



Newport Historical Society

Guide to the Margaret Hayden Rector papers regarding the Belmont family , 1971 – 1995

Newport Historical Society
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Descriptive Summary

<i>Collection Identifier</i>	MS.097
<i>Title</i>	Margaret Hayden Rector papers regarding the Belmont family
<i>Creator</i>	Belmont, August IV, 1909-1995 Rector, Margaret Hayden
<i>Date</i>	1971 – 1995
<i>Extent</i>	1 box in manuscript collection 2 folders in photo collection
<i>Abstract</i>	This collection contains photographs and letters written on behalf of and by the Belmont family. The majority of letters within this collection are written by August Belmont IV addressed to Margaret Hayden Rector.

Historical Note

August Belmont IV:

August Belmont IV (1909-1995) was the great grandson to August Belmont (1816-1890), the successful banker who entered the profession working for the office of the Rothschilds, in Frankfurt Germany, then established August Belmont & Company on Wall Street. His great grandfather was also an active politician within the Democratic party of the time, developed a great love for horse racing, and served as the president of the American Jockey club for a number of years.

His family is also connected to Newport, Rhode Island, because his great uncle, Oliver H.P. Belmont (1858-1908), married Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, a Newport socialite. Together they lived in Belcourt on Bellevue Avenue, which after Alva's passing in 1933, was left to August Belmont IV.

August Belmont IV's grandfather, August Belmont, Jr. (1863-1924) was a pioneer of horse racing. He formed the Westchester Racing Association in 1895 and was the founder of Belmont Park which opened on May 4, 1905. Continuing his family's philanthropic legacy, August Belmont IV became the public figure for the family after the death of this grandfather in 1924. He became the chairman of the Jockey Club, an honorary trustee of Presbyterian Hospital, a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History and a chairman of the American Kennel Club.

Maintaining family tradition, August Belmont IV entered the world of banking and became a partner in the investment firm of Dillion, Read & Company, serving as the company's president until his retirement in 1971. He too was a passionate horse racer and his colt, Caveat, achieved great fame under renowned trainer Woody Stephens.

In the final years of his life August Belmont IV suffered from a series of health complications. A broken hip was the beginning of his deterioration. Soon after recovering from this injury Belmont experienced a series of mini strokes resulting in loss of vision in 1995. At age 88, Belmont had a stroke and died in Easton, Maryland.

Margaret Hayden Rector:

Margaret Hayden Rector was an American playwright and author. She was born in Azusa, California, on May 23, 1916. In 1992 her book titled: *Alva, That Vanderbilt-Belmont Woman* was published by The Dutch Island Press in Maine. Rector died at age 86 on November 9, 2002.

Sources:

- *Newport Mercury*, Dec. 13, 1924, *Newport Historical Society Obituary Collection*.
- Newport Historical Society Clipping Files, "Number 2, Perry Belmont Buys Belcourt."
- Dictionary of American Biography, Barsotti to Brazer, Vol. II, pages 169-170.
- The *Newport Daily News*, Monday, August 31, 1992.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of author Margaret Hayden Rector's photographs, correspondence, and research pertaining to the history of the Belmont family. In 1992 Rector published the book, *Alva, That Vanderbilt-Belmont Woman*. The book is a creative biography, written in first person, on the life of Alva Vanderbilt Belmont. Rector believes her book is Alva's "story as she might have told it." The publication of this book put Rector in contact with August Belmont IV, a descendant of Alva. The two began corresponding, and wrote to one another from 1992 until August's death in 1995. The photograph series consists of photographs and slides taken by and of Rector, while traveling in Newport and attending black tie affairs. This series also includes many photos taken circa 1994 during "A Weekend of Coaching," a Preservation Society of Newport County event. The correspondence series mainly consists of letters, primarily written by August Belmont IV to Rector, between the years of 1992-1995. However, there are a small number of letters written by Mrs. Belmont, Eleanor Robson Belmont, mother to August Belmont IV, which describe the Belmont family's involvement in the construction of the Cape Cod Canal. The letters cover a wide range of topics including family relationships, the history of the Belmont and Vanderbilt family, health concerns, literature, horse racing, financial burdens, and philanthropy. The research series consists of photo negatives, hand-written notes, and 1993 horse racing magazines. Highlights include a *Newport Daily News* newspaper clipping that explains how Rector's interest and passion for researching Alva began.

Organization

The collection is organized into three series. Photographs, Correspondence, and Research.

The photograph series is stored separately in the Newport Historical Society's photo collection.

The correspondence series is arranged chronologically by date of year. Original envelopes are placed in front of original letters. Photographs within the correspondence series are stored separately in the Newport Historical Society's photo collection.

Photographs within the research series are stored separately within the Newport Historical Society's photo collection.

Subject Access

<i>People</i>	Belmont, Alva, 1853-1933
	Belmont, August IV, 1909-1995
	Belmont, Eleanor Robson, 1879-1979
	Rector, Margaret Hayden
<i>Organizations</i>	Belmont Park (Elmont, N.Y.)
<i>Subjects</i>	Newport family
	Social life and customs
	Horse trainers
	Racetracks (Horse racing)
	Vanderbilt family
	Belmont Park (Elmont, N.Y.)
	Race horses--Breeding--Kentucky--History--19th century
	Cape Cod Canal (Mass.)
<i>Form/Genre</i>	Marble House (Newport, R.I.)
	correspondence
	photographs
	clippings (information artifacts)

Access and Use

<i>Physical Access</i>	This collection is housed on site at the Newport Historical Society. Researchers can be seen by appointment during operating hours.
<i>Reproduction & Use</i>	NHS allows monitored personal photography of manuscript and artifact

collections for research use only, with some limitations and restrictions. Fees apply. See our Personal Photography Policy and Agreement for more details.

