collection contains an anonymous sketchbook containing a highly illustrated handwritten gothic story, additional watercolor paintings, and numerous pen and ink sketches. The primary story pertains to a horse race between the devil and death that takes place on March 12, 1830. It is likely a satire on the first English National Steeplechase, which was run in Bedfordshire on March 8, 1830, and was the precursor of the Grand National race at Aintree. Nine full-page watercolors are devoted to the primary gothic steeplechase story, each with a narrative on the facing page. The story is a morbid variant of the turtle and the hare fable, with the Devil taking an auspicious start but as the Devil relaxes, the Death recovers, catches up and wins, and celebrates his victory by throwing his head (which is a skull) in the air and catching it. In addition to the steeplechase illustrated story, there are three other watercolors of riding, two of these in a steeplechase or a foxhunt. There are also eleven other pages with pen and ink drawings, in varying states of finish, plus three pages heavy with text, and the endpapers are filled with sketches. The other illustration includes a page of silhouettes, which are on military or equestrian themes. Also in the manuscript is a four-page rendering of the Tragedy" from the Ingoldsby Legends" which recounts the story of Catherine of Cleves.

## **Keywords**

cartoons (humorous images)

Sketchbooks

Gothic fiction (Literary genre)

Horses