

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Poynter Family  
Added Papers, 1887-1992**

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**Size of Collection:**

1 cubic foot

**Locator number:**

Mss. A P892a

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**Biographical Note**

Wiley Taul Poynter

Dr. Wiley Taul Poynter (1839-1896) was the son of Thomas Poynter (1812-1901) and Angeline Northcutt Taul (1817-1881).

On November 24, 1857, Wiley married Pattie N. Poston (1838-1866), with whom he had three children: Henry Poston Poynter (1860-1927), Anna Poynter, and Thomas Fletcher Poynter (1866-1927)—there is evidence in the collection that Thomas Poynter was editor of the *Shelby Sentinel* in Shelbyville (see back of letter to Horace Poynter dated October 15, 1894). Eleven years after Pattie's death, on September 13, 1877, Wiley married Clara Davis Martin (1846-1937), with whom he had three children: Horace Martin Poynter, Juliet Jameson Poynter, and Harriet Rockwell Poynter.

In 1879, Wiley and Clara bought Science Hill Female Academy in Shelbyville, Kentucky, from Julia Tevis. Wiley was a teacher and principal of the school until his death in 1896, whereupon Clara took over as principal until her death in 1937.

Clara Davis Martin Poynter

Clara Davis Martin (1846-1937) was born in Bourbon County, Kentucky. According to the recollections of Harriet Poynter found in folder 44 of this collection, Clara's mother was Juliet Jameson, a graduate of one of the few schools for girls operating at the time, who came from a family that moved to Ohio from Kentucky because of its disapproval of slavery. Clara's father, however, did enslave people. Clara reportedly came to detest slavery so much that when she came of age, she took all the enslaved people under her power to Ohio, where she liberated them and helped them find permanent jobs at the homes of friends and family.

Clara attended Wesleyan College, from which she graduated in 1863, then continued her education in Cincinnati studying music. For a few years she taught in Bourbon County, Kentucky, then she gave private piano lessons in Paris, Kentucky.

In 1877, Clara married Wiley Taul Poynter and had three children. In 1879, she and Wiley bought Science Hill Female Academy, which they taught at and ran together until Wiley's death in 1896. The school was in heavy debt when Clara assumed the responsibilities of principal, a position she kept until her death. Clara was active in the suffrage and temperance movements and was a lifelong advocate for women's social and political equality.

### Horace Martin Poynter

Horace Martin Poynter (1879-1953) was born in Shelbyville to Clara and Wiley T. Poynter. He was educated at the Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, graduated from Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1896, and graduated from Yale in 1900. In 1902, he was appointed to the Phillips faculty, where he taught classics, specializing in Latin. He retired in 1945 after 43 years and lived the rest of his life on his and his wife's farm in Durham, New Hampshire, where he died in 1953.

On July 14, 1909, Horace married Elsie Frances Pitkin (1884-1974), who founded of the League of Women Voters in Andover, Massachusetts, and with whom he had four children:

- David Poynter (1915-1917)
  - David died in infancy from unknown causes (see collection correspondence).
- Horace Martin Poynter, Jr. (1918-2004)
  - Horace, Jr., became an engineer at Writhe Aeronautical Corporation in Woodridge, New Jersey. On August 15, 1942, he married Elizabeth "Betty" Varney, with whom he had two children: Nancy and Betsy. Nancy later married Malcolm Sandberg of Durham, New Hampshire, and had a daughter, Betsy Sandberg Garrity of Bristol, Rhode Island (see folders 45 and 47).
- Edward Pitkin Poynter (1920-1943)
  - Edward became a fighter pilot and died in combat in World War II in Sitka, Alaska, in 1943, aged 23 (see collection correspondence and Folder 3).
- Emily Ruth Poynter (1923-1992)
  - Emily Ruth attended Science Hill from 1936 until its closure in 1939, graduated from Abbot Academy in Andover, attended Pomona College in California, and graduated from Brown University in 1945. She earned her master's in social work at Simmons University and served as a psychiatric social worker at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia for 20 years. For the last 23 years of her life, she lived in Shelbyville, first with her aunts Harriet and Juliet on the Science Hill grounds, then with someone named Frances Shipman (see obit in folder 45).

