

A Guide to the Adele Clark Papers, 1855-1976

Adele Clark Papers 1855-1976

1855-1976

A Collection in the Virginia Historical Society Mss1 C5472 a FA2

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

Mss1 C5472 a FA2

Language

English

Abstract

Include scattered business and personal correspondence, ca. 1916-1950, as well as newspaper clippings, organizational minutes, notes and other published and manuscript materials pertaining to a wide array of Clark's political and artistic interests. Among the organizations with which Miss Clark worked were the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, the League of Women Voters of Virginia, and the Federal Art Project in Virginia. Correspondence, 1916-1940 and 1926-1939, with Nora Houston (1883-1942) and Willoughby Ions (1881-1977) illuminates the relationship between women's personal and professional networks and their political activities. The correspondence, 1906-1929, of Clark's mother, Estelle (Goodman) Clark (1847-1893) with her three daughters offers insights into relationships between mothers and their adult children. The collection also contains information on teaching art history in a variety of contexts, on women's suffrage and women's rights, and on other civic and political activities.

Size

900 (ca.) items. (2 archival and 1 oversize box).

Repository

Virginia Historical Society

Administrative Information

Access

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Adele Clark in 1979. Accessioned 7 July 1986.

Preferred Citation

Adele Clark Papers, 1855-1976 (Mss1 C5472 a FA2), Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.

Biographical/Historical Information

Adele Clark was a major figure in Richmond's art scene and political life for nearly three-quarters of a century. Born in Montgomery, Ala., she spent her childhood in New Orleans, La., before moving to Richmond in 1894. Seven years later she graduated from the Miss Virginia Randolph Ellen School (now St. Catherine's). While working as a stenographer for the chamber of commerce, Miss Clark studied art with Lily Logan at the Art Club of Richmond. In 1906, Miss Clark received a scholarship to the Chase School of Art in New York, where she studied under Robert Henri and Kenneth Hays Miller. Shortly after her return to Richmond to teach at the Art Club, she became involved in the women's suffrage movement.

Scope and Content Information

This collection begins with the papers of Robert Clark (1832?-1906) and his wife, Estelle (Goodman) Clark (1847-1937). His papers consist of three letters written by a brother Tom Clark and miscellany; hers include correspondence, accounts, and miscellany. A folder of her general correspondence precedes individual folders of letters with her three daughters, Adele Clark, Edith (Clark) Cowles, and Gertrude (Clark) Dew, as well as one containing two letters from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Accounts and letters concerning the deaths of two family members follow.

Correspondence of Edith (Clark) Cowles includes letters with her sister, Adele Clark, and illustrator Dugald Stewart Walker. Adele Clark (1882-1983) was a major figure in Richmond's art society and political life for nearly three-quarters of a century. Born Adele Goodman Clark in Montgomery, Ala., she spent most of her childhood in New Orleans, La., before moving to Richmond in 1894. Seven years later Clark graduated from the Miss Virginia Randolph Ellett School (now St. Catherine's). While working as a stenographer for the chamber of commerce she studied art with Lily Logan at the Art Club of Richmond. In 1906, Adele Clark received a scholarship to the Chase School of Art in New York where she studied under Robert Henri and Kenneth Hays Miller. Shortly after her return to Richmond to teach at the Art Club, she became involved in the women's suffrage movement.

Adele Clark's papers reflect her varied careers and avocations, yet mostly pertain to her personal life and art activities. Major collections of her papers documenting her work with the Equal Suffrage League, the Virginia League of Women Voters, and the U.S. Work Projects Administration have been given to the Virginia State Library, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and other institutions.

Adele Clark's papers begin with a section of general correspondence, which consists of letters with family members, artists, politicians, and suffragists. Among the more prominent are: Ella Graham Agnew, Edmund Minor Archer, Harry Flood Byrd (1887-1966), Colgate Whitehead Darden, Marion Montague Junkin, Elizabeth Dabney (Langhorne) Lewis, Theresa Pollak, and Roberta Wellford. Separate folders contain correspondence with Richmond artist Nora Houston and artist and designer Willoughby Ions, Adele Clark's first cousin.

