Laura Estill analyzes the poetic and legal contents of Folger MS V.a.262, concluding that Charles Croke (1590/1–1657) was the manuscript compiler. This requires an in-depth examination of the manuscript as a physical object, of the poems in the manuscript, and of the social, literary, and historical contexts of this particular verse miscellany. The essay considers the religious and political connotations of the poetry in the manuscript in relation to Croke’s education and the Croke family’s struggles during the civil wars, while also addressing the circulation of the poems and the compiler’s particular knowledge of Henry King.

**KEYWORDS:** early modern manuscript compilations; seventeenth-century verse libels; Royalist poetry; anti-Puritan satire; Christ Church; memorial verse
with the libels, those anonymous political satires that comment on seventeenth-century events. The compiler of this manuscript has been, until this point, unknown.3 By analyzing where and when this manuscript was compiled, what political and religious poems it contains, and how the compiler attained information that was not widely circulated, I argue that Charles Croke (1590–1657) compiled it. I first demonstrate this manuscript’s ties to the Croke family by introducing a poem that, so far as we know, appears only in this collection. Second, I argue that Croke’s published work reveals his engagement in the collection and transmission of poetry; furthermore, his family network, social ties (to Henry King in particular), and educational background demonstrate his interest in and access to information and poems found in this manuscript. Third, I read the poems of the English civil wars, the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate as exhibiting Croke’s Royalism and staunch Anglicanism, which must be considered in relation to his family’s political engagement. I conclude by considering extant paleographical evidence in order to suggest that Croke had a hand (literally and figuratively) in the compilation of this manuscript. In sum, postulating Charles Croke as the compiler of Folger MS V.a.262 is a heuristic assumption that requires an in-depth examination of the manuscript as a physical object, of the poems in the manuscript, and of the social, literary, and historical contexts of this particular verse miscellany and its compiler.

Before turning to the poetry, let me offer a bibliographical description of the manuscript. Folger MS V.a.262 is a quarto verse miscellany (18 × 15 cm) compiled in the late 1640s and early 1650s that contains many poems that circulated at Christ Church during the 1630s. It begins with 38 pages of law reports (from Oxford, Suffolk, from 1631, and from Heddon in 1637) followed by 172 numbered pages of poetry in a contemporary limp vellum binding.4 On the last page of the law reports, facing the opening poem, there are two titles in two different hands, neither of which seems to be the main hand in the manuscript: “Certaine Sonnets and Divers Works of gentil Clerks” and “Divers Sonnets & Poems compiled by certaine gentil Clerks and Ryme-Wrightes.” The poetry is written in one hand from page 1 to the top of page 167, with three or four additional hands adding poems from pages 167–72. The final contributor to Folger MS V.a.262 added a song from William Congreve’s 1695 play Love for Love after the rest of the poetry was collected: “A Nymph and a Swain to Apollo once pray’d” (p. 172).


4. Heddon could refer to either Heddon-on-the-wall or Black Heddon (both in Northumberland) or Heddon in Devon. For a list of the poems in this manuscript, see the Union First Line Index of Manuscript Poetry, http://firstlines.folger.edu, and search by shelfmark V.a.262.
The strongest piece of evidence relating Folger MS V.a.262 to the Croke family is a poem, possibly unique to this manuscript, titled “An Elegie dedicated to the happy / memory of the most incomparable peece of / perfection Mistris Jane Crok late wife of John / Croke of Chilton Esq.” (pp. 120–22; “Hard taske, when all thy grieved friends must know it”, see figures 1, 2, and 3 for images of the poem and appendix B for a transcription).

There were five Sir John Crokes of Chilton, including the famous judge (ca. 1553–1620) who became speaker of the House of Commons (see appendix A for clarification of the Croke family tree). The last Sir John Croke of Chilton, grandson of the speaker of the House of Commons, married Jane Tryon, daughter of Moses Tryon from Harringworth, on November 20, 1634. This Jane Croke, who died delivering a daughter in 1636, is the person memorialized by the poem in Folger MS V.a.262. The poet laments that “Ere eighteene monethes wer past, thy pregnant wombe / Found mer- ciless Lucinus heavy doome”—Jane died just eleven days short of eighteen months of marriage. The daughter was also named Jane, in memory of her mother; the poet pictures the mother “Content to part with life . . . / To leave a little picture of thy selfe.”


