

Hill-Stead Museum



Pope-Riddle families papers, 1869-1946

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Hill-Stead Museum

35 Mountain Road

Farmington

CT

06032

email: bourbeaum@hillstead.org

URL: <http://www.hillstead.org>

Phone: 860-677-4787

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Collection Summary](#)

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content of Collection](#)

[Arrangement](#)

[Restrictions](#)

[Indexing Terms](#)

[Related Material](#)

[Administrative Information](#)

Collection Summary

Repository

Hill-Stead Museum

Creators

Pope, Ada Brooks, 1844-1920; Pope, Alfred Atmore, 1844-1913; Riddle, John Wallace, 1864-1941; Riddle, Theodate Pope, 1867-1946

Title:

Pope and Riddle families papers, 1869-1946

Dates:

1869-1946

Dates:	1880-1930
Extent	64 linear feet; 127 boxes
Abstract	The Pope-Riddle Family Papers collection includes letters, diaries, genealogical information, family Bibles, and other documents and material generated by or pertaining primarily to Theodate Pope Riddle, her parents, Alfred Pope and Ada Brooks Pope, and Theodate's husband John Riddle.
Collection Number	MS 1
Physical Location	Third-floor archives
Languages Represented	English.

Biography

Alfred Atmore Pope (son of Alton Pope and Theodate Stackpole Pope; born N. Vassalboro, Maine, July 4, 1842 - died Farmington, Connecticut, August 5, 1913) In 1861, when Alfred Pope was 19, he and his family moved to a Quaker community in Salem, Ohio. Later, in Cleveland, he joined his father and brothers as partners in a woolen business. Alfred married Ada Brooks in 1866, and their only child, Effie, was born one year later. (Effie later renamed herself "Theodate"e after her paternal grandmother.) In 1869 Alfred borrowed \$5,000 to become a principal in the Cleveland Malleable Iron Company. He transformed the company product line from agricultural machinery to components for the booming railroad industry. In his late 40s, self-educated and wealthy, Alfred developed a great love and enthusiasm for art. He began collecting French Impressionist paintings when he took his family on a European Grand Tour in 1888-1889. Alfred's Naugatuck, Connecticut-based business associates, J. H. Whittemore and his son Harris, became steadfast friends and fellow collectors of Impressionist paintings. Alfred developed his personal aesthetic and bought only artwork he "could rise to." Hill-Stead was his retirement home, designed by his daughter and planned, in part, to showcase his collection.

Ada Brooks Pope (born Salem, Ohio, March 31, 1844 - died Pasadena, California, May 6, 1920) Ada Brooks, the third of eight children, was in her teens when each of her parents died. She and her siblings remained very close to each other all their lives, often gathering in Vermont where their parents were born and several relatives still lived. After marrying Alfred Pope, her childhood sweetheart, in 1866, directing the Pope household became her life's work. Her skill and grace were legendary. She enjoyed living in Cleveland, Ohio, where the couple eventually built a Queen Anne-style house, in 1885, on fashionable Euclid Avenue. The family kept an apartment, as well, in New York City. At first, Ada was less than enthusiastic about the move to Farmington. Yet, she adapted to country living, and much of what we know about daily life at Hill-Stead derives from her avid letter writing and fastidious keeping of accounts. Ada never fully recovered from Alfred's death in 1913. In her later years she found it difficult to spend long winters at Hill-Stead and, annually, spent time California with some of her Brooks family.