Accounts precede financial records, which include materials concerning "Swannanoa," the summer home of James Henry Dooley, uncle of Nora Houston. Adele Clark was helping the Dooley family dispose of this property after the death of Sallie (May) Dooley in 1925. A few items documenting Adele Clark's brief tenure as acting dean of women at the College of William and Mary precede materials concerning her uncle, Edward Samuel Goodman, who died in 1931. These include inquiries concerning his health, sympathy letters and trust information. Sympathy letters concerning the death of Nora Houston, recipes, miscellaneous newspaper clippings and personal miscellany conclude this section.

Materials pertaining to Adele Clark's art career and political activities are located in box 2. These begin with a folder of general art correspondence, arranged alphabetically, which mostly consists of portrait requests, commissions, inquiries, and letters with miscellaneous art institutions. Clark was treasurer and member of the board of directors of the Richmond Art Club as well as a student and instructor there. A minute book, loose minutes, correspondence, loose clippings and a scrapbook of clippings, located with oversized materials in box 3, document her affiliation with the club. An unsigned appeal from James H. Dooley, the club's president, is found among the loose minutes.

In 1919, Adele Clark and Nora Houston, with whom she shared a studio, founded the Virginia League of Fine Arts and Handicrafts in an attempt to revive the Chevalier Quesnay de Beaurepaire's Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts. This soon became the Virginia League of Fine Arts, which merged with the Richmond Academy of Arts in 1931. This collection contains a copy of the league's constitution, amendments and reports as well as a few items of correspondence. Minutes of the board of trustees of the Richmond Academy of Arts document the merger and the two years following. Lecture notes and student papers from the College of William and Mary extension in Richmond (Richmond Professional Institute) precede WPA materials. The latter mainly consists of letters with Campbell Bascom Slep about the Southwest Virginia Museum at Big Stone Gap, but also include a scrapbook, located in box 3, and the transcript of a 1963 interview.

From 1941 to 1964, Adele Clark served on the State Art Commission, an organization she helped establish in 1916. Materials, primarily reports and minutes, span her entire affiliation with the commission, but mostly pertain to her last three years of service. Materials of the Virginia Society for Crippled Children and Adults include correspondence, reports and notes on patients and demonstrate Clark's interest in using art in rehabilitation. In 1947, a portrait gallery of state police officers who died in the line of duty was established at state police headquarters in Chesterfield County. Adele Clark was commissioned to paint one of these portraits. Materials concerning the dedication include clippings and a program that contains biographical sketches of artists and subjects.

In 1956, the Richmond Artists Association was founded to encourage local appreciation and patronage of contemporary art. Among these materials are copies of the constitution, by-laws, rosters, and a directory. Materials concerning the dedication of the Nora Houston Gallery at St. Paul's School in 1972 follow. A copy of the dedication address by Edmund Minor Archer recounts Nora Houston's contributions to Richmond art. Notes and articles, invitations, announcements and exhibition information, a visitor's roster to a 1946 exhibition, two sketchbooks and loose sketches, and miscellany conclude this section.

The rest of Adele Clark's papers concern her role as a political activist. These materials are relatively few in number and often individual folders contain only several items that span a large date range. For example, the first folder in this section contains materials concerning women's rights (excluding the League of Women Voters) from 1912 to 1976. This material includes correspondence, clippings, notes, and miscellany concerning various women's issues from suffrage to the Equal Rights Amendment. As previously mentioned Adele Clark's Equal Suffrage League and Virginia League of Women Voters papers were given to another institution. An index to those papers donated to the James Branch Cabell Library at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond follows folders on the Richmond and Virginia Leagues. In 1923, the Virginia League of Women Voters established the Virginia Women's Council of Legislative Chairmen of State Organizations to coordinate lobbying efforts among like-minded organizations. In the mid-1950's this became the Virginia Council on State Legislation. Materials concerning these organizations mainly include bulletins and reports. In 1921, Governor E. Lee Trinkle appointed Adele Clark to the Commission on Simplification of state Government. A few items of correspondence, reports and bulletins, mostly from budget director LeRoy Hodges, document the commission's work.