9. This younger Jane Croke is listed in *Allegations for Marriage Licenses issued by the Bishop of London, 1611–1828*, ed. G. J. Armytage (London, 1887), 282, which reprints a marriage license stating that in January 1660, Jane Croke (aged twenty-four) married Peter Cullen (aged twenty-eight), with the consent of her father, “Sir John Croke, Kt, of Chelton, Bucks.” This license would put her date of birth in 1636, the year of her mother’s death.
Figure 2. Folger MS V.a.262, p. 121. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.
FIGURE 3. Folger MS V.a.262, p. 122. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.
The presence of this poem in this manuscript and apparently nowhere else suggests the compiler was a relation of Jane Croke. Charles Croke, who I propose compiled this manuscript, was the uncle of the youngest Sir John Croke, widower of Jane Croke. It is doubtful that the compiler authored the memorializing poem, because he left a blank spot seven lines from the end of the poem (see figure 3). This blank spot comes mid-line and obviously allows space for several words, suggesting that the compiler was unable to read those words in the original poem. Members of the Croke family would have had both access to this poem and the motivation to copy it, because they knew Jane. Perhaps this poem struck a doubly personal chord with Charles: he had previously lost his young wife, Anne.

Another poem in the manuscript has a potential Croke family connection. Along with Jane Croke’s memorializing poem, Folger MS V.a.262 includes another eulogy possibly unique to the compilation, beginning “Come hether death and see what thou hast done,” and titled “An epitaph on John Pettise of Norwich Esq” (pp. 9–10). John Pettus (ca. 1550–1614), described in the poem as “a good Cittezen,” was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, became mayor of Norwich in 1608, and served as a member of Parliament from 1601 to 1611. John Croke (Charles’s father) was made speaker of the House of Commons in 1601, which means that Pettus and John Croke served together in Parliament, and this could explain the presence of Pettus’s epitaph in Folger MS V.a.262.

Charles Croke wrote *A Sad Memorial of Henry Curwen* (1638), a funeral sermon for one of his students, which he published along with commemorative poems by various mourners. *A Sad Memorial* attests to his inclination to collect poetry, particularly memorializing verse, a genre that appears frequently in Folger MS V.a.262. Croke’s preface explains that his sermon and the accompanying poems were first a manuscript compilation: he explains that these lay “two years in Cumberland in a manuscript.” Croke eventually published the sermon because “the privacie” of the manuscript “[was] not satisfying the great affection of Noble Parents towards their deceased Son.”

10. It is important not to confuse this Charles Croke (b. 1590) with the younger Charles Croke, who was probably born around 1635. For clarification, see appendix A, and Isabel M. Westcott’s introduction to the younger Charles Croke’s *Fortune’s Uncertainty or Youth’s Unconstancy* (Oxford, 1959). The younger Charles Croke is the son of Unnton and the nephew of the older Charles Croke. Literature Online and EEBO conflate the two.

11. This manuscript was not written by a professional scribe for presentation: one poem, for instance, is hastily crossed out with an X (p. 125; “A Lover to his Mistris,” first line: “Keepe on your maske & hide your eye”). Furthermore, certain pages include lines written too long for the page (p. 81), a response poem fitted in the margin (p. 100), and individual words or letters crossed out (p. 29).

12. Charles erected a monument to his first wife, Anne (daughter of William Grene), bearing the inscription, “not in any opinion brass, or marble, canne express her worth, or his owne affection” (Croke, *Genealogical History of the Croke Family*, 508).

13. There are more than fifty poems (of about 250 total) in Folger MS V.a.262 that treat death; the majority of these are serious memorializing poems, including “An Elegie on the death of Mr. Washingtn, page to Pr. Charles who dyed in Spayne” (p. 113), and “Dr. Corbet upon the death of his Father” (p. 42). The collection also contains a number of short satiric epitaphs.

14. Charles Croke, *A sad memoriali of Henry Curwen Esquire, the most worthy and onely child of Sir Patricius Curwen Baronet of Warkington in Cumberland, who with infinite sorrow of all that knew him departed this life August:23 being Sunday: 1636. in the fourteenth yeare of his age; and lyes interred in the Church of Amersham in Buckingham Shire* (Oxford, 1638), sig. A3; available through EEBO.
In its published version, Croke's sermon is followed by a description of notable people who attended the funeral and by poetry about Henry Curwen in both English and Latin. None of the poems in A Sad Memorial of Henry Curwen are found in Folger MS V.a.262, but that seems almost to be expected because Folger MS V.a.262 was compiled perhaps a decade after Croke's publication: he would likely not have felt a need to recopy the verses that he had previously published. This collection of poems about Curwen, however, speaks to Croke's predilection for gathering and disseminating poetry.

