

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞  
for Special Collections  
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ Olive A. Colton Papers, 1867-1961 ◀

MSS-008

**Size:** 4 linear ft.

**Provenance:** Olive Colton donated a scrapbook to the University of Toledo Libraries in 1936; the rest of the collection was accessioned later.

**Access:** open

**Collection Summary:** The bulk of the collection consists of postcards and scrapbooks. Colton traveled extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and the world. There is also considerable information on her activities as a woman suffragist. Colton was a founder of Toledo's League of Women Voters in 1921, a member of the National Woman's Party in the 1930s, and served as a delegate to Carrie Chapman Catt's Woman's Centennial Congress in 1940. Materials in the collection include pamphlets, correspondence (1909 -1961), clippings, and autographs.

**Subjects:** [Social Life and Customs](#), [Travel](#), and [Women](#)

**Related Collections:** Toledo Woman Suffrage Association Papers, MSS-091.

**Processing Note:** Postcard Collection was processed separately from the rest.

**Copyright:** The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the person(s) responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection, or with their heirs or assigns. Researchers bear full legal responsibility for the acquisition to publish from any part of said collection per *Title 17, United States Code*. The **Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections** may reserve the right to intervene as intermediary at its own discretion.

**Completed by:** Paul Gifford, December 1985. Revised and updated by Laura Micham and Marsha Weatherspoon, 1998, last updated: April, 2014

### Biographical Sketch

Olive A. Colton was born in Toledo in 1873 and died there in 1972. She was the daughter of Abram W. Colton (1834-1909), president and general manager of the Lake Erie Transportation Company and officer of other transportation firms, and Catherine (Van Home) Colton, a descendant of the prominent Knickerbocker family of New York. Her only sister, Cornelia, wife of E. Griswold Hollister, was a leader in Republican politics and the musical life of Toledo.

Olive Colton attended the Smead School for Girls, majoring in history, and for many years remained active in the Smead School Associations. She traveled in Europe frequently and developed an extensive collection of postcards. One of her early interests was in the "romance of royalty," the title of her first published work (1908). Her interest in woman suffrage appears to date from the beginning of her friendship with Amy G. Maher in the 1910s.

A founder of the League of Women Voters of Toledo in 1921, she served as president twice and in 1930 was elected honorary president for life. She appears to have been a member of the National Woman's Party during the 1930s. She participated in Carrie Chapman Catt's National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War's conferences in Washington from 1925 to 1933. She was also a delegate to Mrs. Catt's Woman's Centennial Congress in 1940.

As a public speaker, Miss Colton gave talks for the Child and Family Agency and during World War II, for the Toledo chapter of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies.

During the late 1940s, she made donations to Albert Einstein's Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, to the American Association for the United Nations, the Committee for the Marshall Plan, and to other causes.

Miss Colton's essays display a variety of intellectual interests: peace, women's suffrage and rights, and Emerson and his association with the Berkshire Mountain region. She remained a Progressive long after the Progressive Era. In her old age, her political philosophy remained to the left of center.

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### Scope and Content Note

Olive Colton was best known as a suffragist and reformer. Her personal interests, however, were rather varied: travel, postcard and autograph collecting, the opera and theater, royalty, Emerson, besides women's and other social issues. This collection documents those interests and activities.

Postcards form approximately two-thirds of the content of the collection. These date from the 1890s to the 1950s and represent the usual local attractions, such as buildings and landscapes, from all over Europe and America, as well as a number of works of art. A number of early-20th-century postcards depict European royalty. Many were sent to Miss Colton by her correspondents, but the notes on them generally contain little substantive information. The scrapbooks are filled with postcards and clippings related to travel.

Of interest to researchers of life in 19th-century Toledo are Miss Colton's memoir of her childhood, the narrative sketch of her family, and the photographs of her early homes. The ephemera in the collection, such as political handbills, programs, ribbons, also include several items of interest.

Researchers will probably be drawn to this collection primarily because of Miss Colton's suffragist activities. However, they will find little material generated before 1919 to document her activities in this area. Her correspondence dates mainly from the 1920s to the 1940s. Prominent correspondents include Carrie Chapman Catt, Florence E. Allen, Mrs. Brand Whitlock, and Edith Cunningham. It is useful in documenting Miss Colton's positions on legislative issues, her choice of public speakers, her philanthropy, and her activity in organizations under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt. The collection does contain a variety of material relating to Mrs. Catt: articles written by her, reports of the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, and reports of the Conferences on the Cause and Cure of War, which was headed by Mrs. Catt. Finally, the collection has material useful for the study of the League of Women Voters of Toledo.

Olive A. Colton  
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**Folder List**

<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Arrangement</b>
		<b>Correspondence</b>
1	1	1909-34
	2	1935-45
	3	1946-61 and undated
	4	Autograph collection
	5	Letter, Susan B. Anthony to Albert E. Macomber, Aug. 8, 1867, with a presentation to Olive Colton by Irving E. Macomber
	6	Toledo Consumer League
	7	Genealogical material
	8	Photographs
	9	Ephemera and memorabilia
	10	"A Pre-Scientific Childhood," a Memoir
	11	Miscellaneous articles and notes by Olive Colton
	12	Articles by and about Carrie Chapman Catt
	13	Clippings
		<b>Pamphlets and Broadsides</b>
	14	Miscellaneous
	15	League of Women Voters
	16	National Woman's Party
	17	National America Women Suffrage Association, 1938
	18	Emerson, 1937 and 1940
	19	Various Essays, 1936, 1938, 1948, 1953
	20	Political Essays, 1942-1943
	21	Reports on the cause and care of War, 1925 and 1926
	22	Reports on the cause and care of War, 1928 and 1930
	23	Reports on the cause and care of War, 1931 and 1933
	24	Women's Centennial Congress, 1940
	25	Monograph, The Romance of Royalty, 1908
	26	Genealogy, Joris Janzen Van Horne and his Descendants, 1911
2		<b>Scrapbooks, 1-6</b>
3*		<b>Postcards</b>
		<i>United States</i>
		Alaska
		Arizona
		California
		Colorado
		Connecticut
		District of Columbia
		Florida
4*		Florida, cont.
		Georgia
		Hawaii

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		Idaho
		Illinois
		Indiana
		Kentucky
		Louisiana
		Maine
		Maryland
		Massachusetts
5*		Massachusetts cont.
		Missouri
		Michigan
		Minnesota
		New Hampshire
		New Jersey
		New Mexico
		New York
6*		New York cont.
		North Carolina
		Ohio
		Oklahoma
		Oregon
		Pennsylvania
		Rhode Island
		South Dakota
		Tennessee
7*		Utah
		Vermont
		Virginia
		Wisconsin
		Wyoming
		<i>Other countries</i>
		Algeria
		Argentina
		Austria
		Bahamas
		Bermuda
		Brazil
		Canada
		Chile
		Cuba
		Cyprus
		Czechoslovakia
		Egypt
		England

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		France
8*		France (cont.)
		Germany
		Greece
9*		Holland
		Hungary
		Italy
		Jamaica
		Japan
		Lebanon
		Madeira
		Malta
		Mexico
		Monaco
		Palestine
		Panama
		Portugal
		Spain
		Switzerland
		Trinidad
		Tunisia
		Turkey
		Uruguay
10*		Wales
		Yugoslavia
		Steamships
		Royalty and Nobility
		Photo portraits
		<i>Art</i>
		Art objects
		Engravings and woodcuts
		Furniture
		Mosaics
		Paintings
		Relief sculpture
		Sculpture
		Tapestry and rugs
		Miscellaneous

\*located on first range inside vault