

MARTIN EGAN PAPERS
Archives of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York

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BRIEF COLLECTION INFORMATION

Collection title and dates

Martin Egan Papers, 1898-1935

Creator

Martin Egan, 1872-1938

Accession number

ARC 1222

Quantity/extent

89 flip-top boxes (ca. 54 linear feet); 4 card file boxes; several bound volumes transferred to bound series; several objects, photographs, and oversize items (including a bronze bust of Egan) housed separately.

Collection overview

A brief overview of this collection is available in the Morgan's online catalog, CORSAIR. The collection-level record includes hyperlinks to names and subjects represented in the collection; descriptions of related material may be found by following these links.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Processing information

The collection was organized and processed in 1994 by volunteer John Rothman, a consultant in information and archival services and former Director of the Archives of The New York Times. Introductory information written by Dr. Rothman was edited by Christine Nelson, 2004. The card catalog that accompanies the collection was based on a card catalog maintained by Egan's secretary at J. P. Morgan & Co., Katheryn Ewing. Cards from Ewing's original catalog were retained if possible, but descriptive data, cross-references and notes were added. There were many cards for which no corresponding folders could be found; it is presumed that these folders were either not released by the firm after Egan's death or were destroyed at some time, either before he died or after the files had been transferred to his widow; cards for these missing folders are filed at the end.

Provenance

From 1917 on, virtually all of Egan's correspondence, even about trivial personal matters, was handled at his office at 23 Wall Street by his secretary, Katheryn A. Ewing. There is internal evidence that papers of his first wife, Eleanor Franklin Egan, were added to those files after her death in January, 1925. (It is not clear how and when Egan's own pre-1917 papers were integrated into the collection.) Some time after Egan's death all the so-called personal files were released by the firm to Egan's widow, Nell, who asked Katheryn Ewing to store them in her

garage. In the mid-1950s, when Nell Egan conceived the idea of having Egan's biography written, she asked her good friend George V. Gallencamp and his friend Richard P. Wunder to get the files from the Ewing garage and bring them to her apartment. There the files were worked over by the three of them, the prospective biographers and at least one scholarly researcher, until Nell Egan's death. In her will, she bequeathed the whole collection to Gallencamp, who moved it to his home in Vermont; and when he died, Wunder became the sole owner. The biographers' drafts, notes and related papers had been added earlier by Nell Egan, and a small group of her papers were added by Gallencamp and Wunder. In 1982, Wunder donated the collection to the Morgan Library.

Accessibility

The collection is open for research by appointment. The following page provides information on conducting research in the Morgan's Reading Room:

<http://www.themorgan.org/research/reading.asp>

Preferred citation

Martin Egan Papers: Box #, Folder #. Archives of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

Repository

The Pierpont Morgan Library
225 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016-3405
(212) 685-0008

DETAILED COLLECTION INFORMATION

Biographical note

A journalist and businessman, Egan was born in Martinez, California, on June 18, 1872, and was admitted to the California bar in 1898. He worked for the Associated Press in New York, London, Tokyo, Peking and Manila; served as a correspondent during Spanish-American War, Philippine Insurrection, Boxer uprising and Russo-Japanese War; and edited the Manila Times from 1908 to 1913, during which period he became friends with several Governors General of the Philippines, including William Howard Taft, W. Cameron Forbes and Leonard Wood. In 1914 he joined the staff of J. P. Morgan & Co., New York, and for two decades was in charge of the firm's public relations (though he held no formal title) and served as the principal assistant to several senior partners, notably Thomas Lamont, Henry Davison, Dwight Morrow, and Edward Stettinius. He was the personal assistant to H. P. Davison, chairman, American Red Cross War Council, 1917, and General John J. Pershing's top assistant for public relations and propaganda, 1918. He married Eleanor Franklin in Yokohama, Japan, in 1905; after her death in 1925 he married Cornelia Cousins in New York in 1927. Egan died on December 7, 1938.

Scope and content

The collection is comprised of letters and memoranda from 1915-35 (with some significant papers dating back to 1898) as well as photographs, reports, newspaper clippings, and pamphlets that document Egan's wide acquaintance in the fields of journalism and public relations, banking, literature, the arts, and the armed services. The collection documents Egan's career as a journalist, including his coverage of the defeat of the Russian fleet by the Japanese; his direction of the

Manila Times from 1908-1913; his work during the first World War as Henry Davison's assistant in the Red Cross War Council and as General Pershing's civilian aide; and his work as a public relations specialist at J. P. Morgan & Co., where he was a valued adviser, spokesman, confidant, speech writer, and guardian of the firm's and the partners' public image.