Not only did the compiler of Folger MS V.a.262 have knowledge of Jane Croke and John Pettus, he also knew the date of Henry King's wife's death, a fact not found in the King manuscripts. Charles Croke grew up with Henry King and would undoubtedly have had this information. Chronologically and geographically, they were born not far apart (Croke around 1591 and King in 1592) and were raised within five miles of one another: King was baptized at Worminghall, and Croke's family was from Chilton, both in Buckinghamshire. Both attended Lord William's School in Thame and then Christ Church. King matriculated at Christ Church in 1609 and remained at Oxford until 1616, when he married. Charles Croke matriculated in 1603, earning a BA in 1608 and an MA in 1611; he was a junior proctor at Oxford in 1616. Croke and King both received doctor of divinity degrees from Christ Church within a month of each other, King on May 19, 1625, and Croke on June 20, 1625. First King and then Croke became royal chaplains. From grammar school to the university and beyond, then, Croke and King traveled in similar circles. When Croke applied for the position of professor of rhetoric at Gresham College, John King, bishop of London, former dean of Christ Church, and Henry King's father, wrote a letter of reference. In his letter, John King attested to how well he knew Croke: "Wee lived together in Christ Church, I his deane, he a member of that house, where I observed and cherished his proceedinge from time to time." The bishop's reference letter demonstrates Croke's personal connection to the King family, a connection that would have made him aware of the date of Anne King's death and could have inspired him to record it in a verse miscellany.

Folger MS V.a.262 is further connected to the King circle because it is one of only three manuscripts outside the King manuscripts that contain a copy of "Dr Henry Kings Anniversari upon his wife" (p. 34), a poem written on the anniversary of King's wife's death. Furthermore, in this manuscript, King's poem "My once deare Love"...
(now commonly called "The Surrender") is titled "The mournefull parting of two Lovers being caused by the disproportion of estates" (p. 23), a title shared with only three other manuscripts, BL Add. MSS 25303 and 21433, and BL Harley MS 6057. Mary Hobbs suggests that this title, which appears in four manuscripts with legal connections, could stem from "an original with particular knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the poem." The title might refer to the litigation over the wills of Anne King's father and his sister, and may have been connected to Anne's marriage to King. The Croke family resided less than five miles from the King family, as noted above, and would have known any local legal scandals.

Folger MS V.a.262 is closely linked to Christ Church, where Croke and King each earned a doctorate of divinity. This manuscript includes poems about people and events at Oxford as well as a number of poems by such Christ Church authors as William Strode, Richard Corbett, Benjamin Stone, and Brian Duppa. Unsurprisingly, Folger MS V.a.262 shares many poems with other manuscripts known to be from Christ Church. Though many Crokes attended Oxford, Charles is the only one with connections to Christ Church around the 1620s, when much of the poetry in Folger MS V.a.262 was composed and circulated.

22. Ibid.
24. For more on manuscript compilation at the universities, see Arthur F. Marotti, Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995), 31–35; and Hobbs, Verse Miscellany Manuscripts, 116–29.
25. The poems that directly refer to people or places at Oxford include "Upon Owen the Buttler of Christchurch in Oxford" (p. 51; "Why death so soone did honest Owen catch"), "Upon John Dawson Buttler of Christchurch" (p. 52; "Dawson the Buttler's dead"), and two poems about Barten Holiday's play Technogamia: "On Mr Hollydayes play acted before the King att Woodstocke" (p. 132; "Bragg on proud christchurch neither fret nor greive") and "The King and the court desirous of sport / to Woodstock apart did hye" (p. 60). Folger MS V.a.262 contains at least thirteen poems by William Strode, including "Love is a game at tables" (p. 82), "O when will Cupid shew such art" (p. 91), and a poem titled in this manuscript "Upon a watch sent to Mris E:K: by W:L:" that begins "Goe and count her better houres" (p. 50). With Strode's pieces we find at least eight poems by Corbett, including the popular "Dr. Corbet to the Duke of Buckingham being in Spayne" (p. 61; "I have read of Ilands floating and remou'ed") and the satiric poem that answers Corbett, "False on his Deanry?" (p. 64). This manuscript also contains Corbett's elegy for Bolding, "If gentlenes could stop the fates" (p. 97) and "Mr. Duppa Upon the death of Mr Bolding of Universitie College" (p. 57), which begins "Tis so, hee's dead." Furthermore, Folger MS V.a.262 contains "An Epitaph on Mr. Ben: Stone of New College in Oxford" (p. 54) as well as a poem by Stone, titled "Ben: Stone Upon Samburn Sheriff of Oxfordsire" (p. 94).
27. Other Crokes who studied at Christ Church include Charles's father, Sir John Croke, and his grandfather, also named Sir John Croke; both John Crokes earned law degrees. Charles's brother Henry attended St. John's College at Oxford from 1605–7; although Charles's younger brother Unton...
Folger MS V.a.262 includes distinctly Royalist poems, suggesting a compiler with these sympathies; Charles Croke, appointed a chaplain to King Charles I, would certainly qualify. Some of the Royalist poems are fairly vitriolic, whereas others are more lighthearted: “Many words spoken, but little amended, / Two subsidies granted the Parliament ended” (p. 39). Not only are many poems in Folger MS V.a.262 explicitly anti-Parliament, but the choice of poets could also be construed as Royalist.28 As Harold Love and Arthur F. Marotti point out, “Especially during the period before, during and just after the Civil War, manuscript collections registered the political tensions and alienation of the compilers and their contacts.”29 This compilation probably began after the defeat of King Charles’s forces in the late 1640s and continued into the 1650s.

