



Katharine Pyle Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

Acquisition Information

Purchased from Oak Knoll Books, 1996

Extent

2 linear feet

Contents

Correspondence, handwritten manuscripts, photographs, illustrations, tear sheets, original drawings

Access Restrictions

Unrestricted

Contact Information

Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives
Delaware Art Museum
2301 Kentmere Parkway
Wilmington, DE 19806
(302) 571-9590
hfslibrary@delart.org

Preferred Citation

Katharine Pyle Papers, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

Biography of Katharine Pyle

Born in Wilmington, the youngest child of the Pyle family, Katharine Pyle was encouraged by her brother, Howard, to pursue a career in writing and illustration. While still a child, her poem "The Piping Shepherd" was published in *Atlantic Monthly*. Howard Pyle asked her to contribute drawings and verses to his book *The Wonder Clock*, published in 1888.

Katharine Pyle studied art at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women and in her brother's illustration class at Drexel Institute. Two of her drawings were exhibited in the first exhibition of Pyle's School of Illustration at Drexel in 1897. While living in New York for four years, she wrote a play published by *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1896 and the book *The Counterpane Fairy*, published in 1898. During her career she wrote and illustrated about thirty books and illustrated a number of books by other authors, including Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* in 1923. In 1924 her serialized article "The Story of Delaware" appeared in the Wilmington newspaper, the *Sunday Morning Star*.

Many of her stories were drawn from fairy tales, ancient myths, nursery rhymes, and stories about animals. In 1900 a series of poems about young children, written by Katharine Pyle and illustrated by Sarah S. Stilwell, appeared in *Harper's Bazaar*. In 1902 she and Bertha Corson Day, a friend at Drexel, collaborated on a book of fairy tales, *Where the Wind Blows*; Katharine Pyle provided the text and Bertha Day the pictures.

In 1923 the editor of *Child Life* magazine expressed concern about two fairy tales that Katharine had submitted for publication. The editorial policy was to keep out "the horror element and the adult experience from *Child Life* stories as much as possible." Katharine argued that in traditional fairy tales evil always defeated itself and that in the end good always triumphed. However, the *Child Life* editor argued that "lurid picturization of the hideousness of evil is usually more impressed upon the child than is the great truth that good finally triumphs." However, she continued to re-tell and illustrate fairy tales and stories from Greek and Norse mythologies throughout her career.

Katharine Pyle was an intense, public-spirited person who pressed for change in the field of social reforms. Her deep concern for troubled young people led to her involvement in the Juvenile Court of Wilmington. As a champion of the underdog, she was responsive to anyone in need, often at her own expense. Her niece Ellen Pyle Lawrence has described her as "a brilliant and vital individual and a woman well ahead of her time." Though raised in a Quaker faith, she, like her brother, became an active member of the Swedenborgian Church.

Pyle relatives fondly recall her curious distinction of having one blue and one brown eye.

By Elizabeth H. Hawkes

Source: Elzea, Rowland and Elizabeth H. Hawkes, eds. *A Small School of Art: The Students of Howard Pyle*. Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1980.

Scope and Contents Note

This collection contains 20 books, 28 original manuscripts (mostly handwritten with a few typescripts), 4 photographs (3 portraits, one work of art), 8 pieces of correspondence addressed to Pyle, and 4 pieces of original artwork.

Many of the manuscripts relate to her book *Tales from Norse Mythology* (Lippincott, 1930) and are annotated and bear revisions. The photographs include two large attributed portraits, one photograph of a work of art, and one image of Pyle in her studio. The original works of art include a hand drawn illustration for *Black Beauty* (Dodd, Mead, 1923, plate facing p. 238), and three other similarly drawn illustrations for other unidentified books. One of these depicting mice is damaged. In all this is a large and interesting collection. Also included are twenty books either written or illustrated (sometimes both) by Katharine Pyle over the period 1898 to 1932. Two of the books are signed by the author. The books have been cataloged and added to the Katharine Pyle Library.

Organization of the Papers

Series I. Correspondence

Series II. Illustrations and Tear Sheets

Series III. Manuscripts, Books

Series IV. Manuscripts, Poetry

Series V. Manuscripts, Stories

Series VI. Photographs

Series VII. Miscellaneous

Series VIII. Original and Oversize Illustrations

Description of the Papers

Series I. Correspondence

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Correspondence from Katharine Pyle
 - Katharine Pyle to Mr. Bok, September 21, 1896
 - Katharine Pyle to Gertrude, July 3, 1919
 - Katharine Pyle to Dear Sir, undated
- 2 Correspondence to Katharine Pyle
 - Joanne to Katharine Pyle, March 19, 1929
 - Joanne to Katharine Pyle, April 3, 1929
 - Saul (?) from the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston to KP, February 28, 1930
 - Gertrude to Katharine Pyle, no date
 - Love note from unknown sender, no date
- 3 Correspondence, miscellaneous
 - Christmas card from Mr. and Mrs. DeWitt Clinton Frazier, no date
 - Illustrated letter, unknown recipient and writer, March 20, 1929

