



Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

Collection 3216

Allen family papers

Creators: Allen, Alfred Reginald, 1876-1918
Allen, Alfred Reginald, 1905-1988

1837-1971

57 boxes, 13 volumes, 2 flat files, 23.2 linear feet

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Collection 3126

Abstract

The Allen family of Philadelphia had its roots in Bristol, United Kingdom. Samuel Allen (sometimes spelled Allan or Allin) came to America in 1681 and settled in what is now known as Chester, Pennsylvania. The Allen family papers consist of correspondence, photographs, albums, newspaper clippings, volumes, manuscripts, ephemera, and artifacts collected first by Dr. Alfred Reginald Allen (1876-1918) and then by his son Alfred Reginald Allen Jr. (1905-1988).

Dr. Alfred Reginald Allen was a noted neurologist and neurosurgeon who earned his degree from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1898. Dr. Allen published a few medical papers and articles mostly about his specialty, injuries of the spinal cord. Dr. Allen was also heavily involved in the theater and penned numerous operettas, some of which were published. He was a founding member of the Savoy Opera Company of Philadelphia, which produced the works of Gilbert & Sullivan and still exists to this day. However, Dr. Allen seems to have abandoned his work in the theater in the early part of the twentieth century to focus on his medical career, probably under pressure from his father, Rev. George Pomeroy Allen (1845-1919). In 1904 he married Helen Burgess Warren (1879-1949), daughter of Ebenezer Burgess Warren (1833-1917). They had two children, twins Alfred Reginald Jr. and Helen Warren Allen II (1905-1954). In 1915 Dr. Allen joined a reserve unit of the United States Army, eventually achieving the rank of major. When the United States joined World War I in 1917 Dr. Allen's unit was sent to France. He was killed in action in September 1918 during the Battle of Argonne.

Alfred Reginald Allen Jr., called Reggie, seems to have pursued the career in arts that his father could not. After graduating from Harvard in the late 1920s Reggie was elected to the board of the Philadelphia Orchestra and became its general manager in 1935. In 1939 he moved to Hollywood, California to work in Universal Pictures' scenario department. When the United States joined World War II in 1941 Reggie served as a lieutenant commander in Air Combat Intelligence. After the war he returned to Hollywood to work for a British film company called the J. Arthur Rank Organisation. He married Helen Huntington Howe (1916-1975) in 1946.¹ (Helen Howe Allen achieved a certain degree of

¹ Helen and Reggie are somehow related, both of them being descendants of Rev. Mark Antony DeWolf Howe (1808-1895), the first Episcopal bishop of Central Pennsylvania. Exactly how they are related is unknown.

fame as a novelist and essayist, including having some works that reached the New York Times' best-seller list. Her papers are currently located in the archives at Radcliffe College.) From the early 1950s to his retirement in 1969 Reggie worked for the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Reggie seems to have shared his father's love of the works of Gilbert & Sullivan in particular. After retiring from the Met he served as curator of the Gilbert & Sullivan Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library, maintained a collection of Gilbert & Sullivan memorabilia, and published two books about their operettas.

This collection of Allen family papers is rich in personal correspondence, particularly between Dr. Allen and his father in the late nineteenth century, between Dr. Allen and his wife while he was at the Army's Plattsburg training camp and overseas, and between Reggie and his mother from the 1920s until her death in 1949. There are also numerous photographs and albums in the collection which are mostly family portraits, pictures of their summer holidays on Lake George, New York, and the family's many travels abroad.

There is also a significant amount of genealogical material in the form of historical biographies, family trees and letters. Dr. Allen began doing genealogical research and Reggie it. While Dr. Allen concentrated on the history of the Allens and the Pomeroy's, Reggie expanded the research to include the Howes, the DeWolfs, the Huntingtons, and other related lineages. This genealogical research is particularly interesting as all lines of the family were people who settled in America in the 1600s. The Pomeroy's in particular were some of the original founders of the town of Dorset, Massachusetts.

Related collections

At other institutions:

Helen Howe papers (77-M218, 78-M104, 82-M96), Harvard University, Schlesinger Library

Allen Reginald papers (*2004MT-36), Harvard University, Schlesinger Library.

Subjects

Allen family (Samuel Allen, fl. 1681)
Music – Manuscripts – 20th century
Family life – Pennsylvania – 20th century
Pennsylvania – Social life and customs

Allen, Alfred Reginald, 1876-1918

Allen, Alfred Reginald, 1905-1988

Howe, Helen. 1916-1975

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Gift of Alfred Reginald Allen Jr., 1982.

Accession number: 82:19.

The collection was donated by Alfred Reginald Allen Jr. in 1982. Though a small portion of the papers were found separate from the main collection when it was inventoried, we believe that all these materials came in at approximately the same time.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Allen family papers (Collection 3126), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Box 56, which contains lace, is currently awaiting conservation. When the conservation process is complete, Box 56 will be added to the end of the collection.