Four of the five first poems in Folger MS V.a.262 are political poems related to the events of 1647.30 The ballad on Charing Cross, titled “On the Demolishing of Charing Cross,” begins,

Undone, undone the Lawyers are  
They wander ’boute the towne  
They can’t find the way to Westminster  
Cause Charing Crosse is downe.  

(p. 4)

Charing Cross was demolished in 1647 by order of the House of Commons as part of the Puritan iconoclastic movement. As the song explains, “The Committee say verily / To popery it [Charing Cross] way [was] bent,” though the poet humorously questions the validity of the committee’s decision by adding, “For ought I knowe it might bee soe / To Church it never went.” The fifth poem, “To the King Charles the First att Holmeby” (p. 6; “Hould out brave Charles and thou shalt win the field”), references Charles’s imprisonment from February 16 to June 4, 1647, when the Army (under the control of Parliament) seized him and took him to Hampton Court. King Charles’s stay at Holmby marked the height of his conflict with Parliament; the first civil war ended

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28. Marotti, discussing Robert Chamberlain’s The Harmony of the Muses (1654), explains that certain collections assumed that “older authors like Donne and Jonson can be associated with more contemporary Royalist poets like Strode” (Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric, 270).


30. Although many commonplace books were not written from beginning to end, the arrangement of the poems in Folger MS V.a.262 suggests that these poems might have been copied down in the order in which they appear (seriatim): poems are generally not squeezed in on the bottom of pages or margins; poems frequently carry over to the next page and begin mid-page with no blank spaces between. Furthermore, the miscellany is not divided by headings or topics, which would increase the probability of poems’ being copied non-sequentially.
in 1646 and the second would begin in 1648. These poems reflect the compiler’s reaction to the political tensions of this historic moment.

The second poem, the drinking song “Gouldsmith hall Compounders” (p. 3; “Drawer fill us some wine, or weele pull downe your signe”), another example of the Royalist sentiment exhibited in this collection, also confirms the historic specificity of the opening poems in the manuscript. “Compounding” was a process whereby Parliamentarians seized the assets of Royalists and other “Delinquents.” This poem implies that the decisions made by the Goldsmith Hall compounders were deliberately unfair by offering a caricature of a compounder: “They forc’t us to take 2 oaths and weele make / A third that wee nere meane to keepe them.” This song was a rallying point for Royalists, reminding listeners and readers about the Parliamentarian “traytors”—it was later published under the title “The Royalists Resolve.” Charles Croke would have been personally acquainted with compounding, the subject of Weaver’s poem; Henry Croke, Charles’s brother, was an exchequer who worked for the Pipe Office and who was also a compounder. As a clerk of the Pipe Office, Henry was charged with the crimes of raising fees and extorting money as early as 1635; later, in 1644, when he was charged with similar crimes, the Parliament declared him innocent. Henry maintained his clerkship during the Commonwealth and Protectorate periods, suggesting his affinity with Parliament, exactly what “Gouldsmith Hall Compounders” condemns as treachery. Henry’s activities might have led Charles to be interested in this piece.

As the examples of Henry and Charles suggest, the Croke family was divided during the civil wars, although of Charles’s four brothers, two were dead by that time (John and Edward). Charles himself was “very zealous for the king.” His brother Unton, however, fought for the Parliamentarians. In 1645, Unton’s house was the headquarters for the Parliamentarian leader Sir Thomas Fairfax; in 1646, the Royalists negotiated and signed their surrender there. As noted above, Henry had Parliamentarian

33. The Loyal Garland (1686), sig. D2v. “On the Goldsmiths Committee” also appears in Alexander Brome’s Royalist collection Rump (London, 1662), 235. Thomas Weaver’s holograph manuscript, Bodl. MS Rawl. Poet. 211, contains “The Compounders Song” (fol. 73), which was reprinted in Weaver’s Songs and Poems of Love and Drollery (London, 1654), 13. This poem is also found in BL Harley MS 3991 (ca. 1655–70), without its final verse (fol. 26v). The poem’s musical setting appears in New York Public Library, Drexel Music Division MS 4041 (ca. 1640–50, fols. 124v–25), which is reproduced in English Song, 1600–1675, vol. 9, ed. Elise Bickford Jorgens (New York, 1987). For other appearances of this poem, see the Folger Union First Line Index.
35. Ibid., 197.
36. Ward, Professors of Gresham College, 308.
37. ODNB, s.v. “Croke, Unton.”
ties, though he was ostensibly neutral, but his eldest son was an active Royalist, demonstrating the depth of the Croke family’s political rift. Another of Charles’s nephews, the youngest John Croke—husband of the memorialized Jane Croke—was a Royalist who “raised a troop of horses for the service of the King” during the civil wars. While many of the Crokes could have appreciated a eulogy for Jane Croke, not all of them would have been interested in a collection of strongly Royalist poetry. Although it is unwise to judge the politics of a manuscript compiler based on the contents of the manuscript (as some manuscripts contain pieces of opposing political viewpoints), it can be safely said that the poems in a manuscript indicate the cultural sphere inhabited by its compiler. The Croke family was divided by the civil wars, but perhaps Charles Croke bonded with his nephew, the youngest Sir John Croke (husband of Jane) because they were two of the few Royalists in the Croke family.