Theodate Pope Riddle (born Salem, Ohio, February 2, 1867 - died Farmington, Connecticut, August 30, 1946) Effie Brooks Pope grew up in Salem, Ohio, and later Cleveland, as an only child. At the age of 19, she declared herself "Theodate" after her paternal grandmother, and thereafter was known by the name that means "gift of God." She first attended a private girls' school in Cleveland along with the daughters of Presidents Garfield and Hayes. In 1886, she went east to continue her education at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut. There, she fell in love with a romanticized version of life in Colonial times. While accompanying her parents on a European Grand Tour, 1888-1889, she began to articulate her ambition of becoming an architect. Upon the family's return, Theodate received permission to live on her own in the rural Connecticut village she had grown to love. She purchased and restored an eighteenth-century farmhouse - her introduction to house design and construction. After living on her own for nearly ten years, Theodate persuaded her parents to buy hilltop property and retire in Farmington. She designed and built Hill-Stead, her first architectural project in the Colonial Revival style, assisted by the noted firm of McKim, Mead & White, who completed construction drawings. Spacious, yet comfortable, the house also provided a showcase for her father's magnificent art collection. The landmark project was completed in 1901. Later architectural accomplishments included designing several private homes and schools, including Westover School in Middlebury, Connecticut, and Avon Old Farms School, in Avon, Connecticut. As a single woman Theodate took in a toddler to raise as her child. At the age of 49, Theodate surprised family and friends by marrying diplomat John Wallace Riddle, whom she had known for nearly a decade, following her remarkable survival of the sinking of the RMS Lusitania. The couple had no children of their own, but, following the

death of her first ward, from polio, two more foster sons were added to the household. In addition to her architectural practice, Theodate oversaw management of Hill-Stead's extensive, and progressive-minded, farm operations. Theodate wanted Hill-Stead to remain intact for the benefit of future generations. To that end, her Will specified that the house she had designed, with all its contents, become a museum for the education and enjoyment of all.

John Wallace Riddle (born Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 12, 1864 - died Farmington, Connecticut, December 8, 1941) John Wallace Riddle never knew his father, who had died before his son's birth. When he was seven his mother married Judge Charles Flandrau of St. Paul, Minnesota, a widower with two daughters. The couple had two sons together. Although John funded his own education from a small inheritance, his stepfather's important political connections helped advance his diplomatic career. After graduating from Harvard in 1886, John attended Columbia Law School and then the École des Sciences et Politiques in Paris. He became a skilled linguist proficient in several languages. His diplomatic posts included Turkey, Egypt, Romania, Russia (while it was under Tsarist rule) and Argentina. He met Theodate in 1905 through their mutual friend and Farmington resident Anna Roosevelt Cowles, Theodore Roosevelt's sister. John and Theodate married in 1916. During World War I, he worked for the Army War College, in Washington, D.C. If John and Theodate's marriage was a relationship based partly on mutual convenience, it also was affectionate. She called him "Totem" because of his height, and he called her "Dearest of Geniuses."

Scope and Content of Collection

The Pope-Riddle Family Papers collection consists of approximately TBD linear feet of material including 13,000 family letters, diaries, genealogical documents, family Bibles and documents related to the fine and decorative arts collection acquired by Alfred Pope. In addition, there are a few financial records from the end of Theodate Pope Riddle's life and papers related to the settling of her parents' estates. Theodate Pope Riddle's diaries, kept intermittently from 1880-1890 and 1898-1905, have been transcribed. The collection contains very few architectural drawings and only minimal references to her architectural career. The diplomatic career of John Wallace Riddle is minimally documented. The variety of materials available for study include:

Series 1: Pope-Riddle family papers

- Pope and Brooks family correspondence
- Theodate Pope Riddle's adolescent and young adult diaries (1886-1890), which include her writing on her years as a secondary school student in Cleveland and at Miss Porter's School, a detailed description of the family's 1888-89 grand tour to Europe, her life on her own in Farmington prior to the construction of Hill-Stead, and, throughout, her search for an identity of her own.
- Theodate Pope Riddle's correspondence with friends such as Henry James, William James, Mary Cassatt, August Jaccaci, Lady Helena Gleichen, Jane Addams, Anna Roosevelt Cowles, Mariana Van Rensselaer.
- Receipts for many items in Hill-Stead's collection (1888-1936), including many but not all the French Impressionist paintings.
- Alfred Pope's correspondence with James McNeill Whistler (1890's).
- A significant volume of correspondence related to Theodate's interest in psychical research with notable persons such as Dr. Richard Hodgson and James Hyslop. Transcriptions of "psychical" sittings undertaken by Theodate Pope Riddle and William James with medium Leonora Piper (c.1904-6), and Theodate's later investigations into spiritualism.
- The correspondence of Theodate Pope Riddle's husband, John Wallace Riddle, from his student days at Harvard; his diplomatic posts in Turkey (1890s) and Russia (1906-08); and copies of his WWI translations of intelligence documents.
- Other items include Pope and Brooks family Bibles with key dates of births, marriages, and deaths
- Copies of Wills, probate documents, including those for the family's long time butler, Earnest Bohlen
- More than 120 items representing multiple facets of the interests and experiences of the Pope family, including art collecting; discreet items pertaining to Connecticut history; European and Asian travel; family genealogy; James McNeill Whistler; personal mementoes; RMS Lusitania

memorabilia; Theodate Pope's design of Avon Old Farms School, and its impact in architectural and design spheres upon opening.