Series II. Illustrations

(see also oversize box)

Folder

- 4 Magazine illustrations
 - St. Nicholas*, 1902, p. 880
 - St. Nicholas*, 1905, January pp. 238-9
- 5 *Tales from Norse Mythology*
 - "The Giant Ymir is Cast into Ginnungagap"
 - "Loki clips away Sif's golden hair"
 - "Frey Mounts the Height of Hlidskialf"

Series III. Manuscripts, Books, *Tales from Norse Mythology*

Folder

- 6 Index and "Thor the Thunderer" (3 items)
- 7 Chapter 1 "In the Beginning"(3 items)
- 8 Chapter 2 "How the World Was Made" (5 items)
- 9 Chapter 3 "Sun, Moon Stars and Day and Night" (7 items)
- 10 Chapter 4 "Sif's Golden Hair" (16 items)
- 11 Chapter 5 "How a Wall Was Built Around Asgard" (10 items)
- 12 Chapter 6 "How the Gods Made War and Peace With One Another" (6 items)
- 13 Chapter 7 "Frey Wins a Hide and Loses a Sword" (14 items)
- 14 Chapter 8 "Skadi Chooses a Husband for Herself" (8 items)
- 15 Chapter 11 "The Story of Brisingamen" (How Freya Won a Necklace for Herself) (9 items)
- 16 Chapter 12 "Loki Tries to Steal a Necklace" (5 items)
- 17 Chapter 13 "The Binding of the Fenris-Wolf" (How the Fenris Wolf Was Bound) (8 items)
- 18 Chapter 14 "Freya's Gift" (6 items)
- 19 Chapter 17 "Thor Brings a Kettle from Jotunheim" (11 items)
- 20 Chapter 18 "How Odin Brought the Magic Mead to Asgard" (How the Magic Mead Was Brought to Asgard) (15 items)
- 21 Chapter 19 "Thor Loses and Finds His Hammer" (11 items)
- 22 Chapter 20 "Thor Visits Jotunheim" (How Thor Visited Jotunheim) (36 items)
- 23 Chapter 21 "The Battles with Hrungrir" (14 items)
- 24 Chapter 23 "The One Who Would Not Weep" (One There was Who Did Not Weep for Balder) (8 items)
- 25 Chapter 24 "The Punishment of Loki" (7 items)

Series IV. Manuscripts, Poetry

Folder

26 "Virgin's Cradle Song" (4 leaves)

27 Miscellaneous

"Bringing in the Christmas Tree"

"In the Train"

"Winter Mornings"

"The Snow Storm"

"In the School-Room"

"Evening Play"

"By the Stream"

"The Summer Sky"

"On the Stairs"

"Recess-Time"

"Cloud Shadows"

"A Day in Spring"

"Afternoon"

"Summer Rain"

"In the Garden" (2 leaves)

"In the Hay-Mow"

"Three Little Mice"

"Dicky was so excited that he fell down the back stairs." (story on 3 leaves; on verso of leaves 1 and 2 are other manuscripts of "The Snow Storm")

Series V. Manuscripts, Stories

Folder

28 "The Bees' Wedding" (15 leaves)

29 "Curious Losts & Founds" (12 leaves)

30 "Johnny & Janey" (11 leaves)

31 "The Story of Heracles" (23 leaves)

32 "Uncle Pie's Hair" (10 leaves)

33 "Well Known Superstitions" (8 leaves)

Series VI. Photographs

Folder

34 Photographs (5 items)

Photograph of Katharine Pyle in Howard Pyle's studio, inscription: "I am Your Valentine"

Cyanotype of woman wearing witch hat and cape, possibly a model

Photograph of a fire screen

Photograph of Katharine Pyle (with glasses)

Photograph of Katharine Pyle (glasses removed)

Series VII. Miscellaneous

Folder

35 Clippings, exhibition brochure

36 *Watteau Dairymaids: A Pastoral Interlude* by Katharine West (33 leaves)

37 Miscellaneous items – Red Cross arm band; photograph of work by John Millais; minutes from "Gen. Meeting" July 1917; "Frontispiece to Her Notebook"

Box 2

Series VIII. Original and Oversize Illustrations

Folder

1 Two mice (ink drawing)

2 Tomahawk (ink drawing)

3 "Joe Green recognizes Black Beauty" (ink drawing)

4 Unidentified (ink drawing)

5 Horses (print)