The latest poems that can be dated in this manuscript suggest that the compilation concluded before 1655, when Croke moved to Ireland. These include “What’s a Protector? he’s a statly thing / That apes it in the nonage of a king,” which disparages Oliver Cromwell’s becoming Lord Protector of England in 1653 and claims that Cromwell cannot live up to governing as he is only “A Esop’s proud ass masqued in a Lyon’s skin” (p. 7). The poem depicts Cromwell’s strict Puritanism as a facade; he is an “outside saint, Lyned with a divell within.” The poem’s closing lines align the king of England with Christ, exhorting “The King of Kings” to “Protect us all.” Another of the collection’s latest datable poems, “Upon May the 17. 1653,” begins with a brief prose description of recent events: an unknown man set up Cromwell’s picture in the Exchange with encomiastic verses attached exhorting Cromwell to take the throne (p. 10; “On Tuesday last a gent came to the Exchange in a coach”). In the context of Folger MS V.a.262, the poem’s overdramatic call to “kneele and pray / To Oliver” has a sharp sarcastic edge; indeed, it ends with a resounding “God save the King” (p. 11). In 1655, Croke moved to Ireland, possibly because of his support for the Stuarts, though more likely for financial reasons. He died near Dublin in 1657. The main scribe of Folger MS V.a.262 likely stopped writing in the few years following 1653, which coincides with Croke’s departure from England.

Folger MS V.a.262 contains anti-Puritan verse along with the Royalist poetry, which highlights not only the compiler’s Royalist leanings but also, potentially, his or her religious proclivities. It opens with “A Divine Ode” (p. 1), a poem that remodulates

38. Aylmer, King’s Servants, 390, 418.
40. For a transcription of this poem, see Marotti, Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric, 122.
41. For a non-sarcastic reading of this poem, see Laura Lunger Knoppers, Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print, 1645–1661 (Cambridge, 2000), 66–68. Knoppers points to the tradition of answer poetry that posits Cromwell as “a grotesque parody of true sacred kingship” (p. 67).
43. ODNB, s.v. “Croke, Charles.”
the Lord’s Prayer by pairing it with anti-Puritan sentiments. The poem’s structure is a series of couplets, each followed by a word or phrase from the Lord’s Prayer. The opening lines—“Blesse us good Lord from that dull sect which say / Wee err in twice repeating when we pray / Our Father”—position the piece as a prayer, one asking God to help maintain the sanctity of the episcopal church. The poet criticizes Puritans: “For to our Common prayers they will not / Come.” Where the familiar line from the Lord’s Prayer, “lead us not into temptation,” does not specify the source of that temptation, this poem points a finger: “And lett not thy true Church by such as these / Bee brought into through ignorance and ease / Temptation”; “such as these” refers to the Puritans who threaten the basis of the Anglican church. The anti-Puritanism of this poem, among others, would have appealed to Croke, whose career was rooted in the traditional Church of England. The conservative Anglicanism of this manuscript also aims a few jabs at Catholicism, including a couplet (titled “An Epitaph on one that rob’d the Pope” in other manuscripts) that reads “Here lies a theife, a theifes thou lyest / Hee is noe theife robs antichrist” (p. 147).

This anti-Catholic attitude is paired with anti-lawyer sentiment in “A dismal Summons to Drs. Commons” (p. 6; “Thou cage full of foule birds and beasts”), which could offer another clue to the compiler’s identity. “A dismal Summons” attacks the Doctors’ Commons, a society of lawyers who practiced civil law. Despite the Reformation, English civil law of the time was based on Roman Catholic canon law. Traditionally used in church courts, it was the alternative system of law to the common law, which was taught at the Inns of Court. This poem indicts “civil law” for turning “Civillians” into “civill villains.” Another poem, “In prayse and disprayse of the Common Lawyer,” is a “punctuation poem” that can be read two ways: from line to line, it praises the lawyers: “Lawyers themselves upholde: the common wealth” (p. 148). From mid-line to mid-line (the caesuras being marked with punctuation), it criticizes the lawyers: “Lawyers themselves upholde”; “the common wealth / They punish.”

