The Pope Family’s Grand Tour

For the intensely curious, armchair adventurers, students, architecture buffs, and historians, we are delighted to offer Hill-Stead Museum’s first virtual tour. So, come along with us on a thrilling trip with our founder Theodate Pope Riddle during her Grand Tour (1888-1889), a ten-month educational sojourn across Europe in search of arts and culture via her diary entries. Each week we will reveal excerpts from her journal alongside enriching online cultural programming. It’s the ultimate trip across Europe!

It was during the late 16th century when the Grand Tour first became fashionable for young aristocrats, as a means of completing an education based on classical ideals. The educational journey usually began in London and included stops in Paris, and sometimes Spain, Greece, or Turkey. But the “It Girl” of Europe was Italy—especially Venice, Florence with the tour typically culminating in Rome. Typically, the tourist was an English, German, Scandinavian, or American young man with the means to support months of travel touring museums, famous ruins, churches, parks, and fountains. Often, Grand Tourists also collected art for their collections along the way.

The Pope family took a similar path during their Grand Tour, except this educational experience was intended for a trailblazing young woman, their daughter, Theodate. Accompanied by her parents Alfred and Ada, a young gentleman named Harris—whose father was Mr. Pope’s business associate—was brought along as her companion. His father, Arthur Harris Whittemore, along with Theodate’s parents, had high hopes that the two would hit it off and eventually marry.

The group first arrived in Le Havre on November 5, 1888. The rest of the month was spent in Paris, then Spain, followed by Italy from January through part of March and so on. The family utilized a tour guide for numerous excursions, crisscrossing all over Europe as seasons and opportunities arose, up into the Lake District of England and on into Scotland. In all, they would travel to Paris four times before sailing for home on September 4.

The trip, for 21-year old Theodate, was a culminating educational experience, following two years of study at Miss Porter’s School, in Farmington, then a finishing school. In part, it was a business trip for her father, who had a colleague in England. In all, there was a lot of pleasure to be had for the entire family. A defining moment was Theodate’s father’s purchase of his first French Impressionist paintings and decorative arts objects.
As he was visiting galleries and exhibitions, Theodate was right there with him, figuratively “hand-in-hand.” Throughout their ten-month-long Grand Tour, Theodate contemplates her life’s path. Conversations with her father, later chronicled in her diary, illustrate that she was not unlike today’s youth. She, too, grappled with the unknown, trying to figure out how and where she would fit in and imagining scenarios of circumstances yet to come.

**Episode 1 - Paris 1888**
Paris, November 5, 1888

“I am certainly slipping, sliding, falling in love.”

Paris, November 6, 1888

“Today I have seen the Venus of Milo. It was beyond my expectations, the lines, the lines are perfect and it is so spiritual, so much more interest in the features than is usual in the face of a Venus...The human form is beautiful, and it is elevating to see such a statue as the Venus of Milo.”

Aphrodite (The Venus de Milo)

One of the most famous examples of sculpture from Ancient Greece, the Venus de Milo is a representation of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. The more familiar name “Venus” refers to the Roman goddess who was the equivalent of the Greek “Aphrodite”. The sculpture was carved out of two blocks of marble, is larger than life-size (standing at 6’ 8”), and originally would have had both her arms intact - with the left hand likely to be holding an apple. The sculpture has gained attention and acclaim for its fusion of grace and grandeur.

As was traditional for Greek sculptures, the Venus de Milo would likely have had color applied to her features, and there are signs that the sculpture wore jewelry - including earrings and a headband.

Questions:

- Where was Theodate when she saw the Venus De Milo?
- Who do you think made this work of art?
- Can you think of other famous pictures of Venus?
To learn more:

https://kids.kiddle.co/Venus_de_Milo
https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/aphrodite-known-venus-de-milo

Paris, November 7, 1888

“This afternoon, Harris, Aunt Nora, Mama & I went across the river to see the Pantheon and Notre Dame...”

The Panthéon was built between 1758 - 1790, dedicated to Saint Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris. After the French Revolution, it was converted into a mausoleum to honor famous French citizens.

In 1851, a physicist named Leon Foucault demonstrated the rotation of the Earth on its axis by hanging a long and heavy pendulum from the dome of the Panthéon. A copy of the pendulum can still be seen there.

“...We went down into the crypt of the Panthéon to see where Victor Hugo was buried.”

Victor Hugo (1802-1885) remains one of the best-loved French authors and poets. More than two million people lined the streets of Paris between the Arc de Triomphe and the Panthéon for his state funeral.

Questions:

- Where is the Panthéon with respect to the Cathedral of Notre Dame and the River Seine?
- Can you name two of the most famous books by Victor Hugo?
  - Hint: one of them is connected to the Cathedral, and the other one has been adapted as a famous Broadway musical and movie.
- What artist at Hill-Stead has murals in the Panthéon?
- What Library in the United States has murals by the same artist who painted a mural in the Panthéon?
● Bonus question: can you discover the other link between this Library and Hill-Stead Museum?

To learn more:

https://kids.kiddle.co/Foucault_pendulum
https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/monarchy-enlightenment/neoclassicism/a/soufflot-the-pantheon-paris
https://www.wdl.org/en/item/4159/
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rue_Soufflot_et_place_du_Panth%C3%A9on_-_plan_de_Paris_Hachette_1894.jpg

Links to information on Puvis:

https://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/puvis/
https://www.theartstory.org/artist/puvis-de-chavannes-pierre/

Notre Dame:

Notre Dame de Paris - or the Cathedral of Notre Dame, is instantly recognizable as one of the most popular landmarks of Paris.

