

Victoria Brown Travel Diary of Europe

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1935

Title Statement

Victoria Brown Travel Diary of EuropeGuide to the Victoria Brown Travel Diary of Europe SC 00002

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

SC 00002

Unit ID

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Unit Date

1935

Language

English

Creator

Brown, Victoria, 1921-

Extent

0.01 Linear Feet

Repository

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Administrative Information

Acquisition Information:

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Administrative History:

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Victoria Brown Polk (1921-2005) was born to Jessamine Garrett and architect Arthur Brown Jr. and grew up in Burlingame with her younger sister Sylvia. According to her obituary, she cultivated a "lifelong appreciation for Impressionist painting, Italian opera, and the architecture of Italy and France," of which her European diary is an early testimony. Victoria took another trip to France and Italy with her family in 1952. Victoria graduated with honors from Vassar College in 1943 with a degree in art history and joined the San Francisco Art Institute as a librarian in the mid-1940s. After her marriage to Charles Ephraim Polk in 1952, the couple lived in Manhattan, NY, and North Berkley, CA, and had three sons, Christopher, Geoffrey, and Bruce. Source: Obituary published in the San Francisco Chronicle on January 16, 2006 and transcribed on FindAGrave.com.

Scope and Contents

Handwritten travel diary by Victoria Brown (1921-2005), daughter of architect Arthur Brown, Jr. (1874-1957). The diary documents a trip to Europe taken when Victoria was a teenager from August to November 1935. The Brown family travelled across the United States from California to New York, then stayed in Paris before visiting Rome and several other cities in fascist Italy. The diary features a description of a fascist rally in Rome and dozens of sketches, some in color, of flags, uniforms, theater costumes, and street maps. The bulk of Victoria's diary consists of comments on the historic sites, museum collections, and neighborhoods she visited during her trip. Also included is an official document [in Italian and French] allowing Victoria access to an international architecture conference in Rome to which her father participated.

Victoria neatly organized her diary, numbering each of its 429 pages. She provided a one-page index of places at the end. Her almost daily entries cover several pages each detailing the program and itinerary of her day, including specific hotel and restaurant names. Frequently mentioned in Victoria's diary are her father Arthur, her mother Jessamine Garrett, and her sister Sylvia (nicknamed "Sisa"). Also featured in Victoria's entries while in New York and Italy is Chester Holmes Aldrich, an American architect who directed the American Academy in Rome (1935-1940) and one of Arthur Brown's friends. Victoria divided her diary into three parts:

Part I (182 pages) starts on August 6th in California and recounts the family's ferry, then train trip to New York via Chicago and Washington DC. Victoria comments on cityscapes and admires her father's buildings in DC, such as the Interstate Commerce Commission. She visits Metropolitan Museum, visits Chester Aldrich, and sketches 4 costumes from a play. Victoria writes about the transatlantic voyage and the entertainment provided on the S.S. Champlain: - horse races, movies, games and dancing with new friend Richard. During her European tour, she describes the sights she sees in Paris and the Loire Valley. She visits museums, churches, and castles, with remarks on architectural features. Her father is sometimes recognized, and they also visit some of his friends. Throughout Part I, she also gives her opinion on numerous movies she watched. The sketches in Part I are in black ink and include about 15 street maps drawn in France.

Part II (182 pages) is entitled "Il Viaggio in Italia - September 1935 Anno XIII" (Year 13 under Mussolini's fascist regime). It covers her stay in Rome, Florence, Venice, Verona, and Milano from September 20th to October 23th. Details about landmarks, tours, and restaurants visited which include forum ruins, St-Peter's, Vatican museum, statues, gardens and fountains, Borghese, Pantheon, bus tour, reception, tea with people from Congress, and reception at house of American ambassador and American naval attaché. While in Rome, Victoria refers to some political developments. She frequently notes the presence of different corps of soldiers in the streets and offers drawings of their uniforms. In addition to her family's meeting with Marcello Piacentini, Mussolini's main architect, Victoria's entries take note of a new hospital built by Il Duce, the new university city, and the athletic forum built by Mussolini, as well as a palazzo with antiquities renamed Museo Mussolini. Her Father had an interview with the government representatives of the Duce. Her October 2nd entry recounts seeing a fascist rally, during which Mussolini gave a speech, and includes drawings of the building from which he spoke, of flags, and uniforms. This event corresponds to the beginning of the Second Italo-Abyssinian (Ethiopian) War, to which Victoria refers in other entries. Sketches in Part II and III are in ink and watercolor, and include hand-drawn colored maps of Italy and Venice. Victoria comments on the people and atmosphere as war seems imminent.

Part III (46 pages) is entitled "À Paris Encore" (Once Again in Paris) and concludes the diary with a stay in Paris from October 24th to November 4th. Most of this last section is dedicated to events Victoria attended: the *Séance publique des cinq académies*, and two theater plays at the Comédie-Française, "Les Fourberies de Scapin" by Molière and "Le Voyage de M. Perrichon" by Eugène Labiche and Édouard Martin. In addition to plot summaries, the section on theater plays includes watercolors of 18 characters' costumes, as well as a color map of Paris Centre.

Related Materials:

The Personal Papers of Arthur Brown Jr. at the Bancroft Library, University of California-Berkeley, include travel ephemera and photographs from the family's trip to Europe in 1935, as well as a folder labelled "Victoria Brown Correspondence 1940, 1951-1952."

Information about related materials is available at <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt5k4026zk/>

Keywords

France--Description and travel--20th century

Italy--Description and travel--20th century

United States--Description and travel--20th century

Youth--Travel--Europe

Youth--Travel--United States

Description of Subordinate Components

Diary

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Unit ID /repositories/2/archival_objects/173483

Unit Date 1935

Mixed Materials Small Collections Box 1 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)