Series 2: Estate papers of Alfred Atmore Pope, Ada Brooks Pope and Theodate Pope Riddle

- Alfred A. Pope's papers span 1906-1917 (1913-17 bulk dates) and generally relate to settling his estate following his death in August 1913. Examples include: invoices, receipts, taxes, cancelled checks, and papers related to commercial property owned in Cleveland, Ohio
- Ada B. Pope's papers span 1913-1926 and include account summaries, bank statements, correspondence, appraisals, and taxes. Of special interest are her detailed household accounts (likely maintained by her secretary F.W. Swenston, about whom Hill-Stead has little information.) Recurring categories include: expenses for: automobiles; California trips; Hill-Steads exterior; farm; furnishings; gratuities (mostly recurring, monthly payments to certain of her siblings); home maintenance and repair; housekeeping; Other documents relate to insurance, loans to employees, repair for paintings in the fine art collection, etc.; also personal expenses for Ada Pope, stable expenses (through 1916), travel and currency, and payments to Theodate Pope / Theodate Pope Riddle. Accounts reflect payments made only by check with no indication as to how Ada Pope spent cash. Accounts also do not reflect presumed, shared expenses with Theodate and there is no true sense of how such expenses were managed.
- Theodate Pope Riddle's papers span 1944-1946 and include primarily information related to farm operations at Hill-Stead and Old Farms (located on what was then part of Avon Old Farms School property). Other papers include those related to household operations at Hill-Stead. There are no business papers or plans related to Theodate Pope, Architect.

Arrangement

Each item was assigned a number in the inventory card file created upon acquisition. Items are boxed sequentially according to the number assigned. Some were grouped within particular number ranges according to their subjects, such as psychical research. Items such as family Bibles, probate documents, wills, etc. are assigned item numbers, within distinctly numbered boxes.

Restrictions

Restrictions

Collection open for research by appointment only.

Publication Rights

For copyright status, please contact the Hill-Stead Museum.

Related Material

Pope-Riddle Family Photographs Collection

Pope-Riddle Family Research Collection

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Accounts
Agriculture
Architects
Architecture
Art
Authors
Avon Old Farms School
Bibles
Brooks family
Brooks, Joseph Judson
Brooks, Judith French Twing
Cassatt, Mary, 1844-1926
Cleveland Malleable Iron Company
Collectors and collecting
Correspondence
Degas, Edgar, 1834-1917
Diaries
Diplomatic and consular service
Diplomats
Estate records
Farmington (Conn.)
Financial records
Gilbert, Cass, 1859-1934
Hodgson, Richard, 1855-1905
Hyslop, James H. (James Hervey), 1854-1920
Impressionism (Art)
Inventories
James, Henry, 1843-1916
James, William, 1842-1910
Lusitania (Steamship)
Manet, Édouard, 1832-1883
McKim, Mead & White
Middlebury (Conn.)
Monet, Claude, 1840-1926
National Malleable and Steel Castings Co.
Piper, Leonora, 1859-1950
Poets
Pope family
Pope, Ada Brooks, 1844-1920
Pope, Alfred Atmore, 1844-1913
Pope, Alton
Psychical Research
Rand, Ellen Emmet, 1875-1941
Receipts (financial records)
Riddle, John Wallace, 1864-1941
Riddle, Theodate Pope, 1867-1946
Spiritualism
Travel
Westover School
Whistler, James McNeill, 1834-1903
Whittemore, Harris, 1864-1927
Whittemore, John Howard, 1837-1910
Women--Suffrage

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Pope and Riddle families papers, 1869-1946, Archives, Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, CT

Acquisition Information

Bequest of Theodate Pope Riddle, 1946.
