Descriptive Summary
Title: Frances Benjamin Johnston Photograph Collection
Dates (inclusive): approximately 1890-1908
Collection Number: photCL 352
Creator: Johnston, Frances Benjamin, 1864-1952
Extent: 1276 single photographs in 12 boxes; approximately 1217 (8x10 in.) glass plate negatives in 59 boxes and 61 (11x14 and 14x17 in.) glass plate negatives in 6 boxes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Photo Archives
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2191
Email: reference@huntington.org
URL: http://www.huntington.org
Abstract: This collection contains approximately 1,276 photographs and corresponding glass plate negatives by American photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston that focus on the portrait work of Johnston's earlier years in Washington, D.C., mainly in the 1890s. The focus is largely on D.C. socialites, diplomats, Presidents, senators, reformers, Supreme Court justices, artists, authors, Confederacy officers, etc. Also included are series of views of Washington's embassies (largely interior shots), legations, and famous residences Johnston photographed for Demorest's family magazine. The remainder of the collection includes, among other items, copies of Mathew Brady's daguerreotypes that belonged to the War Dept., treaties and other official documents from the State Dept. Archives, Lincoln ephemera intended to illustrate Ida Tarbell's Life of Lincoln, and views of the Bell telephone.
Language: English.
Access
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Preferred Citation
Frances Benjamin Johnston Photograph Collection, Huntington Library. Photo Archives.
Provenance
Purchased by Henry E. Huntington for the Huntington Library from Frances B. Johnston, 1924.
Processing information
This collection was processed by Jennifer A. Watts and the original paper finding aid was prepared in November 1994.
Biographical Note
Frances Benjamin Johnston (1864-1952) was an American photographer whose prodigious career spanned six decades and whose lens captured a vast array of topics. A woman of immense drive and energy, she is most commonly referred to as the first female photojournalist. However, she was also a charter member of the Photo-Secession, exhibiting her pictorialist work in a wide variety of salons and shows; she was a businesswoman who operated her own Washington, DC portrait studio and later, in New York City, a studio devoted to architectural photography; she was the recipient of awards and accolades and served as a mentor--particularly through her published essays and private correspondence--to countless women who aspired to her profession; and she was a peripatetic soul whose travels in the United States and abroad resulted in a tremendous body of work concentrating primarily on architecture and gardens (the fruit of her later years).
Scope and Content
This collection contains approximately 1,276 photographs and corresponding glass plate negatives by American photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston that focus on the portrait work of Johnston's earlier years in Washington, D.C., mainly in the 1890s.
The photographs arrived at the Huntington in 1924 when, after persistent negotiations, she sold some 1200 glass plate negatives and her "catalogue set of blue prints" to Henry E. Huntington and his library for several thousand dollars. In her correspondence with the librarian, George Watson Cole, Johnston described the collection as "portraits of famous men and women and historic events...through the administrations of Benj. Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt and Taft" which she deemed to possess "ultimate historic value and interest." Indeed, this collection of cyanotypes (with some gelatin and finished, platinum prints) focuses largely on the stream of socialites, diplomats, Presidents, senators, reformers, Supreme Court Justices, artists, authors and other important figures who flowed through Johnston's well-appointed studio at the turn-of-the-century. In addition there is an excellent series of views, largely interior shots, of Washington's embassies, legations and famous residences which Johnston photographed for a series of articles in Demorest's Family Magazine. The remainder of the collection is comprised of a sundry group of images including copies of Matthew Brady's daguerreotypes (most unidentified) belonging to the War Department, various treaties and official documents, a set of Abraham Lincoln ephemera intended to illustrate Ida Tarbell's Life of Lincoln and some views of the Bell Telephone.


