

Haverford College Library
Special Collections

Finding Aid for the EZRA POUND PAPERS, 1955-1959

Collection No. 833
1 document box (0.5 linear feet; ca. 100 items)
©January, 2007

Gift of Howard Comfort, 1973

RESTRICTIONS

No restrictions

RELATED MATERIALS

Other letters of Ezra Pound can be found in the Charles Roberts Autograph Letters Collection, coll. Nos. 110 and 810, with a portrait in 110.

ABSTRACT

The papers of Ezra Pound, including his correspondence with Haverford College professor Howard Comfort, letters about Pound to Comfort from Sherry Martinelli, as well as articles by and about Pound, especially about his confinement at St. Elizabeth's hospital.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ezra Loomis Pound (1885-1972) moved from the western U.S. as a child to the suburbs of Philadelphia. He first traveled in Europe when he was 12, which left deep impressions on him. He was admitted in 1901 to the University of Pennsylvania at the age of fifteen on the strength of his Latin; he transferred to Hamilton College in his junior year, graduated from Hamilton in June 1905. Pound received his M.A. from Penn in 1906. He taught French, Spanish, and Italian at Wabash College after graduate school and a fellowship in Europe, but after his behavior was declared unsuitable, he traveled to Europe, published a collection of his own poems, and again tried teaching. He began a friendship with William Butler Yeats and Ford Maddox Ford. Pound's notion of poetry, Imagism, was that it had to be organic, vital, and central to the speech of ordinary people. For larger works, he developed Vorticism. He was a notable influence on the literary world in England, but also supported himself as a music and art critic for a magazine. In the 1920s, Pound began to earn his reputation as one of the most inventive and iconoclastic poets of the modernist school. Moving to Paris in 1920, Pound's friends were the expatriate literati, including Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein. He also

befriended the Dadaists and Surrealists. Pound admired Benito Mussolini, made radio broadcasts with virulently anti-Semitic content. In the spring of 1945, Pound was incarcerated in the Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa. After a nervous breakdown, he began work on the *Pisan Cantos* (1948), creating some of his most poignant and personal verse. Later, in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in a suburb of Washington, D.C., Pound was regularly interviewed by psychiatrists whom he saw as instruments in a Jewish conspiracy. In 1948, Pound received the prestigious Bollingen Prize. He was released from the hospital in 1958, but after 1961, and for ten years, he rarely spoke to anyone. Pound was married to Dorothy Shakespear, but also had a long-time mistress, Olga Rudge.

From: *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement 9: 1971-1975*.

Howard Comfort (1904-1993), a Quaker, was the son of Haverford College president and professor, William Wistar Comfort and Mary L. (Fales) Comfort. In 1931, he married Elizabeth P. Webb. Comfort received his B.A. from Haverford College in 1924, M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1927 and 1932 respectively. He was a classics professor, eventually teaching at Haverford, 1932-1969. He was also a director of the Rome (Italy) office of the American Friends Service Committee, 1940 and cultural attaché (United States Information Service) at the Rome Embassy, 1950-51 and Bern Legation, 1951-52. Comfort was editor and translator of August Oxe's *Corpus Vasorum Arretinorum*, Habelt Verlag, 1968; and author with Arturo Stenico, Mario Del Chiaro, and Enrico Paribeni of *Terra Sigillata: La ceramica a rilievo ellenistica e romana*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1968, as well as of articles and reviews in the *American Journal of Archaeology* and other archaeological journals.

From: *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2003.

SUBJECT HEADINGS

600 1 – Pound, Ezra
700 1 – Comfort, Howard
700 1 – Martinelli, Sheri
700 1 – Pound, Ezra

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

Papers consist of Pound's correspondence with Howard Comfort; the "Agnostic and Paideumic Review" containing articles by Pound and Pound cultists; letters from Pound doyenne, Sheri Martinelli, to Howard Comfort concerning Pound; and ephemeral material: on the issue of Pound's committal to St. Elizabeth's hospital, printed materials or drawings by Pound cultists, and about Pound publications.

Pound's letters to Comfort primarily request advice or incite discussion re Latin works. Comfort letters to Pound are about the poet Catullus and other classical matters. Martinelli's letters to Comfort include material written and drawn by her.