In addition to a vast amount of social correspondence, the collection includes letters from a wide variety of correspondents on such topics as U.S. relations with Britain and France, Germany and Italy, China and Japan; initial reactions to Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution; the ups and downs of the financial world culminating in the Great Depression; political developments of the 1920s including the Presidential campaigns; Prohibition and at its demise; the key role of clubs and luxury travel in Egan's social circle; and the growth of radio and the movies.

About the business of J. P. Morgan & Co. there are few revelations. Egan's papers deal with known facts about the firm's loans to Britain and France to buy war materiel, its role in the Liberty Loans, the Bankers' Consortium to China, the loan to Cuba, the loan to Japan for the Manchurian railway, and diverse other projects discussed from the point of view of the man who provided the news releases, countered criticism and unfavorable publicity, and in some cases helped to make necessary arrangements. The papers provide some details about the missions of several senior partners: Davison and Stettinius during the World War; Lamont and Morrow, and J. P. Morgan himself, at the conferences on disarmament and war debts; Lamont in Mexico, China and Japan; Morrow in Cuba; again, from the point of view of the assistant who supplied background data, made arrangements, handled (or forestalled) publicity, and provided liaison with the office and the family at home.

The papers provide a view of the aura at 23 Wall Street, the intimate personal relationships between Egan (and evidently others on his level in the hierarchy) and the senior partners and their families. The papers convey a feeling of "extended family," of trust and interdependence, of loyalty and support and respect both up the line and down. Poignant examples can be found especially in the correspondence with Davison, Lamont and his son, Morrow, and Stettinius. Although Egan was not in a powerful, let alone critical, position at the firm, the record he left of his association with the House of Morgan offers a view not available in the histories written from a detached and more distant perspective.

The primary significance of the collection is as a resource of biographical material. Egan knew everybody, it seems, and his graciousness in dealing with people, whether he was their host or their guest, granting favors or seeking or acknowledging them, was legendary and endeared him to all. His friends were legion and (as a report to Cass Canfield about the prospects for an Egan biography has it) "they came from every field: newspapermen, actors, writers, generals, politicians, financiers, statesmen, artists." He counseled William Howard Taft about seeking the appointment as Chief Justice, celebrated with Herbert Hoover when he became Secretary of Commerce and when he was elected President, and commiserated with him in his defeat in 1932. He had a leading role in promoting Pershing for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1920; and they were such close friends that Pershing served as best man at Egan's wedding.

He knew, and corresponded with, bank and industry executives and publishers throughout the world. They exchanged information about business propositions and job seekers. Egan furnished character references, and he gave them and their relatives and friends introductions to foreign officials and to U.S. envoys abroad. He had sources for tickets to the theater and to football games and other sporting events, and was able to obtain staterooms on ocean liners even when

they were fully booked. He belonged to dozens of clubs and organizations, formal and informal, and entertained generously and often.

When Egan died, newspapers throughout the U.S., and many abroad, carried his obituary; hundreds of people attended his funeral and sent letters of condolence. A letter from J. P. Morgan Jr. read, "The death of my old friend Martin is a very real loss, and during all the long years of association I do not remember any time when his intelligence, good principles and sound judgment were at fault. We shall all miss him, and those who knew him best will miss him the most."

Papers were removed from the files in three or four stages. First, during his lifetime, Egan frequently sent reports, letters and memoranda on to his associates at the firm, and often circulated letters from friends and relatives to other friends and relatives, and he rarely kept copies or got the originals back. Second, someone at the firm may have removed some pages from some files before releasing them after Egan's death (there is no hard evidence for this, however). Third, Richard Wunder reported that Nell Egan went through the files with abandon and tore out and destroyed any pages that displeased her. Finally, Keith Torbert removed a score or more pages while working on his biography of Egan, and attached them to his typescript; and though he left a list of the pages taken and the parts of his typescript where he had attached them, they could not be located.

The collection also includes the following additions:

I: Egan Biography projects. Correspondence about efforts to prepare a biography of Egan, notes for this project, drafts and typescripts, 1956 to the late 1960s.

II: Eleanor Egan's writings. Writings and notebooks of Egan's first wife, Eleanor Franklin Egan, her photographs and personal papers, and letters addressed to her, mostly ca. 1900-1924.

III: Cornelia Egan papers. A few letters addressed to Egan's second wife, Cornelia ("Nell") Cousins Egan, after Egan's death, along with few photographs and other papers.

IV: Residue. This file includes papers left by Mr. Rothman after processing the collection marked "Would Kill"—in other words, not worth retaining.

Arrangement note

Folders are arranged alphabetically by personal name, subject, or company name, and chronologically within each folder. Addenda are filed at the end.

Related material

A painted portrait of Egan by Joseph Cummings Chase was given to the Library by Mr. Wunder in 1997 (ptg 1997.92). [Descriptions](#) of the painting and additional materials related to Martin Egan are available in CORSAIR.

INVENTORY

See card catalog.