Charles Croke came from a family of successful lawyers and judges, including Charles’s father, Sir John Croke (d. 1608), and Charles’s uncle, Sir George Croke. While coming from a legal dynasty, Charles elected to pursue an academic career, remaining at Christ Church even though he was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1609. Although Charles was not a lawyer himself, his legal ties might have contributed to his interest in these poems.

Those ties may even explain how papers containing law reports from Yoxford and Heddon were eventually filled with Christ Church poetry. The lawyers in the

44. For a complete transcription of the poem, see Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*, 119–21.
46. ODNB, s.v. “Croke, Sir George (c.1560–1642),” by C. W. Brooks. George Croke is now remembered for not allowing the king to take ship money; he is also the subject of the poem that begins, “This was the man the glory of the gown,” found in a handful of manuscripts.
47. ODNB, s.v. “Croke, Charles.”
Croke family were in the habit of collecting manuscript legal reports. According to C. W. Brooks, Sir George Croke, a prominent lawyer, serjeant-at-law, and member of the king’s bench, “actively collected manuscript copies of older law reports while at the same time assembling new material either from his own observations in court or by borrowing from other younger lawyers.” Possibly Sir George was hoping to follow in the footsteps of his father, John Croke, who was known for publishing early law reports from manuscript sources. Charles’s ownership of the law reports could easily be explained: he was part of a family that gave gifts from uncle to nephew and prized legal manuscripts. The paper throughout the manuscript (including the legal reports and the poetry) has a pot watermark with the initials PR; the compiler did not create a verse miscellany that was later bound with these law reports, but rather, he filled the remaining pages of an existing manuscript with poetry, putting to use paper that would otherwise have been wasted. Folger MS V.a.262, that is, is not an aggregation or composite volume in which disparate manuscripts were later bound together: the poetry compiler had access to the legal material. The Croke family’s connections could make sense of how a manuscript with legal notes became a verse miscellany and account for the presence of some of the poems.

A connection to the Croke family could also explain the absence of one particular poem, “The Parliament Fart,” a frequently copied libel that mentions John Croke (ca. 1553–1620) in the opening line: “Downe came grave auntient Sir John Crooke.” As Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae point out, “The Parliament Fart” was one of the most “popular comic political poems of the early Stuart era, which was still in circulation in the latter half of the seventeenth century.” “The Parliament Fart” is found in multiple manuscripts related to Folger MS V.a.262. The poem, in all its variable forms, mentions more than one hundred members of British Parliament and is found in versions varying in length from roughly forty lines to over one hundred lines in forty known manuscript copies. It was on March 4, 1607, that Henry Ludlow farted when Sir John Croke delivered a message from the House of Lords to the House of Commons. Through that message, King James was trying to pressure Parliament to

48. ODNB, s.v. “Croke, George.” Sir George left his legal books to Harbottle Grimston, who published them. This does not preclude his giving one notebook to Charles.
49. ODNB, s.v. “Croke, Sir John.”
50. Paulus Ambrosius (Paul Ambrose) Croke, Sir George’s brother and Charles’s uncle, left an account book in which he documents numerous gifts to nieces and nephews; see J. H. Bloom, “Paulus Ambrosius Croke: A Seventeenth-Century Account Book,” Notes and Queries 77 (1918): 5–7, 36–38. Larminie notes that Sir George left his estate to two nephews after his son Thomas’s death, disinheriting his grandchildren; see “Settlement and Sentiment,” 32.
51. See Bellany and McRae, Early Stuart Libels, Cii, for a transcription of one version of “The Parliament Fart.”
52. Oxford, Corpus Christi College Library MS 328, which shares more than forty poems with Folger MS V.a.262, contains a copy of “The Parliament Fart.” Other related manuscripts that contain the libel include BL Sloane MS 1792 and Rosenbach MS 1083/16.
approve the “Union of the Kingdoms”; Ludlow’s fart was seen as a “metaphorical [fart] in the face of the king and his ministers,” and in this case, in the face of his messenger, John Croke.\textsuperscript{55} Although Baird Whitlock conjectures that “even those who are named in the poem took the jest in good spirit,”\textsuperscript{56} it would be understandable if John Croke’s son chose not to re-copy the verses.\textsuperscript{57} Although the absence of a poem can, by itself, hardly be considered a method of attribution, in the case of “The Parliament Fart” and Folger MS V.a.262, it can support the hypothesis that Charles Croke compiled this manuscript.

