Maxfield Parrish Papers, 1891-1997

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Abstract
The papers of artist and illustrator Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966) who became enamoured of art while a student at Haverford College. The collection consists of letters, original drawings and illustrations, magazines to which he contributed, catalogs, calendars and his famous chemistry notebook created while a student at the college.

Background note
Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966), painter, muralist, book, magazine, art and advertising illustrator, a specialist with color and light, known for both his romantic and humorous art, was one of the most successful artists of the early 20th century. His star as a painter of carefully-detailed landscapes rose even as abstract art was ascendant. In the 1960s, the Pop Art movement embraced the imagery of commercial art and reintroduced figurative and objective elements, but even then Parrish's work had a differently-faceted quality. Parrish has been compared to Salvador Dali and other Surrealists.

Born in Philadelphia in 1870, he enjoyed the privileged childhood of a son of well-to-do Quaker parents, Stephen Elizabeth Parrish who took him on the Grand Tour of Europe and generally created a cultured environment for him. Parrish attended Haverford from 1888 to 1891; later he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. His first oil painting, Moonrise, was exhibited in 1893. Parrish traveled a number of times to Europe on commissions or to study painting masters; in his letters, he commented on the effect of the colors employed. In 1895, he married Lydia Austin who was not a Quaker and Parrish soon left the folds of the Society of Friends.

As an illustrator, Parrish's works appeared in books, magazines and posters. He also created a quantity of purely “commercial” art, earning a great deal of money through the sale of color reproductions, and, by the late 1920s, he was able to leave commercial art and to paint whatever he chose. By the 1930s, he had chosen to paint only landscapes.

Maxfield Parrish's subject matter came both from his own vivid imagination and from meticulously laid
out still-life arrangements in the form of miniature landscapes and architectural models. Parrish regularly painted from photographs which he had made, and when transferring the images to his paintings, he made few major transformations in them.

His name became such a household word, that, by 1920 when F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote his short story, “May Day,” he described the reflection in a restaurant window as being the color of “Maxfield Parrish moonlight.”


**Scope and content**

**Contents of collection:** Letters, photographs, transparencies, drawings, illustrations, notebooks, articles, exhibit catalogs, clippings, and other items related to Parrish and his wife, Lydia A. Parrish.

Includes 77 letters (1896-1951) of Lydia Parrish and 21 letters (1896-1912) of Maxfield Parrish addressed to artist Bertha Day Bates; topics include their friendship and appreciation of her work as an artist, news of family, friends and the Parrish's summer homes in New Hampshire and Vermont.

Also 22 letters (1891-1954) from Parrish related mostly to Haverford College affairs.

Drawings include caricatures (reproductions and originals) for Haverford College reunions (1891, 1894), Haverford Classbook (1889); also Christmas cards, book illustrations, magazine illustrations (for Century, Collier's, Scribner's and others) and advertisements.

College chemistry and physics notebooks of Parrish while at Haverford; also German textbook used by Parrish; Haverford College Athletic Annual (1897-1898); biographical material and bibliography on Parrish; calendar (1986); clippings (obituaries, etc.), articles on Parrish and criticism of his work.

**Arrangement**

**Arrangement of collection:** Collection is in 4 boxes and in packages wrapped separately on shelves. Box 1 includes photographs, transparencies and other items (see itemized list following); box 2 contains 22 letters of Parrish, drawings, clippings and other items (see itemized list following); box 3 contains magazine illustrations and other items (see itemized list following); box 4 contains letters of Maxfield and Lydia Parrish to Bertha C. Day (later Bates) (see list following of selected letters); framed artwork wrapped separately on shelves.

**Collection inventory**

Maxfield Parrish, 1870-1966

**Contents:**

2. Photocopy of Chemistry notebook (no. 1).
3. Five photographs (black and white) of pp. 19, 68-9, 40-1, 70-1, 72-3 and cover of Chemistry notebook. Gift of William Comfort, Eight photographs (color) of pp. 9, 17, 40, 46, 47, 57, 69, 78
7. Photo reproductions of caricatures for the class reunions of 1891 (13) and 1894 (20). Two original ink and wash caricatures for 1894 (Walter Emmanuel Smith and Franklin B. Kirkbride). All are identified for 1891, 11 of the 20 from 1894.
8. Album of photo reproductions, caricatures for a class of 1889 dinner held in 1891, made by Franklin B. Kirkbride. All are identified.
9. Five caricatures on menu cards for 1891 reunion dinner. Original ink and water color, two with menu still attached and one menu unattached. Gift, November 1968.
9a. Pen and ink drawing “Man with cigarette + cane.”
12. Chemistry final examination, Haverford College (n.d.).
13. Color photograph of experiment 74 from Chemistry notebook (used in *JAMA* article).
15. Three copies of the *Haverford College Athletic Annual* (one with annotations by Arthur Haines).

