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Richard C. Plater Collection
Collection Number: 1490 THL

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS: Collection is open to all researchers.

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PROCESSING INFORMATION: Initial processing undertaken in 2008. Last updated by Buffy Knappenberger in June 2025.

EXTENT: 0.46 linear feet

DATE: 1900-2017, bulk 1900-1955

EXISTENCE AND LOCATION OF COPIES: Photographs in this collection have been digitized and are available to view online through the Past Perfect online database: <http://handley.pastperfectonline.com/>

SCOPE AND CONTENT: This collection is comprised of correspondence, scrapbooks, speeches, notes, recipes, receipts, ledgers, and other papers and artifacts belonging to the estates of Edward Gay Butler and his nephew Richard Cheatham Plater.

The majority of the materials are gardening journals and correspondence on horticultural matters written by Edward Gay Butler while he lived in Clarke County, Virginia. The materials reflect Butler's keen interest in horticulture while he lived at Annefield, near Boyce, from approximately 1900 to 1923, and later Play Gardens, a house located near Millwood. The collection also includes a Bird Diary from Annefield, dated 1914, written by Butler's wife, Emily.

Both Butler and Plater served in the American Red Cross. The collection includes notebooks and a lapel pin from Butler's service during World War I.

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL: Richard Cheatham Plater was born on May 9, 1908 in Nashville, Tennessee. On his mother's side he is a descendant of the Custis, Lewis, and Washington families. Plater married Eleanor Leake of Massachusetts and the couple had two sons Ormonde and David. After graduating from Williams College, Massachusetts, Plater worked in various fields before moving to Thibodaux, Louisiana to manage a family run sugar-cane plantation in 1940. Plater took on a number of civic responsibilities including working as a Parish Director for the American Red Cross during World War II.

In 1953, Plater inherited a property known as Play Gardens in Clarke County, Virginia from his uncle, Edward Gay Butler. The Plater family spent an increasing amount of time at Play Gardens and operated a horticulture business. Plater also came to be involved in several local history projects. He guided much of the restoration of the grist mill once owned by the Revolutionary War General Daniel Morgan and was active in the Clarke

County Historical Association. Later in life Plater spent most of his time in Louisiana. He died on Christmas Day, 2004, at his home in Thibodaux at 96 years of age.

Edward Gay Butler is also a descendent of the Lewis and Custis families, as well as the Butler family of Pennsylvania. His great-grandmother was Eleanor Parke Custis (1779-1852), a step-granddaughter of George Washington and Martha Custis Washington, and the wife of Lawrence Lewis (1767-1839). "Nelly" Custis lived at Audley in Clarke County. Her daughter, Frances Parke Lewis (1799-1875), married Edward George Washington Butler (1800-1888). He was a son of Lieutenant Edward Butler, an officer in the Revolutionary War. Butler also became an Army officer, serving in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). Butler also had several military assignments to Louisiana in the 1820s as the United States expanded its territory to the Southwest. As a result of these assignments Butler decided to purchase land to build a sugar plantation in Iberville Parish, Louisiana.

Edward Gay Butler was born in Iberville Parish, Louisiana on April 18, 1872 to Major Lawrence Lewis Butler, C.S.A. and Mary Susan Butler (née Gay). He was educated at Harvard and later he married Emily Mansfield of St. Louis. In 1900 Edward and his wife visited Clarke County, Virginia. During their stay they decided to purchase Annefield, a plantation house near Boyce. The Butlers resided at Annefield for over two decades before selling it and purchasing Play Gardens. Butler was a horticulturalist and involved with the Garden Club of Virginia. He also served with the American Red Cross during World War I, spending two years in England. Butler died on February 8, 1952, just six months after his wife, Emily, who died on August 26, 1952.

Edward Gay Butler and Richard C. Plater are buried in the Old Chapel Cemetery, Clarke County, VA.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Stuart E. Brown, et al, *Biographical and Genealogical Record of Persons Buried at Old Chapel: Annals of Clarke County, Virginia*, Volume II (1983), pp. 96, 136-137; Obituary, "Edward Gay Butler Dies in Hospital," *Winchester Evening Star*, February 9, 1953; Obituary of Richard Cheatham Plater, Jr., 1908-2004, *The Winchester Star*, January 6, 2005.