Paris, November 7, 1888 (continued)

The cathedral was constructed between 1163 and 1345, meaning that parts of it are over 850 years old. There was a terrible fire in April 2019 that destroyed much of the roof and the spire. Plans for rebuilding Notre-Dame have already begun in the hope that a new spire will one day rise as a symbol of the renewed cathedral.
This painting was completed in 1888. Notre Dame Cathedral appears very dark and "Gothic" in this image. A major cleaning of the front of the structure began in 1963, to remove centuries of dirt and grime, restoring the original off-white colour of the limestone.

Paris, November 8, 1888

“This morning we all went to the Luxembourg. Saw there an immensely good picture by Uncle Ned’s master, Cormon.”

During the time of Theodate’s visit in 1888, the Musée du Luxembourg was housed in the former orangery of the Luxembourg Palace.

The Luxembourg Palace has served many different functions over the years, since it was built in 1625. A brief history may be found here: https://en.parisinfo.com/paris-museum-monument/71365/Senat-Palais-du-Luxembourg

Questions:

- Where is the Luxembourg Palace related to the Pantheon?
- What is the Palace used for now?

To learn more:

https://kids.kiddle.co/Luxembourg_Palace
Paris, November 8, 1888 (continued)

“After lunch at Julien’s, we all except Papa went to the Madeleine.”

The decorated ceiling at Chez Julien restaurant remains unchanged from the time of the Pope’s visit. The restaurant was updated in 1902 in the modern Art Nouveau style.

The Madeleine:

The Madeleine is built in the style of a Greek/Roman temple. Construction began in 1764, but it was only consecrated in 1845, not long before Theodate’s visit. There were several different proposals for how the building should be used, including as the country’s parliament building, a bank, or as a temple to the Glory of Napoleon’s Army.

Behind the building’s bronze doors, is a lavishly decorated interior, with marble and gilt, and many sculptures. Look closely, as there are no windows to illuminate the space.

Question:

- What is interesting about the design of this church?
Paris, November 12, 1888

“Harris came down to meet us at Redfern's and I went to a Pattiserie's [sic] with him for lunch and then we walked across the Tuileries gardens to the Seine where we took a boat for St. Cloud. The river and banks were so picturesque…”

The Tuileries gardens have been a popular attraction for generations of Parisians and visitors to the City of Lights. The name derives from “tuile,” which is the French for “tile” and recognizes that this area was the home to tile and pottery makers in the Middle Ages. The garden was created in the 16th century by Catherine de Medici, but was turned into a public garden in the 17th century. The gardens have been the site of important innovations and experiments over the years:

- White mulberry trees were planted in reign of Henri IV, between 1589-1610, in an effort to develop the production of silk
- Helium-filled balloon ascent made in 1783
- The first motor vehicle show was held here in 1898

Edouard Manet’s painting from 1862, Music in the Tuileries, depicts the type of fashionable and wealthy crowd, who would attend public musical events, under the shade of the trees.
This painting by Camille Pissarro, entitled The Garden of the Tuileries on a Winter Afternoon (1899), shows both the formal layout of the gardens, as well as the crowds of visitors enjoying an afternoon outdoors.

River Steamboats, or bateaux-omnibus, were small steamboats which traveled up and down the River Seine, and were recommended by the popular travel guide, Baedeker's, as a suitable mode of transport in fine weather, as they offered the traveler a good view of the quays and banks of the river. They were, however, quite small, which meant that they could become crowded and uncomfortable. Owing to their small size, they were nicknamed mouches (flies) or hirondelles (swallows).

Today, the bateaux-mouches still operate on the River Seine.

A pleasant cruise along the river, to visit the small town of St. Cloud, site of a ruined palace, and a large park with fountains and lovely views of the Paris skyline.
Questions:

- Can you name artists who painted in the Tuileries Gardens?
- Can you name artists who painted along the Seine?
- What organization designated the Seine a UNESCO World Heritage Site?
- Can you add to the album of paintings by the Seine?
- Can you paint your favorite picture of the Seine?

Paris, November 12, 1888 (continued)

“...We passed the new buildings that are being erected for the Universal Exhibition next Spring.”

Paris was due to host the Universal Exposition in 1889, and it was to become a showcase of international achievements in architecture, fine arts, and the latest technology. The Exposition ran from 6 May to 6 November, 1889 and attracted more than 2 million visitors.

Question:

What sort of preparations might have been underway in November 1888, that Theodate and her friend, Harris, saw? Here is a clue - when complete, it would be the tallest manmade structure in the world.

One of these photographs was taken only 2 days after Theodate’s diary entry!

We hope you’ve enjoyed Episode 1 of this virtual journey of the Pope Family’s Grand Tour. This is the first in our series and features a few of Theodate’s favorite things: iconic architecture & art. Please stay tuned for our Answers Key to be posted in a few days, and more intriguing episodes in the coming weeks.

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www.hillstead.org
FOOTNOTES/SOURCES:

Venus de Milo - https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/aphrodite-known-venus-de-milo
Foucault's Pendulum - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foucault_pendulum#/media/File:Panth%C3%A9on_Pendule_de_Foucault2.JPG
Notre Dame - https://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/features/slideshows/marville/marville-s042.jpg
https://www.nga.gov/research/library/imagecollections/features/notre-dame.html
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437314
The Riverboats - https://www.histoires-de-paris.fr/transport-de-voyageurs-seine/