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## A "Find" of Henry Fielding Letters

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#### A "FIND" OF HENRY FIELDING LETTERS

Until 1975 only 20 Henry Fielding (1707-1754) letters were known to exist, but the efforts of Martin C. Battestin, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of English at the University of Virginia, have led to the discovery of 40 additional letters in recent years. Working with his wife, Ruthe, who specializes in documentary research, Battestin has systematically searched the major and minor British libraries and archives for Fielding materials. In the summer of 1978 the husband-wife team found the only literary prose manuscripts in Fielding's hand. Battestin says the essay, written in 1738, "will fill a huge gap in the Fielding biography." The manuscript was in a box of confiscated papers taken when the British government seized the radical journal, Common Sense.

The Battestins are now on academic leave in London, continuing their search. "When we leave the archives at the end of each day of research," Mrs. Battestin reports, "we are shocked back into the modern world." They hope to complete a full-length biography of Fielding in the next five years.