Mary Eleanor Bissell Papers: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Huntington Library staff in October 1976 and updated by Diann Benti in 2016.
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Overview of the Collection
Title: Mary Eleanor Bissell Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1738-1958
Collection Number: mssBissell papers
Collector: Bissell, Mary Eleanor.
Extent: approximately 160 items in 1 box
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: This collection chiefly contains correspondence and documents created by the Connecticut ancestors of Pasadena, California, socialite Mary Eleanor Bissell, the most prominent of whom are her great-grandparents, Eleanor Mills Bissell and Thomas Bissell (fl. 1796-1848).
Language: English.
Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. Mary Eleanor Bissell Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
The material was acquired from the estate of Eleanor Bissell through the courtesy of the Pasadena Art Museum, August 2, 1963.
Biographical Note
Eleanor Bissell was born circa 1870 in Winsor, Connecticut, the daughter of Thomas H. Bissell, banker and land owner. About 1924 she moved to Pasadena, California, where she was active in prominent, social groups until her death circa 1962.
Scope and Content
This collection chiefly contains correspondence and documents created by the Connecticut ancestors of Pasadena, California, socialite Mary Eleanor Bissell, the most prominent of whom are her great-grandparents, Eleanor Mills Bissell and Thomas Bissell (active 1796-1848). The collection contains around forty pieces of correspondence relating to her great-grandparents as well as over a hundred items relating to the Bissell family business. The business papers include court summons, bills of sale, receipts, promissory notes, quit-claim deeds and an account book, all dated between 1738 and 1836. The collection also contains documents on the genealogy of the Bissell family in Windsor, Connecticut, as well as eighteen photographs of family and friends.
A one volume guest book for Bissell's home in Pasadena, an autograph album, three lantern slides of Bissell's rose garden, one piece of correspondence, and a college diary are the only items in the collection that specifically pertain to Mary Eleanor Bissell.
Arrangement
The collection is arranged broadly in chronological order.
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.
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**Subjects**
- Bissell, Eleanor Mills.
- Bissell, Mary Eleanor.
- Bissell, Thomas, active 1796-1848.
- Smith College -- Students -- 19th century.
- Family-owned business enterprises -- Connecticut -- Windsor -- 19th century.
- Women college students -- Social life and customs -- 19th century.
- Pasadena (Calif.) -- Social life and customs -- 20th century.
- Windsor (Conn.) -- History -- Sources.
- Windsor (Conn.) -- Social life and customs -- 18th century.
- Windsor (Conn.) -- Social life and customs -- 19th century.

**Forms/Genres**
- Business records -- United States -- 18th century.
- Family papers -- United States.
- Genealogies -- United States.
- Letters (correspondence) -- United States.
- Photographs -- United States.
- Business records -- United States -- 19th century.
- Legal documents -- United States -- 18th century.
- Legal documents -- United States -- 19th century.

**Alternate Authors**
- Bissell, Eleanor Mills.
- Bissell, Thomas, active 1796-1848.

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**Box 1**

**Papers of Eleanor Bissell and family**

**Folder 1**
- **Business papers of the family of Eleanor Bissell 1738-1836**
  - 103 pieces including legal documents, deeds, receipts from Connecticut.

**Folder 2**
- Mills, Timothy. [Account Book], Baltimore, Maryland. 1797 February 11-October 5

**Folder 3**
- 10 letters to Timothy Mills and/or Eleanor (Mills) Bissell. 1796-1800

**Folder 4**
- 16 letters to Eleanor (Mills) Bissell, Roswell Mills, and Thomas Bissell from various persons. 1802-1819

**Folder 5**
- 9 letters to Eleanor (Mills) Bissell, Thomas Bissell, and Ellen? Bissell from various persons, with one related item. 1822-1829

**Folder 6**
- 8 letters to Eleanor (Mills) Bissell and Thomas Bissell. 1830-1848

**Folder 7**
- 8 letters to Eleanor (Mills) Bissell and Thomas Bissell. 1830-1848

**Folder 8**
- Genealogical materials [5 pieces].

**Envelope 1**
- Bissell, Eleanor. Autograph album. Approximately 1862-1865

**Envelope 2**
- Bissell, Eleanor. Journal. 1893-1895

**Envelope 3**

**Envelope 4**
- Bissell, Eleanor. 3 colored lantern slides of Pasadena home rose garden. 1924

**Envelope 5**
- Photographs of family, relatives, and friends. Approximately 1860-1925
  - 18 pieces. Chiefly carte-de-visite and card photographs of young women and children, as well as the exterior of "The Adams Place, Bethel, Vermont," a photograph of four women on camels in front of Egyptian pyramids, 1925, and two photographs of the interior of a sitting room with a mural over the fireplace.