**Arrangement**
Organized in the following categories:

1. Portraiture (1895-1905)
2. Government commissions, events, and group portraits, Brady daguerreotypes, documents and treaties, miscellaneous views
3. Legations and embassies (approximately 1890-1903)
4. Residences and interiors (approximately 1889-1906)
5. Portraiture-Large format
6. Group portraits and government events-Large format

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

**Form/Genres**
Photographic prints.
Cyanotypes.
Gelatin silver prints.
Platinum prints.
Daguerreotypes.
Portraits.

**Subjects**
Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865 -- Miscellanea.
United States. Supreme Court -- Officials and employees -- Photographs.
United States. Congress. Senate -- Officials and employees -- Photographs.
Confederate States of America. Army -- Officers -- Photographs.
Socialites -- United States -- Photographs.
Diplomats -- United States -- Photographs.
Presidents -- United States -- Photographs.
Legislators -- United States -- Photographs.
Reformers -- United States -- Photographs.
Judges -- United States -- Photographs.
Artists -- United States -- Photographs.
Authors, American -- Photographs.
Diplomatic and consular service -- Washington (D.C.) -- Photographs.
Celebrities -- Homes and haunts -- Washington (D.C.) -- Photographs.
Telephone -- Photographs.
Scope and Content
These images span the length of Johnston's major portraiture years, beginning in 1895 with 23 shots of the first sitter in her studio, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and including a series of Supreme Court Justices which Johnston made in 1905. The sitters are divided into the following categories and finding guides are available according to these topics: Presidents, Cabinet members, Senators, House members, Supreme Court Justices, Diplomats, State Department employees, Women, Government Commissions, and Portraits (including authors, artists, poets, children -essentially all those who are not affiliated with the government either by direct appointment or marriage). The large format portraits are housed in Box 12.

Arrangement
The images are organized alphabetically by the sitter's last name.

Box 1
Portraits, A-B by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (1-145)

Box 2
Portraits, C by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (146-240)

Box 3
Portraits, D-F by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (241-336)

Box 4
Portraits, G-H by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (337-464)

Box 5
Portraits, I-M by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (465-578)

Box 6
Portraits, N-Ri by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (579-681)
Portraits, 1895-1905

Box 7

Portraits, Ro-Sm by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (682-800)

Box 8

Portraits, Sp-Y by sitter
Call number: photCL 352 (801-931)

Box 9

Government commissions, events, and group portraits, Brady daguerreotypes, documents and treaties, miscellaneous views
Call number: photCL 352 (932-1048)

Box 9, Items 932-950

Group Commissions, Events, and Group Portraits, 1889-1908
Call Number: photCL 352 (932-950)

Scope and Content Note
Portraits of government groups such as the U.S. Mint employees (1889), Senate Military Affairs Committee (1891), Assistant Secretaries of the Treasury (1901), and the U.S. Delegates to the Pan-American Congress (1906); Views of government commissions including the Venezuelan Commission (1896), Samoan Commission (1899), First and Second Philippine Commissions (1899, 1900), Chinese High Commission, Presidential Commission to receive Prince Henry; Views related to the Presidential administration of William McKinley such as his Cabinet (1901), the second inauguration (1901), the Pan-American Exposition (including the last photograph of McKinley before he was assassinated at this even in 1901), and, later, a series of the unveiling ceremonies at the McKinley Memorial in Canton, Ohio (1907); Other ceremonial events include the unveiling of the Rochambeau Statue by President Theodore Roosevelt in Lafayette Square (1902), and laying the cornerstone for the Pan American Union Building (1908), also by President Roosevelt. Additional events include the Exchange of Warrents for the Philippines (1899), and the Opening of the 60th U.S. Congress (1907). For large format group portraits and government events refer to Box 13.

Box 9, Items 999-1006

Matthew B. Brady Daguerreotypes from the War Department Collections
Call Number: photCL 352 (999-1006)

Scope and Content Note
Cyanotype copies of Brady daguerreotypes of male sitters, many unidentified, which Johnston made from the originals in the War Department collections. There are identified portraits of Henry Clay, George Custis, John M. Clayton, William L. Dayton, and Winfield Scott.

Box 9, Items 1007-1009

Portraits of Confederacy Officers
Call Number: photCL 352 (1007-1009)

Scope and Content Note
Cyanotype copies of eighteen portraits in the War Department Collections. Six small head-and-shoulder views are included on each 8x10 inch negative (three in all). All the men are identified.
Box 9, Items 1010-1030
Documents, letters, and treaties from the State Department Archives

Call Number: photCL 352 (1010-1030)

Scope and Content Note
A variety of original texts which Johnston photographed (possibly for an article?) including the Articles of Confederation, the Oaths of Allegiance, the Treaty of Paris, Treaty and Seal of George I, Treaty of the War of 1812, C.A. Dana letter, Signature Treaty of the Mexican War, Acts of the 51st Congress, and John Quincy Adams' passport among other documents, some unidentified.