1. Letters from Parrish:

Contents:

April 10
[year?] 1891
2. Correspondence in re “A Master of Make-Believe”, *Century* v.84 no. 3, also text of the article. Gift; Copy of April 1912; [1906] Hubert Herkimer letter.
3. Ink drawing of dragon, verso text of “The dragon's tale” (William Marot Griscom?) and an explanatory letter.
4. “Plum Pudding” (originally printed *Harper's Weekly*), set of cards from the Library of Congress. (2 sets - 1 opened)
5. Folder marked Biography and Criticism: 32 items, including a bibliography and Parrish's “Inspiration in the Nineties” from the *Haverford Review*.
6. Folder marked Clippings: 26 items from various periodicals (mostly obituaries).
7. Folder marked Haverfordiana: photograph of “The College Cricket First Eleven, 1889” which includes Parrish (from the *Athletic Annual*?).
1. “Silent Night” print, purchased from Valerie Kraft 1977.


3. Folder marked Magazine Illustrations: “The Pied Piper” black and white (magazine proof?), gift Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater... color print (advertisement brochure for Ferry and Co. Seeds), gift The Clown” color print from a Parrish drawing, gift winged globe footing (advertisement for Collier's Magazine) in *Century Magazine* 72:1 1909, 1918, 1956; “1941; (May 1906).


5. Folder *Booknews* (published John Wanamaker):
   - Cover (allegorical figure with open book) Oct. 1895
   - Cover (woman holding book, in landscape) June 1897

6. Folder *Century Magazine*, illustrations for:
   - Envelope A -
     - Christmas Eve” Dec. 1898 “
     - A Hill Prayer” Dec. 1899 “
     - The Story of Ann Powell” July 1900 “
     - Storm Song of the Norseman” Jan. 1901 “
     - L'Allegro” and “John Cox his Book” Dec. 1901 “
   - Envelope B -
     - The Great Southwest” May 1902 “
     - The Great Southwest II” June 1902 “
     - The Great Southwest III” and “A Note about M.P.'s Western Pictures” July 1902 “
     - The Great Southwest IV” Aug. 1902 “
     - The Great Southwest...” and “The Southwest in Color” Nov. 1902 “
   - Envelope C - illustrations for series on Italian villas:
     Dec. 1903
     Feb. 1904
     April 1904
     Aug. 1904
     Oct. 1904

7. Folder *Century Magazine*, illustrations for:
   - Envelope A -
     - Keat's 'Poem to Autumn' ” Nov. 1904 “
I'm Sick of Being a Princess”  Dec. 1904 “
Seven Green Pools”  Aug. 1910 “
Sing a Song of Sixpence”  Feb. 1911 “
Decoration for...James T. Storrow”  April 1912 “
Curtis Company murals  Aug. 1912
Pipe-night at the Players”  Dec. 1915 “

Envelope B -  Hire's Root Beer advertisement, color  June 1921,
(purchase 1985)

9. Folder Collier's magazine, illustrations for:
   frontispiece “Circe's Palace”, color  Jan. 25, 1908
   cover “The Palace Guards”, color  Dec. 12, 1908
   cover “The Prospector”, color  Feb. 4, 1911

10. Folder Collier's magazine, illustrations for:
    cover “The Three Shepherds”, color, cropped  Dec. 3, 1904
    cover, Father Time winding clock, one color  Jan. 7, 1905
    cover “Easter”, color  April 15, 1905
    cover “Spring”, color  May 6, 1905
    cover “Christmas Number”, color  Dec. 16, 1905
    cover, two characters in conversation, used in different colors for various issues -
    June 3 1905,
    July 8 1905,
    Mar. 4 1905,
    May 20. 1908

11. Folder
    Envelope A -  Country Life, “Fit for a King” (Fisk Tire advertisement), color
    Envelope B -  Harper's Bazaar, Easter”, color  April 1895 “

12. Folder Harper's Monthly, frame for photograph (line drawing)  April 1898,

13. Folder Ladies' Home Journal, cover “Air Castles”  Sept. 1904
    [also called “Bubbles”], color

14. Folder Life Magazine, illustrations for:
    cover (two men and Father Time)  Dec. 1, 1900
    cover (Three characters serving plum pudding)  Dec. 1, 1921
    (man in masquerade costume)  Oct. 19, 1922
    Literary Digest, (Fisk Tire advertisement)  May 11, 1918

15. Folder McClure's Monthly, illustrations for:
    cover and illustrations for “Rawhide”  Nov. 1904  (2 items)
    Photoreproduction of article “Rawhide”  Jan. 1905
    cover (allegorical figure with landscapes)  1925

