JOHN S. TARKINGTON
PAPERS, 1844-1923 (BULK 1910–1923)

Collection Information
Biographical Sketch
Scope and Content Note
Series List
Cataloging Information

Processed by

Charles Latham
22 May 1991
9 October 1992
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Manuscript Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 5 manuscript boxes, 5 oversize folders, 4 bound volumes; 83 photographs, 194 post cards, 1 post card album, and 1 tintype.

COLLECTION DATES: 1844–1923 bulk 1910–1923

PROVENANCE: Mrs. Booth Tarkington, 4270 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, Ind.,
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Stevenson Tarkington (1832-1923) was born in Centerville, Indiana, the son of the Rev. Joseph Tarkington, a Methodist preacher (who served as pastor at Lawrenceburgh, Centerville, Brookville, Vincennes, and Greensburg) and Maria Slawson (Slauson).

John Tarkington graduated from Indiana Asbury University (later DePauw) in 1852, and earned an A. M. degree three years later. He moved to Indianapolis in 1852, served as private secretary to Governor Joseph A. Wright (1853-1857), then studied law in the offices of Albert G. Porter (later Governor). He set up his own law practice in 1855, and two years later married Elizabeth Booth, whose brother Newton Booth was then U.S. senator from California. They had two children, the author (Newton) Booth Tarkington (1869-1946), and a daughter, Mary Booth (nicknamed Haute—1861-1937), who married Ovid Butler Jameson.

Tarkington won a contested election for the Indiana General Assembly in 1863. Having served eight days as a private in one Indiana regiment in 1863, he helped to organize the 132nd Indiana Volunteers the next year, and served in it as captain and provost until the end of the Civil War.

Briefly after the war Tarkington practiced law in partnership with Oliver P. Morton and Elijah B. Martindale. In 1870 he was elected judge of the Fifth Circuit Court, serving Marion and Hancock Counties, and held the post for two years. In the later 1870s he practiced law alone. He retired early from his legal practice, and ran the safety deposit section of the Fletcher and Sharpe Bank. His first wife died in 1909, and a year later he married Mrs. Linda H. Schulz. He had a considerable literary bent, and did quite a bit of traveling. In his later years, under the compound pen-name John Steventon (apparently to avoid confusion with his famous son), he wrote and published two collections of essays, The Hermit of Capri (1910) and The Auto-Orphan (1913).

Sources:
Materials in collection
Indiana Biographical Series, Vol. 1, pp. 73-75, Vol. 4 pp. 234-235
Who Was Who in America, Vol. I
Dunn, Indiana and Indianans, Vol. 3, p. 1232
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains correspondence, telegrams, legal papers, skits, typescripts and manuscripts of essays, printed material, post cards, and photographs, from John S. Tarkington, his father, his second wife, and others.

**Series 1** contains correspondence, personal papers, and photographs of John S. Tarkington. Two large bodies of material here are papers, by Tarkington and others, from his years at Indiana Asbury University, 1847-1851; and second, papers from his service in the Civil War, mainly reports and rosters. Photographs stored in Visual Collections include two, possibly three portraits of John S. Tarkington at various ages, and a copy photograph of an outdoor Civil War group portrait.

**Series 2** includes correspondence of Tarkington's second wife, mainly letters of condolence at his death in 1923; diaries and notebooks from 1856 to 1926; and a ledger for the years 1893-1899.

**Series 3 and 4** contain Tarkington's literary output. In **Series 3** are successive revisions of his book *The Hermit of Capri*, beginning with manuscript and ending with the printed book. **Series 4** contains copies of essays written by Tarkington; **Series 5** contains the same kinds of materials written by others. Among the latter is a short account by his father, Joseph Tarkington, about the founding of a German Methodist church in Lawrenceburgh. This series also contains portraits, mostly unidentified, and a view of an unidentified house.

**Series 6** contains two scrapbooks, mainly of clippings, belonging to Tarkington's daughter Haute.

**Series 7**, “Postals and Photographs: Europe” derives its name from a label found with the oversize photographs during reprocessing. Of note in this series are photographs from Capri, including photographs of Villa Narcissus made by Giorgio Sommer of Naples (1834-1914) and the Anglo–Saxon Company of Capri. Two photographs (Box 8) with the hand-written captions “View from top of Villa Narcissus, home of artist, looking West” and “Moorish Courtyard of Villa Narcissus / Sarin [?] (French Painter) and Coleman” suggest that Villa Narcissus could have been the home of Italian artist Enrico Coleman (1846-1911). One of the scenic photograph of a bay appears in Tarkington’s *The Hermit of Capri*.

A deteriorated post card album containing 181 French post cards (127 views and 54 portraits) necessitated the removal the post cards from the album. The post cards have been retained in their original order, including loose cards not inserted into pre-slotted pages (Box 6). The loose post cards all have the notation “M273” on their versos. A hand-written itinerary of a multi-day trip is on the inside cover of the album, so the album was retained. A set of oversized post cards (Box 5, Folder 3), two oversize photographs of Château de Chenonceaux (OVA manuscript photographs), and an unidentified château may relate to this trip.

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Civil War papers: Appointment to Captain; 132nd Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, 1864; Loyal Legion award, 1894; Sons of the Revolution Certificate, 1911  
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[copy photograph of an outdoor Civil War group portrait]  
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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:  http://157.91.92.2/

2. Click on the "Traditional Search" icon.

3. Click on the "Call Number" radio button.

4. Search for the collection by its call number, using the letter or letters designation and four digits (in this case, M 0273, OM 0156, BV 1740-1743).

5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.