Box 9, Items 1031-1037
Items related to Abraham Lincoln

Call Number: photCL 352 (1031-1037)

Scope and Content Note
This series was taken by Johnston to illustrate Ida Tarbell's book, The Life of Abraham Lincoln [1903]. The images include a portrait of Abraham Lincoln and Tad (Meserve 39), Lincoln's chair and his Bible, documents and products with Lincoln labels. Most of the items were probably in the War Department collections.

Box 9, Items 1038-1048
Miscellaneous photographs

Call Number: photCL 352 (1038-1048)

Scope and Content Note
This grouping has a series of photographs of the first telephone instruments which, Johnston explains on an index card, were made for Mrs. Bell. There are prints of the Francis E. Spinner Statue, a painting depicting Prince Edward of Wales at the Tomb of [George] Washington, and a group portrait of the survivors of the Johnstown Disaster.

Box 10
Legations and Embassies, approximately 1890-1907

Call number: photCL 352 (1049-1132)

Scope and Content
Views of the imposing diplomatic residences of Washington, DC, many of which have been demolished. Most of these images were taken by Johnston for a series of articles that she authored entitled "The Foreign Legations of Washington, Parts 1-4" in Demorest's Family Magazine (April-July 1893). There are exterior and interior views of the Austrian, British, and French Embassies as well as the Brazilian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mexican, and Russian Legations. The addresses of the buildings (included in the item-level guide) were provided by The Commission of Fine Arts in the 1970s.

Box 11
Residences and Interiors, approximately 1889-1906

Call number: photCL 352 (1133-1214)

Scope and Content
The majority of these photographs showcase some of the more elaborate residences in turn-of-the-century Washington, DC. The impressive interiors of the John Wanamaker and William Whitney homes were the subject of articles by Johnston, again for Demorest's (July-December 1890) entitled "Some Homes Under the Administration." Additionally, there are views of the State Department and Department of Justice interiors, Senator Albert Beveridge's office, and the residences of Henry Brown, Charles Fairchild, Horace Gray, John Hay, Philander Knox, and photographs of Maytham Hall and Dorchester House, both in England. Maytham Hall was the estate of author Frances Hodgson Burnett, and Johnston took views of the gardens, grounds, and large house in 1906. There are two views of Burnett, author of The Secret Garden among other works, posing in her garden. There are many interior shots of Dorchester House, the American Embassy in London, which Johnston took in 1906.
Box 12  
**Portraiture - Large Format**

**Call number:** photCL 352 (1215-1248)

**Scope and Content**
Most of these portraits are printed from glass plate negatives which are 11x14 in. and larger. Included are views of Theodore Roosevelt (1902), a signed and mounted platinum print of Frances Folsom Cleveland, and impressive studio portraits of Julian Pauncefote, Wu T'ing Fang and his wife, Madame Wu. There is also a series of salt prints of illustrious men, many of the prints autographed by the sitters. The images are duplicates of the 8x10 in. portraits listed in the earlier boxes and appear to be a series that Johnston was preparing as a limited edition for sale.

Box 13  
**Group Portraits and Government Events - Large Format**

**Call number:** photCL 352 (1249-1276)

**Scope and Content**
These views are printed from Johnston's 11x14 in. and larger glass plate negatives. This notable grouping included a mounted, platinum print of the Officers of the First National Congress of Mothers, February 1897. This organization was the forerunner of the Parent-Teacher Association, and the portrait is autographed by all the sitters. There is an interesting series of cyanotype proofs and platinum prints of Mrs. Cleveland and the Ladies of the Cabinet (#1250-1257). Both sittings (January, February 1897) are included and two of the mounted prints are signed by some of the women in attendance. Other items are group views of the first and second McKinley Cabinets; Signing of the Ratification of the Treaty with Spain (1898,1899); Opening Ceremonies of the 59th U.S. Congress (1905).

Box 14  
**Original Negative Boxes**

**Scope and Content**
Two original 11x14 in. glass plate negative boxes owned by Johnston with her handwriting on the boxes.