

MS-160: Harris Family Papers

Collection Number: MS-160

Title: Harris Family Papers

Dates: 1898-1964

Creator: Harris Family

Summary/Abstract:

This collection consists primarily of the personal and business correspondence of George Harris and his wife Katherine Carr Harris, his brother, Robert Harris, and his son, Ladley Harris. Both Katherine and George were born and raised in Yellow Springs, Ohio and attended Antioch College in the 1890s. They married in 1904 and moved to Georgia where Harris established a successful law practice and they raised a family. The bulk of the correspondence in this collection is with family members and friends in Yellow Springs, New York and elsewhere, and reflects the interests, concerns and activities of a white, middle class family during the first half of the 20th century.

Quantity/Physical Description: 1.5 linear feet

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092

Restrictions on Access: There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

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Preferred Citation:

[Description of item, Date, Box #, Folder #], MS-160, Harris Family Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Acquisition:

The Harris Family Papers are part of a larger collection of family papers donated to the Wright State University, Archives and Special Collections by Corinne Odiorne Pelzl, Eve Odiorne Sullivan, and Ken Odiorne. The papers were accessioned in October, 1982.

Other Finding Aid:

The finding aid is available on the Special Collections & Archives, Wright State University Libraries web site at

http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection_guides/guide_files/ms160.pdf. It is also available in the OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/>.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements: Much of the paper in the collection is very brittle. Please handle and turn pages carefully.

Related Material:

- MS-117 Derostus F. Ladley Papers
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms117.pdf>)
- MS-135 Alice Griffith Carr Papers
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms135.pdf>)
- MS-137 Totten Family Papers
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms137.pdf>)
- MS-138 Oscar D. Ladley Papers
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms138.pdf>)
- MS-139 Jerusha Hall Peacock Papers
(<https://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms139.pdf>)
- MS-155 Ladley/ Carr/Totten/Harris/Odiorne/ Families Photographs
(<https://libraries.wright.edu/special/collectionguides/files/ms155.pdf>)

Revisions: Finding aid written according to DACS standards by Alyssa Stark and Toni Vanden Bos, February 2019.

Processed by: Adrienne Saint-Pierre, May 1986.

Arrangement:

The papers are arranged into 5 series:

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| Series I: | George Harris's Papers, 1902-1964 |
| | Subseries IA: Personal Correspondence, 1902-1964 |
| | Subseries IB: Business Correspondence, 1903-1958 |
| Series II: | Katherine Carr Harris's Papers, 1898-1960 |
| Series III: | Mr. and Mrs. George Harris's Correspondence, 1904-1953 |
| Series IV: | Robert Harris's Papers, 1930-1937 |
| Series V: | Ladley Harris's Papers, 1928-1941 |

Biographical/Historical Note:

George Harris was born in 1875, the second son of Jerusha Hall Peacock and Dr. James Madison Harris, both teachers at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Their eldest child, Allen, was

born in 1873 and the youngest, Robert, was born in 1877. Jerusha died in November of the year following Robert's birth. James Harris later married a Yellow Springs native Elia S. Baisdell, and they had one child, Walter B. Harris.

Both George and Robert became attorneys; Robert worked in a New York architect's office prior to establishing his own law practice in Valdosta, Georgia. George established his practice in McRae, Georgia. In addition to their careers in law, the two brothers created businesses in growing and selling pecans. George maintained a farm outside of McRae, and Robert acted as a broker to pecan growers, creating a mail-order business called the Telfair Pecan Co. The only eldest brother, Allen, established an office specialties (supply) business in Dayton.

On January 7, 1904, George Harris married Katherine Carr, daughter of William Wallace Carr and Mary Ladley. Katherine was their second child, born in 1878 in Yellow Springs; she graduated from Antioch College in 1900. Her maternal grandfather, the Reverend D.F. Ladley, was one of the founders of Antioch College. Her father established the well-known Yellow Springs firm, W.W. Carr Nurseries, in 1870. George and Katherine had three children; the first, Dorothy, was born in August 1908 but lived only two weeks. Their second child, Katherine Louise, was born in January 1910, and their third child, Ladley Hall, was born in September 1911.

