Guide to the William Adams Delano Papers

MS 178

compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

March 1983

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 178

CREATOR: Delano, William Adams, 1874-1960

TITLE: William Adams Delano papers

DATES: 1902–1960

BULK DATES: 1939–1960

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6.5 linear feet (16 boxes, 1 folio)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers consist almost entirely of social and professional correspondence. They also include an unpublished autobiography, The Reminiscences of William Adams Delano; printed matter; and a drawing made for the 46th anniversary of The Record. Much of the personal correspondence concerns Delano’s membership in various New York clubs and his classmates in the Yale College class of 1895. His professional correspondence relates in part to important commissions, among them his work on the White House, West Point, and his design for La Guardia airport in New York. His participation in the work of the National Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission is also documented. Prominent correspondents include Dean Acheson, Frederick L. Allen, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Hiram Bingham, Charles C. Burlingham, George Parmly Day, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Charles Dana Gibson, Joseph Grew, M. A. DeWolfe Howe, Walter Lippmann, Allan Nevins, Arthur Upham Pope, Elihu Root, Jr., Henry Lewis Stimson, Charles Warren, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0178

Requesting Instructions
To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.0178.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:
b. box
Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Conditions Governing Access
The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

Preferred Citation
William Adams Delano Papers (MS 178). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Other Finding Aids
For a listing of selected correspondents with William Adams Delano, and a chart outlining the genealogical relations of the Delano family, please consult the Correspondents Index and Genealogical Chart.

Biographical / Historical
William Adams Delano was born in New York City on January 21, 1874. His father, Eugene Delano, was a partner in the banking firm Brown Brothers & Company; his mother, the former Susan Magoun Adams, was the daughter of the Reverend Mr. William Adams. In 1887, William Adams Delano entered the Lawrenceville School, from which he graduated in 1891. In the fall of that year he enrolled in Yale College, obtaining his A.B. In 1895. After graduation from Yale, Delano spent two years in the Columbia University School of Architecture and two years as a draftsman in the architectural office of Hastings Carrère. He then went to Paris to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, from which he received a diploma in 1902. In 1901 Delano had been awarded the Jean Leclaire Prize, an honor bestowed by the Institut de France upon the member of the First Class who receives the greatest number of values. This had been a particularly meaningful award to Delano, since this was the first time the prize had been given to other than a Frenchman. After over five years in Paris he returned to New York where, in 1903, he and Chester H. Aldrich founded the firm of Delano and Aldrich. Until 1910, Delano also served as a professor of design at Columbia University’s School of Architecture.

In 1924, Delano was appointed for a four year term to the National Commission of Fine Arts by President Coolidge. In 1927 Secretary Mellon appointed him a member of the Board of Architectural Consultants of the United States Treasury Department, a position Delano held for six years. In 1929, by president Hoover’s request, Delano became the architectural representative on the National Park and Planning Commission, being re-appointed by succeeding Presidents and serving in his capacity until 1946 when he resigned.
In 1908, Delano was awarded the degree of B.F.A., and in 1939 he received an honorary M.A. -- both from Yale. He became, in 1930, a corresponding member of the Academic des Beaux Arts Institut de France, having served as President of the Society of Beaux Arts Architects from 1927 to 1929; also in 1930, Delano became an officer in the Legion d’Honneur. He was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and from 1928 to 1930 he served as president of the New York Chapter; in 1953 Delano received the Institute’s Gold Medal for excellence in Architecture. A member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, he had received their Gold Medal for architecture in 1940. Delano also belonged to the Architectural League of New York, the National Academy of Design, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was a trustee of the New York Orthopaedic Dispensary and the New York Public Library; he was vice president of the Grenfell Association of America and the New York Hoticultural Society. He was a member of the Century Association, the Coffee House, India House, The Brook, and the Yale University Knickerbocker, and Piping Rock Clubs in New York; he was also a member of the Metropolitan Club in Washington and the Graduates Club in New Haven.

During his architectural career, Delano designed many buildings of note. Among them at Yale were Wright Hall, Sterling Chemical Laboratory, and the Divinity School. His buildings at Washington include the Japanese Embassy, the Post Office Building and Circular Plaza. In New York City, Delano designed the University Club and the Brook, and LaGuardia and Idlewild Airports. A commission which had given Delano particular professional satisfaction was the American Embassy on the Place de la Concorde in Paris. At West Point Delano succeeded in winning the contract for the enlargement of the United States Military Academy. However, Delano is probably best known for his work on the renovation of the White House, including the balcony addition he designed.

A member of that stylistic persuasion in architecture called the “Beaux Arts School,” Delano’s designs are today often unfavorably criticized and largely ignored. However, in his time, many thought very highly of his architectural artistry. President Truman, for one, expressed his admiration in this note he sent Delano: “On all sides we find noble works whose artistic merits reflect the fine taste and judgment which you have exercised.”