Before conclusively ascribing the compilation of Folger MS V.a.262 to Charles Croke, we must consider the signatures on the manuscript. Signatures may at times be misleading: for instance, the final page of Thomas Weaver’s holograph manuscript, Bodleian MS Rawl. poet. 211, reads “Charles his book.”\textsuperscript{58} On the front pastedown (which is not on the same paper as the poetry) of Folger MS V.a.262 is a hard-to-decipher signature: “Wakelin EeK. Hering [de Kettering?] / Blows of Whitsor” (see figure 4).\textsuperscript{59} The hand is markedly different from the hand of the main compiler: Wakelin's majuscule \textit{W} is pointy on both sides at the bottom, whereas the compiler’s majuscule \textit{W}s are more rounded on the right-hand side. The compiler also tends to have a flourish on the left-hand side of his majuscule \textit{W}, particularly at the start of a line, and Wakelin does not. As Shakespeare scholars can attest, signatures are weak evidence for a palaeographic argument; that said, the signature suggests that Wakelin is not the compiler.

\begin{figure}
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\caption{Folger MS V.a.262, inside front cover pastedown detail. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.}
\end{figure}

\begin{notes}
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{56} Whitlock, \textit{John Hoskyns}, 285.
\textsuperscript{57} For many of the other politicians named, it would have been easy to omit the couplet referring to that politician. Bellany and McCrae (\textit{Early Stuart Libels}, C1i) explain that the poem always opens with the same few lines, but that the rest of the poem was often altered and personalized: indeed, politicians were added to the poem who were not in office when the notorious fart occurred. John Croke’s name, however, was in the initial line of the poem and therefore could not be excised without changing the entire basis of the poem.
\textsuperscript{58} Crum, \textit{First-line Index}, 163; \textit{ODNB}, s.v. “Weaver, Thomas.”
\textsuperscript{59} This signature is particularly challenging to read and I rely on the transcription from Peter Beal, \textit{Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts, 1450–1700}, forthcoming online.
\end{notes}
The rear pastedown of Folger MS V.a.262 offers another signature: R. J. Cotton. Cotton’s hand similarly does not match the hand of the main manuscript compiler: the curly majuscule C in “Cotton” is an italic C unlike the secretary C used by the main compiler, a graph with a right ascender and a cross-stroke; see, for instance, “Croke” and “Chilton” in figure 1. Furthermore, the R in this signature is unlike the majuscule Rs found elsewhere in the manuscript; the main hand adds a long, smooth descender unlike the crooked stroke that does not descend below the baseline in Cotton’s signature. Cotton might have been a later owner or reader of the manuscript but was probably not the compiler. We have no handwritten documents definitively by Charles Croke with which to compare this manuscript, making a positive paleographic match impossible.

The legal documents and the poetic contents of Folger MS V.a.262 point to the literary tastes, social circles, and historic situation of the compiler. Taken separately, the pieces of evidence set forth in this essay amount to a few possibly interesting facts about one manuscript. Considered together, however, these facts (the information known by the compiler, the compiler’s social and familial circles, the manuscript’s university provenance, the political and religious opinions expressed, and the paleographical comparison) points to Charles Croke as the manuscript compiler.

While this manuscript is valuable as an example of the particular knowledge to be gained about an individual from manuscript research—that is, as an object that reflects one person’s tastes, experiences, and interests—it also serves as an example of broader trends in manuscript compilation and circulation. Folger MS V.a.262 is one of many Christ Church manuscripts (though it was compiled after the poetic heyday in the 1620s and 1630s) and one of many Royalist manuscripts: this manuscript captures cultural pieces that would otherwise have been lost while also recontextualizing popular poems—for instance, pairing elegiac verses with funny epitaphs alongside anti-Cromwellian satires. Potentially valuable work could further trace the sources of these diverse works, concentrate on comparing Croke’s manuscript to other related Christ Church manuscripts, offer a reading of Henry King’s poetry in light of Croke as an individual reader, or seek to piece together and understand Croke’s Royalist coterie in relation to the poems they read and copied. Attributing the compilation of Folger MS V.a.262 to Charles Croke could lead to further scrutiny of the manuscript’s contents that could benefit historians, bibliographers, and literary scholars alike.

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60. For more recent provenance, Seymour de Ricci says that Folger MS V.a.262 was “apparently obtained (June 1918) through Ashley T. Cole, New York, possibly from the Charles F. Gunther collection, of Chicago.” See De Ricci, with W. J. Wilson, Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada (reprint, New York, 1961), 438–39 (2073.4).
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Appendix A: Select Croke Family Tree

John Croke m. Prudentia Cave  
(d. 1554)

Sir John Croke m. Elizabeth Unton  
(1530–1608)  
(1538–1611)

Sir John Croke m. Katherine Blount  
(1533–1620)  
(1563–1620?)