For two years Katherine taught the sixth grade at the Yellow Springs public school, and was then promoted to a position on the staff of the high school, which she held until her marriage. She also worked in the high school, which she held until her marriage. She also worked in the office of her father's nursery before her marriage, and it appears that she continued to help in the family business during the periods of her married life when she resided in Yellow Springs. In July 1960 while in McRae, Georgia, Katherine died suddenly of a heart attack; the following month George Harris returned to live in Yellow Springs permanently. He lived at least into his 90th year.

Scope and Content Note:

Much of the correspondence in this collection dates from the first and second decades of the 20th century, and would be useful for researching the kinds of products people ordinarily purchased for their homes and farms in the early 20th century. The correspondence between Katherine and George Harris, as well as their files of business letters, contains this sort of information. In addition to providing information about products, this collection of papers would be fairly useful to researchers studying daily routines and typical social activities of small town life at the turn of the century, also, attitudes toward marriage and the "roles" of husbands and wives both at the turn of the century and in the 1930s and 1940s.

Katherine Carr Harris wrote many letters to George Harris during the years of their engagement while she was in Yellow Springs and he, embarking on his career as an attorney, was in Georgia. Though it is clear from her correspondence that Katherine did receive many letters from her fiancé during this period (circa 1902-1903), few have survived. However, George seems to have been a faithful letter writer to family members and friends throughout his life, and particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, often wrote to his wife on a daily basis. Inversely, few letters from Katherine to her husband exist for this later time period. No regular "pattern" of seasons spent

together or apart in Yellow Springs, Ohio and McRae, Georgia emerged from the letters, but it is clear that they were often apart for many months at a time.

The bulk of correspondence in **Series I: George Harris's Papers, 1902-1964**, are in **Subseries IA: Personal Correspondence, 1902-1964** containing Katherine's early letters to George (1902-1904), in which she expresses concern about his future and her preference that he establish his own law practice instead of working "on salary" for someone else. Along with local news and discussion of social activities in Yellow Springs, Springfield, and Xenia, she mentions decided and interesting reasons for their wedding (though they actually married in winter), and occasionally refers to purchases she was making for their future home. (Note: Her business correspondence, Series II, is especially useful regarding the latter, as it provides evidence of her choices in furnishings, linens, household supplies, and decorations; many items were purchased through mail order. Items in this file date from 1903 to 1950.)

Other personal correspondence in Subseries IA includes letters mainly from George Harris's relatives: his brothers; his father and stepmother; and his maternal aunt, Anna Peacock Otis, who was a teacher in New York City, and says of herself that she was born twenty-five years ahead of her time. Her letters, though full of family news, do provide insight into the life of a single "career woman" in the early 1900s; she did not marry until very late in her life.

George Harris's business correspondence (1903 to 1958, but mainly from the early years) in **Subseries IB: Business Correspondence, 1903-1958**, reveals how and what kinds of household and farm supplies were purchased in the first decades of this century. There are extensive lists of items – from the most basic, including food and toiletry items, to heavy equipment – ordered from the Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward Companies. There are also several interesting booklets (circa 1903, with letters) from architectural firms, showing the kinds of homes they would build, floor plans, costs, etc. Other business correspondence includes letters, invoices, and brochures from lumber companies, tiling and mantel companies, brick and cement companies, a tin and stove company, a carriage builder, farm equipment manufacturers, the Medical Association of Georgia, nurseries and livestock companies, a Cincinnati gun maker, the National Cloak and Suit Company, and many others. There are also a few letters and printed items relating to Harris's political interests which reveal some of the social attitudes and legislative "Causes" of the period between 1908 and 1910.

In **Series II: Katherine Carr Harris's Papers, 1898-1960**, Katherine Carr Harris's letters from her husband written in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s reveal a rather tender concern for their children even in the face of financial difficulties, his struggles to keep the farm going, and his own health problems. In the 1940s, his letters are filled with stories about a young toddler, "the Minnix baby," whom he dotes on almost as a substitute for his own grandchildren living far from Georgia. He occasionally mentions his opinions about "modern" methods of caring for infants, and judging from the books he ordered, appears to have been genuinely interested in children throughout his life. Maintaining the farm, both physically and financially, seems to have been difficult for reasons beyond his control, and his letters thus paint a generally dismal picture of farming.

Another major group of personal correspondence in this series consists of Bessie Totten's letters to Katherine Carr Harris, dating from 1910 to 1960. A cousin of Katherine's, Bessie Totten was active in local (Yellow Springs) affairs, which she writes of often, and in 1953 received an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree from Antioch College for her work in developing and preserving their collection of "Antiochana".