### Juliet Jameson Poynter

Juliet Jameson Poynter (1881-1974) was born on February 19, 1881, in Shelbyville to Clara and Wiley T. Poynter and studied at Science Hill for her primary and high school years. She entered Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, in 1900 and graduated with a B.A. in 1905. She majored in mathematics and chemistry and also took courses in physics and zoology. During her junior year, Juliet was secretary of the Student Government Association, and during her senior

year she was president. She was also captain of the crew team. After college, she returned home to Science Hill and taught math and science. She took over as principal of Science Hill when her mother died in 1937 and ran the school until 1939, when it closed due to economic hardship during the Great Depression. After Science Hill was shut down, she lived with her sister Harriet on the school's grounds until her death in 1974.

### Harriet Rockwell Poynter

Harriet Rockwell Poynter (1884-1982) was born on January 20, 1884, in Shelbyville to Clara and Wiley T. Poynter. She lived at Science Hill throughout her childhood and adolescence and studied there for her primary and high school years. She studied piano, voice, and violin and became a locally renowned performing violinist. She taught music at Science Hill until its closure in 1939 and continued living on the school's grounds—sleeping in the same room and on the same bed in which she was born—for the rest of her life. The collection includes several handwritten accounts of Harriet's early life, written when she was 92 years old, circa 1976. Harriet died in 1982, aged 98.

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**Scope and Content Note**

This collection consists of correspondence and papers related to the Poynter family of Shelbyville, Kentucky. The bulk of the correspondence is between Clara Poynter, Horace Poynter, Elsie Poynter, Juliet Poynter, and Harriet Poynter, and it mostly concerns news about education, careers, health, childrearing, etc. Some correspondence is also to or from friends or acquaintances. Most letters from Clara Poynter throughout the collection mention the operations and events going on at Science Hill Female Academy.

Folders 1-4 contain mostly letters to Horace from his parents and siblings during his time at school in Tennessee.

Folders 5-18 (to around 1911) contain mostly letters to Juliet from her mother, siblings, and friends. Letters to Juliet between 1903 and 1905 mention her exploits and accomplishments at Wellesley College.

Folders 18-29 contain mostly letters dated from the 1910s to the 1940s from Horace and Elsie to Clara, Juliet, and Harriet, sharing news about life in Andover, Massachusetts.

Folder 30 contains the final dated letters in the collection, most of which after Juliet and Harriet's deaths are to or from Emily Ruth Poynter.

Folders 35-40 contain miscellaneous material related to Science Hill, including report cards, student writing assignments, commencement material, publications, and property indentures.

Folder 44 contains several handwritten accounts of Harriet Poynter's early life, written when she was 92 years old, circa 1976. The folder also includes biographical sketches of Clara and Juliet Poynter.

Related Collections:

Poynter Family papers, 1895-1910 [Mss. A P892]

Science Hill Female Academy papers, 1825-1975 [Mss. BI S416]

Science Hill Female Academy photograph collection [021PC54]

Shelby County Public Library Collection on Science Hill Female Academy, 1852-2004 [Mss. BI S544]

Tevis, Julia Ann, 1799-1880 papers [Mss. A T353]