IMMEDIATE SOURCE OF ACQUISITION: Gift of multiple donors.

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX 1

Annefield Farms, 1 leaf, printed

Butler Correspondence—between Mr. and Mrs. Edward Gay Butler, 1931-32, and no date, 16 leaves, manuscript; 3 envelopes, manuscript; 3 postcards

Butler, Edward Gay—Speech and notes for special occasions, 4 leaves, typescript; 7 leaves, manuscript; 1 envelope

Butler, Edward G.—American National Red Cross certificate, passport and notes, 1918-1919, 3 leaves, manuscript on printed form; 1 leaf, manuscript; 1 leaf news article (photocopy)

Bird feeding —General information, 8 leaves, printed; 2 leaves, typescript (copy)

Bird Feeding Station—patented by Edward Gay Butler, 1950, 2 leaves, scale drawing; 4 printed cards; 1 page, manuscript; 1 award ribbon; 1 postcard

Boxwood information, 15 pages, printed; 4 booklets, printed; 1 spiral notebook, manuscript

Clarke County tax receipts –1901 to 1919, 19 leaves, manuscript on printed form

Garden Club of Virginia, 1930-1944, 8 leaves, typescript; 6 leaves, printed; 3 leaves, news articles (photocopy)

Iris information, 18 leaves, typescript; 1 envelope with manuscript notes

Obituaries, 1932-1937, 5 leaves, news articles (photocopy); 1 leaf, typescript; 1 page, printed

Play Gardens–Certificates and official papers, 1928-1983, 12 leaves, typescript on printed form; 6 leaves, typescript; 10 leaves, manuscript on printed form; 3 leaves, manuscript; 1 page, manuscript on printed form

Play Gardens–Correspondence and invoices, 1929-1980, 38 leaves, typescript; 12 pages, manuscript; 6 leaves, typescript on printed form

Play Gardens–Notes on nursery stock, 1928-1940, printed material on plants and equipment, 49 leaves, manuscript; 18 leaves, typescript; 12 booklets, printed; 2 cards with manuscript notes; 5 pages, printed

Recipes, 1 leaf, manuscript; 1 leaf, typescript

St. Louis property correspondence and title, 5 leaves, typescript; 1 leaf, typescript (copy)

Plater, David, “Genealogies of Main Characters” from *The Butlers of Iberville Parish, Louisiana: Dunboyne Plantation in the 1800s* (LSU Press, 2015).

BOX 2

Red Cross lapel pin, “U.S.”

Metal eyeglass case

Card case, 1 item

Notebooks and Ledgers (small)

American National Red Cross Notes, 1918-1919

American National Red Cross and Garden Notes, 1919

Notes on Farming and Conditions, 1907

Book Inventory, no date

Butler, Edward Gay–Etched bookplate and copies, coat of arms, metal and printed material

Notebooks and Ledgers (large)

Bird Diary–Annefield, 1914, “E.M.B.,” 1 item, bound, manuscript

Plantings at Annefield, 1911, 1 item, bound, manuscript

"L.L. Butler Atty. in Fact 8 Tutor"--accounts, plants, etc. plus legal notes from 1892 on p. 190, 255 pages, manuscript

University Note Book, Narcissus, 1 item, 19 pages, manuscript

"Edward G. Butler"--scrapbook contains photographs and clippings regarding plants and gardens, c.1931

"Iris" Play Gardens, 1936, 1 item, 2 ring binder, manuscript

"L.L. Butler"--1954 boxwood prices, 1955 peonies charts and prices, 1 item, bound, manuscript

Iris catalogues, 1929-1934, in one binder, 14 items, printed; notes, manuscript

Play Garden scrapbook, 1928-1953, 1 item, manuscript; with printed photographs and news clippings

"Robinson's Book of Modern Conundrums," printed 1903 by James M. Robinson, paperbound

PHOTOGRAPHS

- [1490-001] Tintype of Edward J. Gay, Emily M. Butler, and Edward Gay Butler, circa 1899.
- [1490-002] Captain Edward Gay Butler and others standing by an official Red Cross automobile on a tour of inspection. The car is in front of Red Cross headquarters in Southampton, England. Butler served with the American Red Cross, circa May 1918-April 1919.
- [1490-003] Captain Edward Gay Butler with group of Red Cross officers visiting Colonel Herbert W. Swalm, the American Consul at Southampton, England. L to r: Capt. Edward G. Butler (farmer from Annefield, VA), Major Foster H. Rockwell (Washington, DC), Mrs. Swalm, Major Joseph M. Hartfield (New York), Colonel Swalm (Civil War veteran), unidentified sixth person, circa 1918-1919.
- [1490-004] Edward G. and Emily M. Butler in outdoor setting, 1906.
- [1490-005] Edward G. and Emily M. Butler in outdoor setting, 1927.
- [1490-006] Emily M. Butler with cook and black rooster, 1904.
- [1490-007] Butler cook with black rooster, 1904.
- [1490-008] Edward G. Butler with "Veteran", a 3-year-old Thoroughbred hackney who won five blue ribbons in single driving class, 1900.
- [1490-009] Emily M. Butler in a field with four black children and a white cat, 1900.
- [1490-010] Group candid photograph of staff of American Embarkation Office in Southampton, England. Persons identified as Lt. Durst (or Dunst?) from Winchester, VA; Lt. French, from Montana; Lt. Hare, from Montana; Lt. M.C. Farmer, "on [the] Mauritania"; Lt. Ahern, adjutant to Lt. Henry; Lt. [later Capt.] John Henry, American Embarkation Officer, from Portland, OR; Capt. George F. Niebling, Jr., Woodbury, NJ (succeeded Henry as Am. Embarkation Officer), January 1, 1919.
- [1490-011] Group candid photograph of staff of American Embarkation Office in Southampton, England. Persons identified as Lt. Durst (or Dunst?) from Winchester, VA; Lt. French, from Montana; Lt. Hare, from Montana; Lt. M.C. Farmer, "on [the] Mauritania"; Lt. Ahern, adjutant to Lt. Henry; Lt. [later Capt.] John Henry, American Embarkation Officer, from Portland, OR; Capt. George F. Niebling, Jr., Woodbury, NJ (succeeded Henry as Am. Embarkation Officer), January 1, 1919.
- [1490-012] The "Olympic" homeward bound from Southampton, carrying returning troops and Edward Gay Butler, May 1919.
- [1490-013] Crowd on pier 37, Southampton, waving goodbye to the "Olympic," May 1919.
- [1490-014] "Downtown" White Post, circa 1900.

- [1490-015] Edward G. Butler with dog "Dan," 1905.
- [1490-016] Edward G. Butler in a field, undated.
- [1490-017] Edward G. Butler, 1917.
- [1490-018] Edward G. Butler as a Lt. in the American Red Cross. Head and shoulders, 1918.
- [1490-019] Edward G. Butler as a Lt. in the American Red Cross. Seated, with cigarette, 1918.
- [1490-020] Bird feeding station, patented by Edward Gay Butler, of Boyce, VA, which sold for two dollars postpaid, undated.
- [1490-021] Bird feeding station, patented by Edward Gay Butler, of Boyce, VA, which sold for two dollars postpaid, undated.
- [1490-022] Emily M. Butler in the rose garden at "Annefield," 1907.
- [1490-023] Emily M. Butler outside a stone house, circa 1900s.
- [1490-024] Emily M. Butler in a shrubby area, with roses, circa early half of 20th century.
- [1490-025] Edward G. and Emily M. Butler in back yard, circa early half of 20th century.
- [1490-026] Edward G. and Emily M. Butler with the R. C. Platers, drinking tea on the porch at "Annefield," 1910.
- [1490-027] Edward G. Butler outside family greenhouse, undated.
- [1490-028] Emily M. Butler inside family greenhouse, undated.
- [1490-029] The Butler family greenhouse, from the outside, undated.
- [1490-030] Apple Blossom. Al Hodge as Captain Video waving to crowd from silver spaceship, 1955.