

# Guide to the Laura Johnson Wylie Papers, 1890-1961 (bulk 1898-1919)

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## Collection Summary

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Repository:</b>      | Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries  |
| <b>Creator:</b>         | Wylie, Laura Johnson, 1855-1932   |
| <b>Title:</b>           | Laura Johnson Wylie Papers  |
| <b>Inclusive dates:</b> | 1890-1961   |
| <b>Bulk dates:</b>      | 1898-1919   |
| <b>Quantity:</b>        | 1.3 cubic feet (7 boxes)  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>        | Correspondence and other material documenting Wylie's work, health, travels, and family; as well as her friendships with Fanny Borden, Fanny Hart, Mrs. Nathan S. Hart, and Nina Katherine Hart; her career at Vassar College, and her relationship with Gertrude Buck. |

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## Biographical Note

Laura Johnson Wylie (1855-1932) was born in Milton, PA, and was valedictorian of the Vassar class of 1877. After graduation she taught Latin and English at the Packer Institute in Brooklyn for fourteen years, and became interested in settlement work. In 1892 Wylie went to Yale for graduate study, earning her Ph.D. two years later. Her dissertation, [The Evolution of English Criticism](#), was published by Yale.

In 1895 Wylie came to Vassar as an instructor in English. In two years she became head of the department; and until her retirement in 1924, Professor Wylie, with her companion, Gertrude Buck, shaped Vassar's English department. As a teacher Wylie said she aimed to encourage "self-expression and self-discipline" in students. She was the author of several books on English literature and was editor of a number of classroom editions of the English classics.

In addition to her teaching and scholarly activities, Laura Wylie was very active in civic affairs in Poughkeepsie. She was a leader of the local women's suffrage movement, and, after the vote was won, helped to found the Women's City and County Club; she served as president from 1918 to 1928. After her retirement from Vassar, Wylie taught at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry. When she died she left a fund to encourage the friendly relations between Vassar and the community. According to H. E. Mills, Laura Wylie's main characteristic was an "ever present struggle for human freedom."

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## **Scope and Content Note**

The Laura J. Wylie collection spans the years 1890 to 1961, with the bulk of the material falling into the period 1899 to 1919, and is for the most part personal correspondence. The collection is arranged chronologically by type of material and includes clippings, correspondence, miscellaneous published items, photographs, postcards, and realia.

The papers include approximately 500 Wylie letters and postcards, written between 1898 and 1919, to Fanny Hart (VC 1898), a graduate student at the New York State Library School at Albany about 1907-1908 and later a librarian at various branches of the New York Public Library. Some of the letters and picture postcards were sent by Professor Wylie from Europe during her trips abroad, the last ending at the outbreak of World War I. Also included are some letters written by LJW to Mrs. Nathan S. Hart, Fanny's mother, and to Fanny's sister, Nina Katherine Hart (VC 1904), an English teacher at a number of schools including the Packer Institute. There are a few letters to Fanny Hart from others in the Vassar community, usually written for or about LJW. A number of letters, mainly thank-you notes, are written to Fanny Hart by Gertrude Buck, professor of English at Vassar College from 1897 to 1922, LJW's companion. Some letters spanning the years 1923 to 1961 request information from Fanny Borden, Vassar College Librarian, regarding LJW's publications. A small number of letters concern the Wylie Memorial Fund, later called the Wylie Memorial Associates.

Miscellaneous clippings and printed material included in the collection pertain to Laura Wylie's life and career, her publications, and events of the Women's City and County Club.

The formal photographs and snapshots in the collection depict Laura Wylie from childhood through adulthood. A photograph of LJW's home at 112 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, is included as well as some unidentified pictures found in her desk at the time of her death.

In addition, there are 3 boxes of unprocessed material.

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## **Access and Use**

### **Access**

The processed portions of this collection are open for research according to the regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library without any additional restrictions.

### **Restrictions on Use**

The unprocessed material in this collection is restricted. Please contact the staff for further information.

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## **Subject Headings**

### **Names:**

- Borden, Fanny
- Buck, Gertrude, 1871-1922
- Hart, Fanny
- Hart, Nathan S., Mrs.
- Hart, Nina Katherine
- Wylie family

### **Organizations:**

- Bryn Mawr College. Summer School for Women
- Vassar College--Faculty

### **Subjects:**

- English language--Study and teaching
- Feminists
- Women college teachers
- Women's rights
- Women--Education
- Women--Employment
- Women--Suffrage
- Workers in Industry

### **Document Types:**

- Photographs
- Postcards

## VCL Categories

- Vassar College
- Women's History

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## Encoding Information

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, April 2007.

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Laura Johnson Wylie Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

### Processing Information

Original processing date unknown.

Boxes 5, 6 and 7 have not been processed.

### Acquisition Information

Gift of New York Vassar Club and anonymous gifts.

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## Container List

|       |                                |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| Box 1 | Correspondence, 1890-1910      |
| Box 2 | Correspondence, 1911-1914      |
| Box 3 | Correspondence, 1915-1961      |
| Box 4 | Miscellaneous clippings        |
| Box 4 | Miscellaneous printed material |
| Box 4 | Photographs                    |
| Box 4 | Realia                         |
| Box 5 | unprocessed                    |
| Box 6 | unprocessed                    |
| Box 7 | unprocessed                    |

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▼ Details

Abstract

Correpondence and other material documenting Wylie's work, health, travels, and family; as well as her friendships with Fanny Borden, Fanny Hart, Mrs. Nathan S. Hart, and Nina Katherine Hart; her career at Vassar College, and her relationship with Gertrude Buck.

Finding Aid Date

Inclusive dates: 1890-1961

Collection Title

Laura Johnson Wylie Papers