Materials that pertain to Prohibition and the National recovery Administration consist almost entirely of newspaper clippings. Minutes and resolutions from a meeting on economic security held in Richmond on March 7, 1935, with Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins precede miscellaneous information concerning a variety of labor and racial issues. A transcript of an interview (ca. 1920) with an ex-slave from Maryland is found with this material. A folder of political miscellany and one concerning Adele Clark's activities on behalf of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women conclude Adele Clark's papers.

The papers of Adeline Harmon (Cowles) Cox (1907-) and miscellaneous family items are located at the end of box 2.

Index Terms:

Art and state -- Virginia.
Art -- Study and teaching.
Clark, Adele, 1882-1983.
Clark, Estelle Goodman, 1847-1937.
Equal Suffrage League of Virginia.
Federal art Project (Va.)
Houston, Nora, 1883-1942.
Lons, Willoughby, 1881-1977.
League of Women Voters of Virginia.
Mothers and daughters.
Richmond (Va.) -- Intellectual life -- 20th century.
Suffrage.
Women artists -- Virginia.
Women -- Family relationships.
Women in politics -- Virginia.
Women -- Suffrage.

Arrangement

The papers of Adele Clark are arranged into seven series by individual and further subdivided by subject or material type.

Contents List

Series 1: Robert Clark (1832?-1906), Richmond, Va.

Box 1

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1855; miscellany.

Series 2: Estelle (Goodman) Clark (1847-1937), Richmond, Va. 1903-1937

Box 1 (cont.)

Scope and Content

General correspondence, 1903-1936; correspondence with daughters, 1906-1929; correspondence with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1933, 1937; accounts, 1928-1930, 1935-1937;

Series 3: Edith (Clark) Cowles (1874-1954?), Richmond, Va.

Box 1 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Correspondence, 1917-1938

Series 4: Adele Clark (1882-1983), Richmond, Va.

Subseries 4.1: General and Financial Materials 1916-1970

Box 1 (cont.)

General Correspondence, 1918-1970

Correspondence with Nora Houston, 1916-1940

Correspondence with Willoughby Ions, 1926-1939

Accounts, 1927-1956

Checking Accounts, 1933-1961

Scope and Content

1933-1941, 1960-1961

Swannanoa, 1926-1944

Financial miscellany

William and Mary, 1926

Edward Samuel Goodwin, 1927-1941

Death of Nora Houston, 1942

Recipes; miscellaneous clippings; personal miscellany,

Subseries 4.2: Art related materials

Box 2

General art correspondence, 1922-1961

Art Club, 1901-1918

Virginia League of Fine Arts/Richmond Academy, 1920-1935

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts 1939-1956

Richmond Professional Institute, 1931

WPA, 1936-1942

Art Commission, 1942-1964

Virginia Society for Crippled Children and Adults, 1946-1954

Virginia Police Gallery, 1947

Richmond Artists Association, 1958, 1965

Nora Houston Gallery, 1970-1972

Art notes and articles; art invitations, announcements and exhibit information; register, 1946

Sketchbook and sketches; art clippings and miscellany

Subseries 4.3: Political materials

Box 3 (cont.)

Women's suffrage and women's issues, 1912-1976

Richmond League of Women Voters, 1938-1938,1961

Virginia League of Women Voters 1923-1942, 1963

Index to league papers at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Women's Council of Legislative Chairmen of State

Organizations?Virginia Council on State Legislation, 1924-1942, 1953-1963

Prohibition 1929-1932

NRA, 1933

Conference on economic security, 1935

Labor, racial and political miscellany

Catholic Church, 1932-1970

Adeline Harmon (Cowles) Cox (1907-), Richmond, Va.,

Box 2 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Miscellany.

Family Miscellany

Box 2 (cont.)

Scope and Content

Correspondence and miscellany

Oversized materials

Box 3

Scope and Content

Adele Clark: Art Club scrapbook, 1907-1917; WPA scrapbook, 1940; certificates and posters.