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**Folder List**

Box 1

- Folder 1: Correspondence, 1887-1894
- Folder 2: Correspondence, Jan.-Feb. 1895
- Folder 3: Correspondence, March-Oct. 1895
- Folder 4: Correspondence, 1896-1900
- Folder 5: Correspondence, Feb.-Oct. 1903
- Folder 6: Correspondence, Nov.-Dec. 1903
- Folder 7: Correspondence, Jan.-March 1904
- Folder 8: Correspondence, April 1904
- Folder 9: Correspondence, 1-9 May 1904
- Folder 10: Correspondence, 10-28 May 1904
- Folder 11: Correspondence, June-Nov. 1904
- Folder 12: Correspondence, 1-10 Dec. 1904
- Folder 13: Correspondence, 11-30 Dec. 1904
- Folder 14: Correspondence, Jan.-Feb. 1905
- Folder 15: Correspondence, March-April 1905
- Folder 16: Correspondence, May-Sept. 1905
- Folder 17: Correspondence, 1906-1907
- Folder 18: Correspondence, 1908-1913
- Folder 19: Correspondence, 1914
- Folder 20: Correspondence, Feb.-July 1915
- Folder 21: Correspondence, Sept.-Dec. 1915
- Folder 22: Correspondence, 1916
- Folder 23: Correspondence, 1918-1919
- Folder 24: Correspondence, 1920-1924
- Folder 25: Correspondence, 1925-1926
- Folder 26: Correspondence, 1927-1929
- Folder 27: Correspondence, 1930-1936
- Folder 28: Correspondence, 1940-1947
- Folder 29: Correspondence, 1948-1949
- Folder 30: Correspondence, 1950-1976
- Folder 31: Correspondence, undated (pt. 1)
- Folder 32: Correspondence, undated (pt. 2)
- Folder 33: Blank postcards, empty envelopes, etc.

Folder 34: Horace Jr. and Edward Poynter childhood drawings and schoolwork, 1925-1926 and undated

Folder 35: Science Hill report cards, Juliet and Harriet Poynter, 1894-1901

Folder 36: Student writing assignments, Juliet and Harriet Poynter, undated

Folder 37: Science Hill Junior Class Excursion Ticket, signed Clara Poynter, 1900

Folder 38: Science Hill commencement material, 1899-1925

Folder 39: Science Hill miscellaneous pamphlets and publications, 1901-1936 and undated

Folder 40: Indentures for Science Hill property/surrounding land and other land documents, 1879-1904

Folder 41: Card for completion of Christian Leadership teacher's training course, Harriet Poynter, 1943

Folder 42: Cookbooks and recipes belonging to Harriet, Betty, and Clara Poynter, 1940-1962 and undated

Folder 43: Wellesley College material, 1904-1905 and undated

Folder 44: Poynter family histories and recollections, ca. 1976 and undated

Folder 45: Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, 1966-1992 and undated

Folder 46: Anna M. Richardson inventory of estate papers for properties in Ohio, 1933

Folder 47: Miscellaneous material, 1896-1953 and undated

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**Subject Headings**

African Americans – Kentucky.  
Asian Americans.  
Automobiles.  
Bee culture.  
Christmas.  
Cooking – Kentucky – Shelbyville.  
Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.  
Holidays.  
Household employees – United States – History – 20th century.  
Immigrants – United States – History – 20th century.  
Jameson family.  
Kentucky – Race relations.  
Language and languages – Study and teaching.  
League of Women Voters of Andover, Massachusetts.  
Music – Instruction and study.  
Music – Kentucky – Shelbyville.  
Phillips Academy.  
Poynter family.  
Poynter, Clara Davis Martin, 1846-1937.  
Poynter, Elsie Frances Pitkin, 1884-1974.  
Poynter, Emily Ruth, 1923-1992.  
Poynter, Harriet Rockwell, 1884-1982.  
Poynter, Horace Martin, 1879-1953.  
Poynter, Juliet Jameson, 1881-1974.  
Poynter, Wiley Taul, 1839-1896.  
Private schools – Business management.  
Psychiatric social work.  
Recipes – Kentucky – Shelbyville.  
School management and organization.  
Science Hill Female Academy (Shelbyville, Ky.)  
Second language acquisition.  
Sports for women.  
Temperance.  
Tevis family.



Unrequited love.  
Valentine's Day.  
Violin – Performance.  
Webb School (Bell Buckle, Tenn.)  
Wellesley College – Rowing.  
Wellesley College.  
Women – Education.  
Women – Suffrage.  
Women athletes.  
Women rowers.  
Women's Rights.  
World War, 1914-1918.  
World War, 1939-1945.