Box and folder listing

Box number	Brief description	Approximate date range
Box 1	Volumes of music	1845-1904
Box 2	Published books of poetry and journal/documents pertaining to European trips	1874-1926
Box 3	Miscellaneous ephemera belonging to both Alfred Sr. and Alfred Jr.-Play/musical programs, newspaper clippings, letters/postcards Volume-Short biography of Alfred Sr. by Charles Mills	1896-1936
Box 4	Sheet music of Alfred Sr.'s original compositions. Also "Music to Aristophanes Acharians" by Hugh A. Clarke E. Burgess Warren estate documents	circa 1930, undated
Box 5	Mostly Alfred Sr. items; includes wartime letters between Alfred Sr. and wife; information regarding Alfred Sr.'s death overseas; a few family photographs	1902-1935
Box 6	Dr Allen's wartime letters and documents; documents pertaining to the death of S. Weir Mitchell (colleague of Alfred Sr. at American Neurological Association)	1905-1918
Box 7	Letters to Alfred Reginald Allen Sr. from his family, mostly from his father. This box contains letters from Alfred's father telling him to give up theater and letters from Alfred's older sister discussing the bad behavior of their younger siblings	1887-1904
Box 8	Dr. Allen's original compositions and scores	1894-1918
Box 9	Genealogical research	1913-1970
Box 10	Genealogical research	1913-1970
Box 11	Letters to Helen Warren Allen	1946-1948
Box 12	Script to "A Comic Opera in Three Acts," clippings about Allen Sr.'s death, penny collection	1909-1933
Box 13	Mostly Alfred Reginald Allen Jr.'s business files with a few personal letters mixed	1918-1946
Box 14	Volumes of Dr. Allen's and a few personal letters	1908-1921
Box 15	Journal, birthday book, personal letters of Dr. Allen	1894-1904
Box 16	Reggie's personal letters and ephemera (passport, school items)	1915-1921
Box 17	Reggie's letters to his mother	1921-1925
Box 18	Reggie's letters to his mother	1925-1941
Box 19	Reggie's letters from mother	1920-1924
Box 20	Reggie's letters from mother	1925-1942
Box 21	Reggie's letters from mother	1941-1949
Box 22	Letters to M.A. DeWolf Howe (father of Helen Howe Allen), various letters to Dr. Allen, miscellaneous	1837-1890

	letters	
Box 23	Letters to Dr. Allen	1892-1904
Box 24	Miscellaneous letters to Dr. Allen, letters from various people to family, Reggie and Helen Howe's wedding present cards	1897-1907, 1912-1919, 1946
Box 25	Reggie's letters from mother	1921-1939
Box 26	Reggie's letters to and from mother	1942-1945
Box 27	Letters to Reggie from various people, newspaper clippings	1922-1948
Box 28	Helen Howe Allen letters to "Wayne"	1946-1948
Box 29	Wedding and baby books, travel journals, appraisals of 2013 Spruce St	1904-1932
Box 30	Family photographs, Dr. Allen's death certificate, unidentified painting	1905-1918, undated
Box 31	Framed photos-Dr. Allen and Helen	undated
Box 32	Four framed photographs and photo stamp of Dr. Allen	undated
Box 33	Two framed photos Dr. Allen and unidentified female	undated
Box 34	Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, letters, published material, documents pertaining to Dr. Allen's death, engagement book	1904-1950
Box 35	Family photo albums	1905-1917
Box 36	Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, letters, Reggie's baby book	1905-1917
Box 37	Travel journals and miscellaneous ephemera collected on travels; framed photo of Dr. Allen	1909-1934
Box 38	30 rolls of photo negatives	undated
Box 39	2 rolls of negatives in containers; loose rolls of negatives	undated
Box 40	Stereo cards	undated
Box 41	11 rolls of negatives	undated
Box 42	Glass negatives	circa 1905-1915
Box 43	Glass Negatives	undated
Box 44	Miscellaneous photos and other ephemera	1909-1945
Box 45	Miscellaneous photos and negatives; stereo card negatives; photos of Reggie's trip to Africa	circa 1930, undated
Box 46	Miscellaneous photos and negatives	1922-1945
Box 47	Miscellaneous photos and negatives	1923-1945, undated
Box 48	Miscellaneous. photos and negatives	1926-1945, undated
Box 49	Two photo albums: Warren and Allen families	1887-1942
Box 50	Large matted photographs	1897-1928
Box 51	Large matted photographs	1897-1928
Box 52	Miscellaneous photos and postcards	circa 1905-1925

Box 53	Lake George tourist information, clippings about E.B. Warren's yachting accident; miscellaneous published material	1895-1939
Box 54	Matted photographs; postcards	1874-1913, undated
Box 55	French Line advertisements; pages from <i>The Sphere</i> , page from <i>The Star</i> newspaper	1924-1933
Box 56	Box of lace	undated
Box 57	Artifacts: Struwwelpeter cards, wedding cake figurines, university letters, linen	undated
Flat Files 1-2	Photograph and memorial certificates	circa 1908-1918