

**The New York Public Library - Stephen A. Schwarzman Building  
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the

**Pauline Astor papers**

1927-1958

MssCol 18067

Compiled by Lea Osborne, March 2011

## **Summary**

**Creator:** Astor, Pauline.

**Title:** Pauline Astor papers, 1927-1958

**Size:** .84 linear foot (2 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by Jamie J. Greene (Archives Specialist), 2008

**Abstract:** The Pauline Astor papers contain primarily personal correspondence from the late 1930s through the 1950s as well as a small amount of business-related correspondence covering the same time period.

**Access:** Advance notice required. Apply at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref>

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**Preferred citation:** Pauline Astor papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

## **Custodial history**

The Pauline Astor Papers were transferred from the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming and given as a gift to NYPL. They were originally donated to AHC between 1991 and 1994 by Edward P. Foote, Jr. to the Edward P. Foote Jr. Collection (#8936).

## **Related collections**

Astor family papers, 1792-1916. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Astor family papers, 1807-1919. New York Historical Society, Manuscript Department

## **Creator history**

Pauline Astor was born in 1888 to Mary Dahlgren (née Paul) and William Waldorf Astor, the grandson of American financier, John Jacob Astor. In 1891, after becoming increasingly upset with the direction he perceived the United States was heading, Astor moved his family from New York to London. Two years later he purchased the manor known as Cliveden from the Duke of Westminster. Pauline became mistress of the estate when her mother died in 1894.

After several rumored betrothals, Pauline Astor married Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert H. Spender-Clay on

October 20, 1904 at St. Margaret's Church in Westminster. Spender-Clay's father was the largest share holder of the Bass Brewing Company. Herbert "Bertie" Spender-Clay himself had served in the second Boer War before returning to his family home in order to become a gentleman farmer. The newlyweds resided at Ford Manor in Surrey where entertaining friends and increasing the beauty of the surrounding gardens was of the utmost importance. During World War I, the house was used as a convalescent home and, during World War II, as a nursery school for London evacuees and later as a hospital for Canadian troops.

Herbert Spender-Clay died in 1937 from complications arising from pneumonia. Soon after his death, Pauline moved into a second Ford Manor. She died in 1970. They had two daughters.

John Singer Sargent painted Pauline Astor during 1898 and 1899. The painting, entitled *Portrait of Pauline Astor*, resides within the William Morris Collection.

### **Scope and content note**

The Pauline Astor papers is comprised primarily of letters sent to Astor by family members, visitors to the manor, friends, and other members of her social circle. Topics include gardening advice, family gossip, thank-you letters from Girl Scout and Doormice Patrol troops, and concern over the changing political and cultural situation in Europe. The bulk of the letters from 1937 consist of condolence letters ranging from government officials to servants.

There is also a small amount of business-related and financial correspondence. These mostly date from World War II. Since the family had several residences in and around London, there was much concern over insuring property and assets (such as paintings, ceramics, and other art) as well as making sure that there would be money to sustain the family once the war was over.

### **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged alphabetically by format.

### **Key terms**

#### **Names**

Astor, Pauline.

#### **Special formats**

Correspondence  
Financial records

#### **Places**

England -- Description and travel  
England -- Social life and customs -- 20th century

## Container list

### Correspondence

- b.1 f.1-6 General, 1936-1939
- b.2 f.1 General, 1940-1958, undated
- b.2 f.2-3 Financial, 1938-1956
- b.2 f.4 Estate Wages, 1927-1928