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Guide to the Robert Henry Leighton Letters to the Leighton Family

WA MSS S-4538



Sarah Lerner

February 2023

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-4538

CREATOR: Leighton, Robert Henry, 1878-1942

TITLE: Robert Henry Leighton Letters to the Leighton Family

DATES: 1911-1917

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.21 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English (Latin script)

SUMMARY: Sixty-six manuscript letters and an epistolary journal created by Robert Henry Leighton, 1911-1917. Letters document Leighton's arrival in Vancouver, British Columbia; his work for the law firm Harris, Bull & Mason, as well as the Western Canada Power Company and B.C. Fisheries Ltd.; and his experiences working on a "government road" and mining coal and gold. Included are Leighton's descriptions of economic conditions in British Columbia, his social interactions, and the Haida (also known as Xaayda, Xaadas, Xaad, Xaat). Later letters document Leighton's enlistment with the Canadian Forestry Corps and time in France during World War I. Leighton wrote from Vancouver, Ruskin, Burnaby Lake, Skidegate, Graham Island, Moresby Island, Aliford Bay, Prince Rupert, and Queen Charlotte City (now Daajing Giids on Haida Gwaii), British Columbia; Brockville, Ontario; and "Somewhere in France." Letters are addressed to Leighton's father, John Alexander Leighton, as well as his sisters Margaret "Maggie" Currie Leighton, Ruth Leighton, and Catherine "Katie" Campbell Leighton. The 24-page epistolary journal documents Leighton salmon fishing in Skidegate Inlet in September 1912.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.rbleighton>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.rbleighton>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from McBride Rare Books on the Arthur Corbitt Hoskins Memorial Fund, 2022.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Robert Henry Leighton Letters to the Leighton Family is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Robert Henry Leighton Letters to the Leighton Family. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Manuscript Unit Processing Manual.

Biographical / Historical

Robert Henry Leighton (1878-1942) was the son of John Alexander Leighton (1841-1928), a solicitor in Belfast, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, and Caroline Campbell Wilson Leighton (1849-1885).

Leighton arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in April 1911 and began work at a local law firm, Harris, Bull & Mason. Let go by the firm for his inability to pay related fees, he took a job as a laborer with the Western Canada Power Company in Ruskin, British Columbia. Following the Canada Northern Railway Strike, he traveled to Skidegate, a Haida community on Graham Island. There he cleared brush, built infrastructure, worked for fisheries, and mined for gold and coal among other work. In December 1916, Leighton enlisted in the Canadian Forestry Corps and shipped out to France, arriving near the front on February 1917.

On July 11, 1924, Leighton married Winifred Charlotte Couplan (1897-1970) at Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The couple arrived in Liverpool, England, in October 1928. He died in Wandsworth, Greater London, in 1942. Winifred Charlotte Couplan Leighton returned to Canada and remarried.

Scope and Contents

Sixty-six manuscript letters and an epistolary journal created by Robert Henry Leighton, 1911-1917.

Letters document Leighton's arrival in Vancouver, British Columbia; his work for the law firm Harris, Bull & Mason, as well as the Western Canada Power Company and B.C. Fisheries Ltd.; and his experiences working on a "government road" and mining coal and gold. Included are Leighton's descriptions of economic conditions in British Columbia, his social interactions, and the Haida (also known as X̱aayda, X̱aadas, X̱aad, X̱aat).

Later letters document Leighton's enlistment with the Canadian Forestry Corps and time in France during World War I.

Leighton wrote from Vancouver, Ruskin, Burnaby Lake, Skidegate, Graham Island, Moresby Island, Aliford Bay, Prince Rupert, and Queen Charlotte City (now Daajing Giids on Haida Gwaii), British Columbia; Brockville, Ontario; and "Somewhere in France."

Letters are addressed to Leighton's father, John Alexander Leighton, as well as his sisters Margaret "Maggie" Currie Leighton, Ruth Leighton, and Catherine "Katie" Campbell Leighton.

The 24-page epistolary journal documents Leighton salmon fishing in Skidegate Inlet in September 1912.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1	1911	1911
b. 1, f. 2-6	1912	1912
b. 1, f. 7-8	1913	1913
b. 1, f. 9	1914	1914
b. 1, f. 10-11	1915	1915
b. 1, f. 12-13	1916	1916
b. 1, f. 14	1917	1917

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.

Geographic Names

British Columbia -- Description and travel
British Columbia -- Economic conditions -- 20th century
British Columbia -- Social life and customs -- 20th Century
France -- Description and travel
Graham Island (B.C.)
Haida Gwaii (B.C.)
Moresby Island (Skeena-Queen Charlotte, B.C.)
Ontario
Prince Rupert Harbour (B.C.)
Skidegate Inlet (B.C.)
Vancouver (B.C.)

Corporate Bodies

B.C. Fisheries Ltd.
Harris, Bull & Mason
Western Canada Power Company

Acquired From

McBride Rare Books , bookseller

Subjects

Coal mines and mining -- British Columbia
Fishers -- British Columbia
Gold mines and mining -- British Columbia
Haida Indians
Indians of North America -- British Columbia
Miners -- British Columbia
Northern Irish -- Canada
Salmon fishing -- British Columbia
World War, 1914-1918 -- France

Occupations

Fishers -- British Columbia -- 20th Century
Miners -- British Columbia -- 20th Century

Names

Leighton, Catherine Campbell, 1882-1956
Leighton, John Alexander, 1841-1928
Leighton, Margaret Currie, 1871-1947
Leighton, Ruth, 1884-1947

Families

Layton family