

Haverford College Library
Special Collections

Finding Aid for the LETTERS OF HANNAH WHITALL SMITH,
1899-1911

Collection No. 950
Accession # 6980
4 folders
©December 2006

INFORMATION FOR USERS

Abbreviation of HWS is used for Hannah Whitall Smith.

All correspondence dates are standardized rather than transcribed, viz: yr mo/day.

Though not all letters are listed individually, those that are highlighted are done so on the basis of content of the letter or historical importance of the letter writer.

RESTRICTIONS

No restrictions

RELATED MATERIALS

See also collection 1119, which in part deals with the settling of Hannah Whitall Smith's estate.

ABSTRACT

Letters of Quaker Hannah Whitall Smith to her friend, Kate, in the period 1899-1911, which cover topics of religion, family, Quaker Meeting and life style, health and old age.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911) was born in Philadelphia, Pa., the daughter of John Mickle and Mary Tatum Whitall. She married Robert Pearsall Smith in 1851. They were both devout Quakers and exponents of a fourfold gospel which included

justification, sanctification, the second coming and faith healing. Around 1848, she had a mystical experience that influenced the later course of her life. Whitall Smith wrote many Christian tracts, including *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* in 1875, a work that was issued in over 100 editions and was translated into many languages. In 1886, Whitall Smith and her husband settled permanently in England.

Whitall Smith's children included Logan Pearsall Smith, who graduated from Haverford College in 1884 and became a writer and critic. He also removed to England and left the Society of Friends about 1913. Smith's daughter, Alys, married Bertrand Russell and her daughter, Mary, married Bernard Berenson.

Whitall Smith was the aunt of M. Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr College (Bryn Mawr, Pa.)

(Information from the Dictionary of Quaker Biography and other sources)

SUBJECT HEADINGS

- 600 1 Berenson, Mary Smith, 1864-1945
- 600 1 Russell, Alys Whitall Pearsall Smith.
- 600 1 Russell, Bertrand, 1872-1970
- 600 1 Smith, Logan Pearsall, 1865-1947
- 650 0 Quaker women, 19th century
- 700 1 Smith, Hannah Whitall, 1832-1911

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The collection consists of a group of 55 letters addressed by Hannah Whitall Smith to her dear friend Kate, whom she always referred to as "sister."¹ In addition, there are two poems and one Christmas card. The letters are often religious in tone. Smith relates news of her family, including Logan (Pearsall Smith) and Alys (Smith Russell), especially re Russell's health, visits from friends, references to Bertrand Russell, Quakers and Quaker Meeting, particularly in Philadelphia, as well as British Women's Meeting, temperance, living a simple Quaker life, writing of her new book, health issues and old age.

Some highlights include:

- 1902 3/20: "terrible catastrophe at Bryn Mawr [College]"
- 1902 5/16: Alys does temperance work and has gone for a rest cure at a nursing home for "overworked people."

¹ "Kate" has not been identified. There were no envelopes accompanying the collection; the donor did not know who Kate is; several published works were consulted, including John M. Whitall: the story of his life / by HWS and A Religious Rebel: the letters of HWS / edited by Logan Pearsall Smith. None of them sheds any light on the identity of Kate.

- 1902 11/6: coal strike and good efforts of President Roosevelt; “poor, deluded Doukhobors”
- 1904 2/19: lectures by daughter, Mary, in Philadelphia
- 1904 8/4: Mary Garrett’s portrait being painted by [John Singer?] Sergeant [sic] for Johns Hopkins University, as she contributed much money to the Medical School on the condition that they admit women
- 1904 8/4: M. Carey Thomas “one of the finest women in the world”
- 1904 12/1: recollecting how involved in many activities she used to be
- 1905 1/5: writing her book: “I do so love putting forth heresies”
- 1910 10/29: Alys starts a school for Mothers based on one in Belgium

There is also a full set of transcriptions of the letters.