William Delano died on January 12, 1960 in New York City at the age of 85.

CHRONOLOGICAL NOTE

1874 Born, New York City, on January 21
1887-1891 Lawrenceville School
1895 A.B. From Yale
1902 Diploma from Ecole des Beaux-Arts
1903-1910 Professor of Design at Columbia
1903 Firm of Delano and Aldrich established
1905 Trustee, New York Orthopaedic Dispensary and Hospital
1907 Married, to Louisa Millicent Potter (Sheffield), May 23
1908 B.F.A. From Yale
1909 Born, a son, William Richard Potter Delano, on July 31
1924-1928 Member, National Commission of Fine Arts
1927-1933 Member, Board of Architectural Consultants, Treasury Department, Washington, D.C.
1929-1946 Member, National Park and Planning Commission
1930 Corresponding member, Academie des Beaux-Arts, L’Institut de France
1933 Operation on neck
1937-1943 Designed LaGuardia Airport
1939 Hon. M.A. From Yale
1939 Member, Board of Design for World’s Fair
1940 Awarded Gold Medal of National Institute of Arts and Letters
1945 Won competition for enlarging West Point facilities
1948 Added balcony to White House
1949 Appointed Architectural Consultant to the Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion
1950 Retired from active partnership in Delano & Aldrich (January 1)
1953 Received Gold Medal of American Institute of Architects
1960 Died, January 12; memorial service held on February 1 at the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City.

For a listing of selected correspondents with William Adams Delano, and a chart outlining the genealogical relations of the Delano family, please consult the Correspondents Index and Genealogical Chart.

Scope and Contents
The William Adams Delano Collection contains social and professional correspondence, various papers, and assorted printed material relating to the personal life and architectural career of William Adams Delano (1874-1960). The collection spans the period 1902-1960, with the majority of the material falling between the years 1939-1959.

The social correspondence pertains to Delano’s personal relationships, including friends and family. A frequent subject of this correspondence is the various clubs to which he belonged, especially the Coffee House, the Knickerbocker Club, and the Century Association. There is also a considerable amount of correspondence with the Yale Alumni Association and Delano’s classmates in the Class of 1895.

The professional correspondence deals with various projects of Delano’s architectural career, including public and office buildings and private homes. Especially noteworthy is his work on the White House and West Point, and his design of LaGuardia Field. His participation and leadership in various organizations, including the National Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, are also covered in the correspondence section.

Nearly all printed material is enclosed with related letters, usually with no separated notation being made. There are several pieces, however, for which no origin is discernible; there have been filed in a separate box, likewise uncatalogued. Also in the same box is the unpublished autobiography: “The Reminiscences of William Adams Delano.”
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Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Architects
Architecture
World War, 1939-1945

Geographic Names
La Guardia Airport (New York, N. Y.)
New York (State)

Genres / Formats
Autobiographies (documents)

Names
Acheson, Dean, 1893-1971
Adams, Frederick B. (Frederick Baldwin), 1910-2001
Adee, George Townsend, 1874-1948
Aldrich, Amey
Aldrich, Winthrop W. (Winthrop Williams), 1885-1974
Allen, Frederick Lewis, 1890-1954
Armour, Norman, 1887-1982
Armstrong, Hamilton Fish, 1893-1973
Arnould, Leopold, 1895-1984
Astor, Nancy Witcher Langhorne Astor, Viscountess, 1879-1964
Atterbury, Grosvenor, 1869-1956
Bacon, Leonard, 1887-1954
Baker, Herbert, Sir, 1862-1946
Beal, Gifford Reynolds, 1879-1956
Bechtel, Edwin DeTurck, 1880-1957
Bedard, Pierre, 1895-1970
Belmont, Eleanor Robson, 1879-1979
Bennett, Edward H. (Edward Herbert), 1874-1954
Bingham, Hiram, 1875-1956
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Brooks, Van Wyck, 1886-1963
Brown, Arthur, 1874-1957
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Brüere, Henry
Burlingham, Charles C. (Charles Culp), 1858-1959
Butterworth, Frank Seiler, 1870-1950
Cadogan, Alexander, Sir, 1884-1968
Carter, Bernard Shirley, 1893-1961
Chadbourne, William Merriam, 1879-1964
Clarke, Gilmore D., 1892-1982
Clay, Henry, 1883-1954
Cleland, T. M. (Thomas Maitland), 1880-1964
Colby, Charles W. (Charles William), 1867-1955
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Collet, Mark, Sir, 1864-1944
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Crisp, Arthur, 1881-1974
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Davidson, Jo, 1883-1952
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Edison, Charles A., 1890-1969
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
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Everitt, Samuel Alexander, 1871-1953
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Gugler, Eric, d. 1974
Hadley, Morris, 1894-1970
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Corporate Bodies
United States Military Academy
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