Henry Croke  
(1560–1642)

Sir George Croke  
(1590/91–1657)

Paulus Ambrosius  
(d. 1631)

4 others

Sir John Croke  
(1586–1640)

m. 1 Eleanor Gibbon

m. 2 Rachel Webb

m. 1 Jane Tryon  
(1616–1636)

Henry Croke  
(1588–1659)

m. Bridget Hawtrey

Charles Croke  
(1590/91–1657)

m. 1 Anne Grene  
(d. 1619)

m. 2 Anne/Amy Rivett

Unton Croke  
(1594/5–1670/1)

m. Anne Hore

Edward Croke  
(d. 1626)

10 children, including
1. Sir Richard Croke (1624–1683)
2. Col. Unton Croke (d. 1694)
3. Charles Croke (ca. 1635–ca. 1686)
Appendix B: Jane Croke's Funeral Elegy

An Elegie dedicated to the happy
memory of the most incomparable piece of
perfection Mrs Jane Croke late wife of John
Croke of Chilton Esq./

Hard taske, when all thy grieved friends must know it
Soe with a subject has soe poore a Poet
It seemes thou meandst in earnist when soe oft
Thou sayd'st when e're thy sowle did soare aloft
And leave this ball of Earth: thy funerall verse
Should by my hand bee fast'ned to thy herse.
T'was thy injunction; nor must I withstand
To hazzard creditt to serve thy command
Who would have hazzarded both life and breath
To have preferr'd thee from soe early death
Or lyen tenn yeares in prison so thy mynde
To fleshly prison had bin still confyn'd.

How vaine wee talke, wee bid the to thy losse
And thy advantage count our greatest crosse
For if (blest Saint) the world had worthy bin
Of thy deare selfe; thou had'st bin longer seene
On our low sphere, not tane1 from earthly stage
In flower of youth, and bloomeing of thy age
Till nyneteene yeares thy untouch't modesty
Deser'vd the crowne of pure virginity
What time thou did'st all others so outshine
The Monopoly of beauty was all thyne.
Then Stymen woo'd thee2: and thy loyalty
Deserv'd the crowne of holy chastity
Ere eightene monethes wer past, thy pregnant wombe
Found mercilesse Lucinus3 heavy doome
Where thou obtayned'st which was yet to come
The crowne of charitable Martyrdome
Content to part with life, world, worldly pelfe4
To leave a little picture of thy selfe

1. Taken (poetic).
2. Stymon (sometimes Strymon) is a river in Greece, and Strymo(n) is a river deity. As Sara Austin pointed out, this is likely a misreading of "Hymen" (god of marriage) from the original source.
3. In "Lucinus," the u is written over another letter, probably a. Lucina is the Roman goddess of childbirth.
4. Pelf is a term to describe money or worldly possessions (OED, s.v. "pelf, n.").
Poore hamelesse, harmefull Babe, too rudly sought
By carelesse handling, and too dearely bought
But other things conciev’d thy selfe and wee
Did make a shift to make an end of thee
In us it was a sinne to live too well
In thee it was as dangerous to excell
In grace, and goodnesse, wisedome, patience,
Devotion, charity, and innocence,
It being a jealousy of Heaven to wrest
One of our hands the choysest, and the best
Such was thy fate, bright sowle: which whoso heare
Will know thy vertue and outvye thy yeares
Heere some (in contemplacion of thy blesse
To think on how highly plac’t and honour’d is
Thy better part walking o’re cloudes, and stares
From thy high orbe beholding earthly jarres
And vanitie of mortalls with an eye
Of pitty of our infelicity)
Would pure his leaves, and to thy sacred name
Helpe to erect a pyramid of fame
Tis not our ease, whose harts, with sorrow rent
Through the eyes sluces, seeke theire griefe to vent
Whetten our sharpe desires to harbour where
Heaven is, the rather because thou art there
    Hence all that talke of comfort or delight
Since thy [ . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ] her winged flight
This have wee learned by thy lifes parable
Death is be<co>me ^to us^ lesse terrible
Which if t’ imbrace, and meete, or overtake
With all the speed that tyme, and griefe can make
Wee run too fast, thou shalt that sinne forgive
None, that know thee, desire, or care to live.

5. The manuscript here reads "one," though it is probably meant to read "out."
6. This and the next line run long and so the final letters are squeezed in at the edges, making them harder to read.
7. There is a word blotted here (between “thy” and “vertue”) that is now illegible.
8. Probably pronounced "bliss" to rhyme with "is." The OED explains that "bliss" and "bless" could be spelled both ways from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries (OED, s.v. “bliss”).
9. "Jars" here means discord or quarrelling (OED, s.v. "jars").
10. This line echoes "Hence all you vain delights," a song that circulated widely in manuscript from John Fletcher’s (or Thomas Middleton’s) play The Nice Valour.
11. Here the compiler has left a blank spot in the middle of the line, as if unable to decipher the original writing.
12. The word “become” here is blotted in the middle, though the initial and final letters are clear. “To us” is inserted with a caret.