

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 7 March 1574 and proved 25 January 1576, of William Collett, whose sister, Mercy Collett (d. 13 April 1597), brother, John Collett, and nephew, Sir John Bodley of Streatham, were involved in the early history of the Globe theatre.

The testator's sister, Mercy, married firstly Francis Bodley (d.1566), by whom she had two sons, Sir John Bodley of Streatham, and William Bodley. For the will of Mercy's first husband, Francis Bodley, see TNA PROB 11/48/415.

After the death of Francis Bodley, Mercy married Thomas Brend (for whose will see TNA PROB 11/93/316), and became the stepmother of Nicholas Brend (d. 12 October 1601), who leased the ground on which the Globe was built by lease dated 21 February 1599 to Richard Burbage (1568-1619), Cuthbert Burbage (1564/5-1636), William Kempe, Augustine Phillips (d.1605), Thomas Pope (d.1603) John Heminges (1566-1630) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) of Stratford upon Avon (see TNA REQ 4/1/2):

*for the said gardens and grounds whereupon the said playhouse & galleries were afterwards builded were demised & letten by the said Nicholas Brend by his indenture of lease tripartite bearing date in or about the 21st day of February in the 41st year of the reign of the late Queen Elizabeth [=21 February 1599] unto Cuthbert Burbage, Richard Burbage, William Shakespeare, the said Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, the said John Heminges, one of the said defendants, and William Kempe, to have and to hold the one moiety of the said garden plots and ground to the said Cuthbert Burbage and Richard Burbage, their executors, administrators & assigns, from the feast of the birth of Our Lord God last past before the date of the said indenture [=25 December 1598] unto the end & term of 31 years from thence next ensuing [=24 December 1629] for the yearly rent of seven pounds & five shillings, and to have & to hold the other moiety of the said garden plots & grounds unto the said William Shakespeare, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, the said John Heminges, one of the said defendants, & William Kempe, their executors, administrators & assigns, from the said feast of the birth of Our Lord God then last past before the date of the said indenture unto the said full end & term of 31 years from thence next ensuing for the like yearly rent of seven pounds & five shillings.*

For the financial transactions entered into in connection with the Globe playhouse by the testator's brother, the London Merchant Taylor John Collett, and the testator's nephew, Sir John Bodley of Streatham, see TNA C 54/1682, mm. 10-11 and the other documents listed there.

For the will of the testator's father, Humphrey Collett, see TNA PROB 11/42A/115.

For the will of the testator's mother, Joan Collett, see TNA PROB 11/61/389.

For the will of the testator's brother, Humphrey Collett, see TNA PROB 11/49/25.

For the Collett family see also:

<http://www.collettfamilyhistory.net/Part-52-The-England-to-Baltimore-and-Ohio-Line-Rev.9.htm>.

The testator states in the will below that he intends to make a voyage to Spruce-land, the contemporary English name for Prussia.

RM: T{estamentum} Will{el}mi Collett

In the name of God, Amen. The seventh day of March in the year of Our Lord God after the computation of the Church of England 1573 and in the sixteen year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc., I William Collett, citizen and bowyer of the city of London, being whole and sound of mind and body, thanks be to God therefore, and pretending to sail to Danske in Spruceland, do make and ordain this my present testament and last will in manner and form following, viz.:

Inprimis, I bequeath my soul to Almighty God, my only Saviour and Redeemer, by whose death and merits I hope assuredly to be saved, and my body to be bestowed as it shall please God to dispose it;

Item, I will that all such debts and duties which of right and conscience I do owe to any person or persons shall be within convenient time after my decease truly paid by my executor hereafter named, or else that due order be taken for the payment of the same;

Item, I bequeath to my mother, Joan Collett, one ring of gold of the value of twenty shillings if at the time of my death she be naturally living;

Item, I give and bequeath to my brother, Peter, twenty pounds sterling to be paid him by my executor hereunder named within six weeks next after certain knowledge had within the city of London of my decease if then the said Peter be naturally living;

Item, I give and bequeath to my sister Curtice six pounds thirteen shillings and four pence of good and lawful money of England if at the time of my decease she be naturally living;

And the rest of my goods and chattels movable and immovable of what kind or property soever they be, my debts being paid and my said legacies performed, I wholly give and bequeath to my well-beloved brother, John Collett, citizen and Merchant Taylor of London, whom I do make and ordain my full and whole executor of this my present testament and last will;

And I do nominate and appoint my brother, Stephen, my supervisor or overseer of this my present testament, and I do give him for his pains herein to be taken one ring of gold of the value of twenty shillings of lawful money of England;

In witness whereof to this my present testament and last will I, the said William Collett, have set my hand and seal the day and year first above-written, renouncing by these presents all former wills heretofore by me made, and this to be my last testament. By me, William Collett. Sigillavit et liberavit in p{rese}ntia mei Ioh{ann}is Cooper no{ta}rij publici. Et mei Gregorij Russell Apprenticij dicti No{ta}rij.

Probatum fuit h{uius}mo{d}i Testamentum coram mag{ist}ro Will{el}imo Drewry legum doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cant{uariensis} Commissario apud London vicesimo quinto die mens{is} Ianuarij Anno D{omi}ni Mill{es}imo Quingentesimo septuagesimo quinto Iuramento Ioh{ann}is Collett Executoris in h{uius}mo{d}i Testamento no{m}i{n}at{i} Cui Commissa fuit Administrac{i}o omniu{m} et singulor{um} bonor{um} Iuriu{m} &c De bene et fidel{ite}r administrand{o} eadem Ac de pleno et fideli Inventario &c exhibend{o} Necnon de plano et vero Comp{ot}o Calculo siue rac{i}ocinio inde reddend{o} Ad S{an}c{t}a Dei Evangelia Iurat{i}

[=The same testament was proved before Master William Drury, Doctor of the Laws, Commissary of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, at London on the twenty-fifth day of the month of January in the year of the Lord the thousand five hundred seventy-fifth by the oath of John Collett, executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of all and singular the goods, rights etc., sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer the same, and to exhibit a full and faithful inventory etc., and also to render a plain and true account, calculation or reckoning thereof.]