Series III: Mr. and Mrs. George Harris's Correspondence, 1904-1953, consists of letters written to both Mr. and Mrs. Harris, some from their children and their spouses, and others from friends and relatives.

Series IV: Robert Harris's Papers, 1930-1937, contains only one file. The first of these, Robert Harris's personal correspondence, includes letters from friends and a few from his brother, George. The dates of these letters range from 1903 to 1937. Robert Harris's business correspondence, consisting almost exclusively of order forms and acknowledgement carbons from the Telfair Pecan Co. were removed from this collection because their research value was minimal.

Series V: Ladley Harris's Papers, 1928-1941, is one file containing letters from his father and boyhood friends, dating from 1928 to 1937, his 1932 high school commencement program, and a sketch he made of an old spring house. The letters from his friends provide some insight into typical "boys' activities" (Scouts, fishing, etc.) and expressions of friendship (nicknames, ways of conversing) of the period.

Subject Terms

Persons/Families

Harris family – Manuscripts
Harris, Katherine Carr, 1878-1960
Harris, George, 1875-
Harris, Robert, 1877-
Harris, Ladley
Peacock, Anna, 1846-
Totten, Bessie L., 1876-1963

Organizations/Corporate Names

Antioch College – History

Places

Yellow Springs (Ohio) – History
Yellow Springs (Ohio) – Business
Yellow Springs (Ohio) – Social life and customs

Material Types

Correspondence

Collection Inventory

Box	File	Description	Date
Series I: George Harris's Papers			1902-1964
Subseries IA: Personal Correspondence			1902-1964
1	1	Correspondence from Katherine Carr Harris	circa 1902-1903
1	2	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1902
1	3	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1903 Jan – Feb
1	4	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1903 Mar – Apr
1	5	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1903 May – Jun
1	6	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1903 Jul – Aug
1	7	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1903 Sep – Oct
1	8	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1903 Nov – Dec
1	9	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1904
1	10	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1905-1911
1	11	Correspondence from K.C. Harris	1930-1952
1	12	Correspondence from James M. Harris	1902-1905
1	13	Correspondence from Ella Blaisell Harris	1903
1	14	Correspondence from Allen C. Harris	1903-1913
1	15	Correspondence from Robert H. Harris	1903-1912
1	16	Correspondence from Anna Otis Peacock	1903-1908
1	17	Correspondence from Anna Otis Peacock	1909-1914
1	18	Correspondence from his children and their spouses, and grandchildren	1919-1964
1	19	Miscellaneous correspondence to and from friends and relatives	1903-1960
Subseries IB: Business Correspondence			1903-1958
2	1	Business Correspondence	1903-1907
2	2	Business Correspondence	1908 Jan – Jun
2	3	Business Correspondence	1908 Jul – Dec
2	4	Business Correspondence	1909 Jan – Apr
2	5	Business Correspondence	1909 May – Jul
2	6	Business Correspondence	1909 Aug – Dec
2	7	Business Correspondence	1910
2	8	Business Correspondence	1911-1919
2	9	Business Correspondence	1936-1958
Series II: Katherine Carr Harris's Papers			1898-1960
3	1	Correspondence from George Harris	1899-1906
3	2	Correspondence from George Harris	1914
3	3	Correspondence from George Harris	1917-1933
3	4	Correspondence from George Harris	1941-1947
3	5	Correspondence from George Harris	1951

Box	File	Description	Date
3	6	Correspondence from Bessie Totten	1910-1960
3	7	Correspondence from children and grandchildren	1935-1957
3	8	Miscellaneous correspondence from friends and relatives	1898-1923
3	9	Miscellaneous correspondence from friends and relatives	1931-1957
3	10	Business Correspondence	1903-1959
Series III: Mr. and Mrs. George Harris's Correspondence			1904-1953
3	11	Miscellaneous correspondence from friends and relatives	1904-1951
3	12	Correspondence from their children and their spouses	1939-1953
Series IV: Robert Harris's Papers			1903-1937
3	13	Miscellaneous Correspondence	1903-1937
Series V: Ladley Harris's Papers			1928-1941
3	14	Correspondence from George and Katherine Harris	1928-1941
3	15	Miscellaneous correspondence and ephemera	1928-1941