

Collection #
P 0919

**THE VIGILANTES GROUP PORTRAIT,
2 NOVEMBER 1921**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 photograph folder

COLLECTION
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NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Vigilantes was a group of writers, artists, and others that was founded in November 1916 to promote patriotic sentiment and advocate for preparedness for war. Among its founding members were Hermann Hagedorn (biographer of Theodore Roosevelt and others, poet, and novelist), Porter Emerson Browne (playwright), Julian Street (journalist and author), and Charles Hanson Towne (author and editor). The group included more than four hundred members, including Hoosier writers Booth Tarkington, George Ade, Meredith Nicholson, and Isobel Osbourne Field.

Other members included former President Theodore Roosevelt, actors Douglas Fairbanks (Sr.) and Tyrone Power (Sr.), Mary Roberts Rinehart (mystery novelist who also wrote about the experiences of soldiers in WWI), Don Marquis (humorist, journalist, and author), children's author Kate Douglas Wiggin, writer Charles J. Rosebault, Wallace Irwin (humor writer and lyricist), Laetitia McDonald Irwin (novelist and short story writer), Charles Dana Gibson (illustrator who created the Gibson Girl), William Allen White (journalist, editor, and author), Irvin S. Cobb (humorist, editor, and columnist), Henry "Hy" Mayer (editorial cartoonist, illustrator, and animator), illustrator Louis Fancher, Wallace Morgan (newspaper artist), James Swinnerton (cartoonist and landscape painter), writer Gertrude Horn Atherton, author Ellis Parker Butler, poet Theodosia Garrison, mystery novelist Natalie Sumner Lincoln, Albert Bushnell Hart (historian, writer, and editor), Ralph Barton Perry (philosopher and writer), author Gertrude Lynch, playwright Augustus Thomas, writer Fannie Hurst, Thornton W. Burgess (conservationist and writer), Harold T. Pulsifer (magazine editor), journalist William Hard, poet Clinton Scollard, and illustrator James Montgomery Flagg (best known for his 1917 Uncle Sam Army recruitment poster).

The Vigilantes opened its headquarters at 110 West Thirty-fourth Street in New York City on 17 March 1917. The organization's platform was as follows:

- 1) To do their part in arousing the country to a realization of the importance of the problems confronting the American people.
- 2) To aid in awakening and cultivating in the youth of the country a sense of public service and an intelligent interest in citizenship and national problems.
- 3) To work vigorously for mental, moral, and physical preparedness.
- 4) To work with special vigor for universal military training and service as a basic principle of American democracy.

The efforts of the Vigilantes continued after World War I. In 1921, U.S. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes invited nine nations to Washington, DC to what was known as the Washington Naval Conference to discuss naval disarmament and ways to relieve growing tensions in the Far East. The United Kingdom, Japan, France, and Italy were invited to take part in talks on reducing naval capacity, while Belgium, China, Portugal, and the Netherlands were invited to join discussions on the situation in East Asia. Also known as the Conference on the Limitation of Armament, the sessions were held from 12 November 1921 through 6 February 1922.

The Vigilantes sent a committee to meet with President Warren G. Harding on 2 November 1921 to offer the services of the Vigilantes to educate the public on the subject. The committee was headed by Mary Roberts Rinehart and included Booth Tarkington, Wallace

Irwin, Laetitia McDonald Irwin, Charles Hanson Towne, and Charles J. Rosebault. They urged that the arms conference be open to the press, believing that the previous Paris conference had failed due to secrecy.

Sources:

“Author ‘Vigilantes’ Will Assist Arms Conference.” *New York Tribune*, 3 November 1921, p. 6.

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Office of The Historian. “The Washington Naval Conference, 1921–1922” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/naval-conference> Accessed 22 December 2025.

Sedgwick, Henry Dwight (of The Vigilantes). “Vigilantes Will Become National: Unique Society Plans to Teach Patriotism to the Whole American People.” *The Detroit Free Press*, 19 September 1917, p. 4.

“The Vigilantes: A Non-Partisan Organization of Authors, Artists and Others For Patriotic Purposes.” *The Ogden Standard–Examiner* (Utah), 27 March 1917, p. 4.’

“‘The Vigilantes’ Open Preparedness Campaign.” *New York Tribune*, 18 March 1917, p. 7.

“‘Vigilantes’ Offer Services: War Writers Tell Harding of Work for Arms Parley.” *The Washington Post*, 3 November 1921, p. 4.

“Writers for Army Bill: ‘Vigilantes’ to Appeal to Nation for Universal Service.” *The New York Times*, 18 March 1917, p. E 3.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one black-and-white photograph of six members of The Vigilantes, an organization composed largely of writers and artists during World War I, who committed themselves to promoting America's best interests. The photograph is a group portrait of the six-member committee from the Vigilantes taken after meeting with President Warren G. Harding on 2 November 1921 to discuss the Conference on the Limitation of Armament.

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Photograph of six members of The Vigilantes including Charles Hanson Towne, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Charles J. Rosebault, Laetitia McDonald Irwin, Booth Tarkington, and Wallace Irwin. They were photographed on 2 November 1921 after calling on President Warren G. Harding to offer their services for the cause of peace and urging that the arms conference taking place be open to the press.

CONTAINER

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