Henry Edwards Huntington papers

Finding aid prepared by Huntington Library Staff.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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Overview of the Collection

Title: Henry Edwards Huntington Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1794-1983

Bulk dates: 1840-1927

Collection Number: mssHEH

Creator: Huntington, Henry Edwards, 1850-1927

Extent: 22,490 items in 200 boxes and uncataloged materials

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Abstract: This collection consists of the personal and business papers of American railroad and land developer Henry Edwards Huntington (1850-1927). The papers deal chiefly with California railways and Southern California real estate and industry. There are also papers related to the founding and history of the Huntington Library, Art Collections & Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California.

Language: English

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

Preferred Citation


Provenance

Gift of Henry E. Huntington and Huntington family, 1927-

Biographical Note

Henry Edwards Huntington (1850-1927), founder of the Huntington Library, was born in Oneonta, New York, son of Solon Huntington and Harriet (Saunders) Huntington. In 1870, Henry Huntington left Oneonta to learn the hardware business in New York City. There he worked first as a porter, then in 1871 he began to work for his uncle Collis Potter Huntington (1821-1900), managing the latter’s sawmill in St. Albans, West Virginia. So successful was the young Huntington, that his uncle gave him increased responsibility and opportunity, which took him into Ohio and Kentucky, where he assisted his uncle in managing widespread railroad interests. In 1892 he went to San Francisco as Assistant to the President of the Southern Pacific Company, that is, to his uncle Collis P. Huntington. In San Francisco he was not only an able executive for the Southern Pacific Company, but also found time to organize the San Francisco railway system, and turn his attention to various other enterprises. It was in 1892 that he first visited the Los Angeles area, and saw the old Shorb Ranch which he was later to purchase and convert into the San Marino Ranch, later the Huntington Library, Art Galleries and Botanical Gardens. After the death of Collis P. Huntington in 1900, Henry E. Huntington began to withdraw from those business interests with which he had been involved with his uncle. In 1902 he transferred his headquarters from San Francisco to Los Angeles, purchased the Shorb Ranch, organized the Pacific Electric Railway Company, the Huntington Land and Improvement Company, and a number of other enterprises relative to real estate, industrial development, hotel interests, etc. The ranch became a productive fruit ranch and botanical garden under the able direction of William Hertrich.

The nucleus of the Huntington Library was initiated around 1900, when Henry Huntington began to seriously collect books, depositing them in his private library in New York. By 1908 he was dedicating more time and money to the collection of books, manuscripts and works of art. Although he divided his time between New York and California, his collections remained in New York until the completion of the library building in San Marino, near the lovely new home he had recently constructed overlooking the San Gabriel Valley. As the library approached completion, in 1919-1920, the entire library and art gallery in New York was shipped west and installed. The San Marino home, now the main Art Gallery, was finished in 1910; the Library in 1920.

Henry Huntington was married to Mary Alice Prentice on November 17, 1873. Four children were born of this union, which ended in divorce in 1906. In 1913 he was married to Arabella Duval (Yarrington) Worsham Huntington, widow of his uncle Collis P. Huntington since 1900. Together they collected the majority of the paintings, furniture and other art objects now housed in what had been their home in San Marino. Arabella Huntington died in 1924, leaving her considerable estate to
her son Archer Milton Huntington. Before her death she had selected the site for the mausoleum, which Mr. Huntington planned, but did not live to see completed before his own death in 1927. The mausoleum was designed by John Russell Pope, the builder of the Jefferson Monument in Washington, D.C.

In 1919 Mr. and Mrs. Huntington made a gift of the collections, together with the buildings which house them, and the grounds on which they stand, as well as the botanical gardens, more than 200 acres in all, to the people of California, in the form of a trust. The endowment fund which was set up enables the institution to operate, free of charge and free of support by federal, state or municipal government.

Scope and Content
This collection consists of the personal and business papers of Henry Edwards Huntington. There is Huntington family correspondence (including Holladay family papers), but the papers deal chiefly with California railways and Southern California real estate and industry. There are also papers related to the founding and history of the Huntington Library, Art Collections & Botanical Gardens. The collection also contains invoices, bills, and receipts from the 1910s and 1920s for Huntington’s purchases of books and manuscripts. Huntington annotated many of these documents.

Represented in the collection are Henry E. Huntington and his uncle, Collis Potter Huntington, among others. There are materials related to the Huntington Land and Improvement Company, Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, and the Pacific Electric Railway Company. The collection also contains some materials on business and civic affairs in New York and elsewhere.

Arrangement
The catalogued section of the collection is boxed in alphabetical order in 200 boxes. The uncatalogued section of the collection is now open on the same basis as the catalogued portion. Some patience and creativity is necessary in using it, since the subject headings in the inventory that follows are far from complete. For example, HEH 3/1-12, listed under Newport News Ship Building & Dry Dock Co., also contains extensive material on Henry Huntington’s other interests in the Newport News area, such as Old Dominion Land Co., Newport News Land Corp., and Newport News Power & Light Co. One should assume a similar situation to apply to much of the rest of the uncatalogued material.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library’s Online Catalog.

Subjects
Huntington, Collis Potter, 1821-1900
Huntington, Henry Edwards, 1850-1927 -- Archives
Huntington, Henry Edwards, 1850-1927 -- Family
Huntington family -- Correspondence
Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery
Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery -- History -- Sources
Huntington Land and Improvement Company
Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company
Pacific Electric Railway Company
Businessmen -- California -- Correspondence
Land tenure -- California, Southern
Railroads -- California
Real property -- California, Southern

Forms/Genres
Business records -- California
Family papers -- California, Southern
Letters (correspondence) -- United States
Professional papers -- California

Additional Contributors
Huntington, Collis Potter, 1821-1900
Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery