Clara Louise Negley Flinn
Papers and Photographs

Clara Louise Negley (1877-1966) was born into a privileged Pittsburgh family during the last quarter of the 19th century. She had ancestry that included (on her paternal side) Jacob Negley, founder of East Liberty, and Barbara Winebiddle, whose father owned large tracts of land in what is now Pittsburgh’s East End. On her maternal side were Mr. and Mrs. George A. Berry, who donated their large mansion on Fifth Avenue to the Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham University) for its campus.

Surrounded by family and friends at her Fifth Avenue residence, Clara had a busy social life as a young woman, which is evidenced in the many diaries, photograph albums, and scrapbooks now in the possession of the Archives at the Heinz History Center. These scrapbooks, filled with invitations to parties, plays, engagement celebrations, and weddings, read like a “Who’s Who” of Pittsburgh’s Gilded Age with surnames such as Dilworth, Thaw, Darlington, Lockhart, Westinghouse, and Carnegie packed within.

Pictured here is a photograph from the collection depicting Clara as a young woman with one of her very dear friends,
The honour of your presence is requested at a Mid-Winter Ball to be given in the Assembly Room of the Pittsburgh Club on Friday evening, January the seventh, at nine o'clock.

Committee
Mrs. Lowell Mrs. Laughton Mrs. Darlington
Mrs. H. R. Raw Miss J. R. Dilworth Mrs. R. V. Massler

Best, Mrs. John Grier Holmes request the pleasure of Miss Negley's company at a musical on Tuesday evening, January the fourteenth at half-past seven o'clock.
Margaret Thaw (later Mrs. George L. Carnegie). Over the years Clara's friendship with Margaret remained close. An invitation to the Thaw-Carnegie wedding, which took place at Shadyside Presbyterian Church, is also in her papers. In 1900, Clara married George Hamilton Flinn (1875-1929), son of State Senator William Flinn, a powerhouse in Allegheny County Republican politics for decades, at the same church. The Flinns later vacationed with their three children—Louise, George, Jr., and Lawrence—at the Carnegie's mansion “Plum Orchard,” located on the Dungeness Estate at Cumberland Island, Georgia. Images of these family vacations are also preserved.

One of the 14 albums included in the collection has an intricately carved wooden cover with a wildlife scene depicting deer walking through a forest. The archives staff has removed the photographs because of preservation concerns, but the album has been preserved.

The Clara Louise Negley Flinn Papers and Photographs provide researchers with a window into the world of an active, privileged late 19th-century woman. This collection was donated to the History Center by Clara's granddaughter-in-law, Kendall M. Flinn Hetterly, and her great-grandchildren Avery Flinn Brighton, Larsen Hamilton Flinn, and Mason Stanfield Flinn.

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