



The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Royal York and Royal Albion visitors' book

1915-1939

MssCol 18378

Compiled by Kit Messick, 2010

Summary

Creator: Collings, Beatrice

Title: Royal York and Royal Albion visitors' book

Date: 1915-1939

Size: .13 linear feet (1 volume)

Source: Patricia Cornwell, 2009

Abstract: Beatrice Collings managed the Royal York hotel (and later, the Royal Albion) in Brighton, England, with her sister's husband, boxing and sports promoter Sir Harry Preston. The visitors' book includes photographs, autographs, sketches, caricatures, and remarks on the hotels from a variety of sports, theatrical, military, and other prominent figures. Among the many notable guests represented in the volume are boxers Jack Dempsey and Joe Beckett; actors Gladys Cooper and Sybil Thorndike; entertainers George Robey and Flotsam & Jetsam; artist Walter Richard Sickert; writers Hillaire Belloc, Hall Caine and A. E. W. Mason; and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Also present are newspaper clippings related to the hotels, and to Preston and his family.

Preferred citation: Royal York and Royal Albion visitors' book, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Processing note: Compiled by Kit Messick, 2010

Related Materials:

Forms part of [Patricia Cornwell collection](#)

Creator History

Sir Harry Preston (1860-1936) was born in Cheltenham, England. He entered the hotel trade in 1900, and in 1901, he purchased and refurbished the Royal York hotel in Brighton, a property which had fallen into disrepair as Brighton's popularity as a seaside resort dwindled. In 1913, he followed suit with the derelict Royal Albion, and helped Brighton reestablish itself as a tourist destination. An active

sportsman, Preston was involved in the promotion of early automobile road races and the management of boxers. He was knighted in 1933 for service to charity and sport.

The Royal York and Royal Albion were managed by Preston's sister-in-law, Beatrice Collings, who created and maintained the visitors' book, and continued to manage the hotels after Preston's death.

Scope and Content Note

The visitors' book includes photographs, autographs, sketches, caricatures, and remarks on the hotels from a variety of sports, theatrical, military, and other prominent figures. Among the many notable guests represented in the volume are boxers Jack Dempsy and Joe Beckett; actors Gladys Cooper and Sybil Thorndike; entertainers George Robey and Flotsam & Jetsam; artist Walter Richard Sickert; writers Hillaire Belloc, Hall Caine and A. E. W. Mason; and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Also present are newspaper clippings related to the hotels, and to Preston and his family.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Autographs
Caricatures
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Sketches
Visitors' books

Geographic Names

Brighton (England) -- Social life and customs -- 20th century

Occupations

Hotelkeepers -- England
Promoters -- England

Subjects

Hotels -- England -- Sussex
Tourism -- England -- Sussex

Names

Preston, Harry, 1860-1936 -- Sir
Royal Albion hotel (England)
Royal York hotel, Brighton