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Administrative Information

<i>Processor</i>	Processed by Mollie Surprenant, August 10 2017.
<i>Descriptive Rules</i>	Finding aid based on <i>Describing Archives: A Content Standard</i> (DACS)
<i>Accession Info</i>	The Margaret Hayden Rector papers regarding the Belmont family were a gift of the Newport Public Library in 2017.

Accession Number: 2017.012

Inventory

Series 01: Photographs, circa 1990 – 1995

This series contains photographs and slides of Newport during the 1990s. Many of the photos capture Margaret Hayden Rectors tourist experience while visiting New England. There are images of black tie affairs, Newport Preservation Society Events, Newport mansions, and family photographs. Within this file there are also photographs of Blenheim

Palace, which was owned by the 9th Duke of Marlborough who married Alva Vanderbilt's daughter Consuelo on November 6, 1895. This file also contains photographs of Rector's lectures on Alva Vanderbilt Belmont. Photos are stored separately within the Newport Historical Society's photograph collection located in MS Photo Box 1 .

File 01.001: Photographs, circa 1990 – 1994

This file consists of photographs taken by and of Rector while traveling in Newport and attending black tie affairs. This file also includes many photos taken circa 1992 during a Newport's Preservation Society event, "A Weekend of Coaching." There are also a number of images of prominent mansions in Newport, and photographs of Blenheim Palace located in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, England.

Series 02: Correspondence, 1972 – 1995

The correspondence series includes a large quantity of letters written from August Belmont VI to Margaret Hayden Rector. The letters address the history of the Belmont family, horse racing, construction of the Cape Cod Canal, philanthropic work, health concerns, the Belcourt house, New England winters, summer gardens, employment experiences, literature, and family relationships. Along with the letters in this series there are a number of academic articles written on the Belmont family.

The correspondence series is arranged chronologically by date. Original envelopes are placed in front of original letters.

File 02.001: Belmont letters, articles, and other material, 1971 – 1992

This file discusses the philanthropic work of the Belmont family. Highlights include a letter written by August Belmont IV regarding the Belmont Chapel at Island Cemetery. He wrote that he would transfer funds "necessary for a major overhaul of the building and deposit funds necessary to insure its maintenance and protection once it is renovated." This folder also includes articles from authors who have written on the Belmont family and sent him a copy of their work. Also within this folder is a letter written in 1972, from the Director of Civil Works, Major General J. W. Morris written to August's mother, Eleanor Robson Belmont, explaining that a visitor center is to be constructed that will display the "efforts of the Canal Company, led by Mr. Belmont, in making the sea level canal a reality." Another highlight from this folder is a letter written by Eleanor Robson Belmont to Robert F. Froehlke, Secretary of the Army in 1972, that reveals the complications her husband, August Belmont IV's father, encountered during the construction of the Cape Cod

Canal. The letter discusses in detail the breaking of machinery, tidal difficulties, and diminishing funds until the project was completed and officially opened on July 29, 1914. Letters are arranged chronologically by date. Original envelopes are placed in front of original letters.

File 02.002: Margaret Hayden Rector correspondence with August Belmont IV, 1992 – 1993

Letters within this file discuss family relationships, Belmont and Vanderbilt family history and burials, horse racing and financial burdens. Highlights include a letter written on October 26, 1992 by August explaining that he never met Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, and the fact that she left him \$100,000, Belcourt and some Bailey's Beach bath houses after her death in 1933 was very much a surprise to him. The letter reveals that he was in no position to inherit Belcourt as "the depression was on and the market for such a place did not readily appear." His uncle, Perry Belmont, bid at the foreclosure sale and sent August \$500 taking the title to the property. A large majority of the letters within this folder discuss August's horses being trained at Taylor Mill in Western Maryland then being sent to Camden, South Carolina. There is also a letter regarding the 1993 Kentucky Derby. Letters are arranged chronologically by date. Original envelopes are placed in front of original letters.

File 02.003: Margaret Hayden Rector correspondence with August Belmont IV, 1994

Letters within this file highlight the close relationship which developed between Rector and Belmont. The majority of the letters within this folder discuss Rector's winter visit in 1994. On December 23, 1994, Belmont wrote, "When we started communicating, I had no idea that I would become so involved with your fascinating life and would be allowed to grow so much by simply getting acquainted." Letters are arranged chronologically by date. Original envelopes are placed in front of original letters.

File 02.004: Margaret Hayden Rector correspondence with August Belmont IV, 1995

This file contains many letters addressing the health concerns of August Belmont IV and his New York Times obituary. In a letter written on June 28, 1995, Barbara Cherry, secretary of August Belmont, explained his recent health decline. Due to a series of "mini-strokes" August's vision was impaired and he was no longer able to read to or watch television. Letters are arranged chronologically by date. Original envelopes are placed in front of original letters.

File 03.001: Margaret Hayden Rector research materials on Belmont and Vanderbilt family, 1992

The majority of the folder contains handwritten notes. Within this folder there is a copy of the Newport Daily News, August 31, 1992, article titled "Calif. playwright's new book gives voice to Newport socialite." In this article Rector discusses how she developed an interest in Alva Vanderbilt-Belmont.

File 03.002: Clippings, 1993

This folder contains two horse racing magazines. The USAir Magazine: Summer in Saratoga, August 1993, and a Club & Sports Society, October 1993 issue.

File 03.003: Margaret Hayden Rector publicity photos

This file contains black and white portraits of Rector.