16. Folder St. Nicholas Magazine illustration for “The Sandman”  1925

17. Folder, Saturday Evening Post, illustrations for:
    Edison Mazda advertisement  Sept. 20, 1924
as above, with store window background Dec. 27, 1924
as above, with additional figures Feb. 7, 1924
Broadmoor Hotel (Maxwell House advertisement) July 4, 1925
18. Folder, "Scribner's Magazine", illustration for:
   Envelope A -
   Its Walls were as of Jasper” Aug. 1897 “
cover Dec. 1897
   At an Amateur...” Nov. 1898 “
   Wagner's Ring...” Dec. 1898 “
cover April 1899
   Envelope B -
   The Duchess at Prayer” and “Play Up Piper Aug. 1900 “
   Phoebus on Halzaphon” Aug. 1901 “
cover, “The Turquoise Cup” Dec. 1901
   Envelope C -
   The Desert” Dec. 1902 “
   "A Venetian Night's Entertainment" Dec 1903
   Romance” July 1903 “
   The Vigil-at-arms” Dec. 1904 “
   Potpourri” Aug. 1905 “
   Envelope D -
   Old Romance” Aug. 1907 “
   The Errant Pan” Aug. 1910 “
   Make Believe” Aug. 1912 “
21. Folder, Youth's Companion Polly Put the Kettle On” Jan. 3, 1924 “
(advertisement for Jello) would appear to be different from Jello booklet in folder.
23. Arabian Nights prints

1. Heading and tailpieces for Colliers editorial page;
   pencil sketch showing human figures, architecture, flora, winged globe and cornucopia.
   (Parrish illus. front and back cover)
3. “Old King Cole” (framed)
4. Ink sketch of man w/hands in pockets, w/ top hat, moustache (framed)
5. “Collier's - the National Weekly” pencil & wash, 15½" × 20" (framed) for Collier's editorial
page, Signed on verso


7. “A rare chance! Don't Miss it” (framed) signed by Parrish. Pencil sketch of and prose re: Harry Thayer “world-renowned Merion drop kicker” [football]

8. Caricature: “DAVE” (framed) pen & ink

9. Caricature: man w/ cigarette & cane (framed) pen & ink; note: removed from frame and placed in Box 1, 9a.

to box 3

1. Seven Arts News - “Maxfield Parrish the most original illustrator of the 20th century” - adv, for book by Coy Ludwig.

2. J. Stephen Lawrence, Rare Books catalog w/ M. Parrish illus. for “The Adlake Camera” on front cover catalog 53


The majority of the letters in this collection (77) are from Lydia Parrish, a chronicler of African American folk music as well as the wife of artist Maxfield Parrish (from whom there are 21 letters). They write to Bertha Day later Bates. The letters cover a period of 60 years. They are chatty in style, full of news about the Parrish summer home in Cornish, NH and their residence in Windsor, VT and society in which they move; they are as well about family and appreciation of Bertha Bates work as an artist.

Bertha Day appears to have been a very close friend of both Lydia and Maxfield Parrish. The letters from both of them discuss at length their pleasure in seeing her. There is little reference to Maxfield (he signs himself primarily as Fred, though there are rarer occurrences of “Maxfield” and “F”) Parrish's work as an artist, and no mention of Lydia Parrish's work as a music chronicler.

Following is a selective finding aid, items chosen for highlight on the basis of content.

Note: usernote: “MP” = Maxfield Parrish This addition is in box 4 of Maxfield Parrish collection.

Letters of Maxfield and Lydia Parrish to Bertha C. Day later Bertha C.D. Bates, 1896-1951

Selected letters include:

1896

- LP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [mentions prizes won by July 27, 1896, MP for his work]

- “Fred” (MP) to BD. Windsor, Vt. [a “most inspiring time to paint”; is working on book covers and the like, Humpty Dumpty the latest of them] Oct. 24, 1896,

- LP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [MP working on cover for Christmas issue of Harpers Round Table] Nov. 2, 1896,

- LP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [negotiations by Scribner's & others for MP's work] March 9, 1896,

- LP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [ref. to work being done March 22, by MP with mention of Century & Scribner's and amount MP requires to work for former] 1898
- LP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [Dr. says MP has typhoid fever] Oct. 20, [18]98, 1899
- “Fred” (MP) to BD. Windsor, Vt. [menu art by MP to be exhibited by Soc. of Arts and Crafts of Boston] March 20, 1899,
- LAP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [MP has finished drawing for Knickerbocker New York] Sept. 6, [18]99, 1901
- LAP to BD. Saranac Lake, N.Y. [MP coughs less; is working on Dream Days] March 2, 1901,
- LAP to BD. Saranac Lake, N.Y. [MP is working on illustrations for Quiller-Couch story in Scribner's] March 27, 1901,
- LAP to BD. Windsor, Vt. [going to Grand Canyon and other points west for MP to do work for Century] Nov. 5, 1901, 1902
- LAP to BDB. Windsor, Vt. [they have had visits from several actors - Ethel Barrymore and writer Norman Hapgood] Sept. 25, 1902, 1904
- LAP to BDB. Windsor, Vt. [MP to work for a year for Collier's and produce 30 drawings] April 29, 1904,
- “Fred” (MP) to BDB. [birth of son Max] Aug. 15, [1906] 1911
- “Fred” (MP) to BDB. [birth of daughter Jean] June 28, [1911] 1914
- LAP to BDB. [trials of doing what MP wants and raising a family, MP “does not stand for suffrage very keenly”] Oct. 20, 1914
- LAP to BDB. St. Simon's Island [oblique ref. to LAP's work] May 8, 1951,