



Sophie du Pont May papers 2402

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Manuscripts and Archives

PO Box 3630

Wilmington, Delaware 19807

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Summary Information

Repository:	Manuscripts and Archives
Creator:	May, Sophie du Pont, 1900-2001
Title:	Sophie du Pont May papers
ID:	2402
Date [inclusive]:	1892-1998
Date [bulk]:	1960-1995
Physical Description:	4 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	Some material in Spanish.
Abstract:	Irene "Sophie" Sophie du Pont May (1900-2001) was a churchwoman, a philanthropist, and a descendant of Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours (1739-1817) who founded the E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company with his son Eleuthère Irène du Pont (1771-1834) in 1802. The E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company is a chemical company more commonly referred to as the DuPont company. The collection consists of Sophie du Pont May's family correspondence and financial correspondence as well as correspondence between her father Irénée du Pont (1876-1963) and his older sister Louisa d'Andelot du Pont Copeland (1868-1926).

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Biographical Note

Irene "Sophie" Sophie du Pont May (1900-2001) was a churchwoman, a philanthropist, and a descendant of Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours (1739-1817) who founded the E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company with his son Eleuthère Irène du Pont (1771-1834) in 1802. The E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company is a chemical company more commonly referred to as the DuPont company.

Sophie du Pont May was born on December 2, 1900 to Irénée du Pont, Sr. (1876-1963), and Irene Sophie du Pont (1877-1961). She was the oldest of nine children. Sophie du Pont May's father, Irénée du Pont was a chemical engineer and worked for E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. for sixty years. He served as company vice president from 1914 to 1919, company president from 1919 to 1926, and served on the board of directors until his retirement in 1958. Irénée du Pont also served on the finance committee and board of directors at General Motors from 1921 to 1924.

Sophie du Pont May attended Vassar College and graduated in 1924. On April 18, 1925 Sophie du Pont married Ernest Nugent May (1901-1985). The couple had four children, Ernest Nugent Jr.(1926-1995), Irénée du Pont (1928-2017), Thomas Henry (1933-), and John Eric (1935-2004), and eight grandchildren.

She was an active member of the Cathedral Church of St. John. In 1949, she was the first woman in the history of the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware to be elected vestry.

May made charitable donations to Vassar College, the Republican Party, Heritage Foundation, National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty, as well as humanitarian and aid groups such as the Red Cross and United Way.

She founded a retirement facility near Hockessin, Delaware and provided financial support for some residents to remain after their financial means were exhausted. She also sponsored students at the Wilmington Friends School in Wilmington, Delaware.

Sophie du Pont May died April 29, 2001.

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Scope and Content

The collection consists of Sophie du Pont May's family correspondence and financial correspondence as well as correspondence between Irénée du Pont (1876-1963) and his older sister Louisa d'Andelot du Pont Copeland, (1868-1926).

Sophie du Pont May series is arranged into two subseries: Personal correspondence and Financial correspondence.

The personal correspondence subseries documents various aspects of her family life, including notes between May her sisters, children, cousins, nieces and nephews, and grandchildren, centering on holiday notes and cards. One of the larger sections of family correspondence is between May and her cousin Pierre Samuel du Pont (1935-) (Pete) during his 1988 presidential campaign. The correspondence includes Pierre du Pont requesting campaign donations updates from the campaign trail, newspaper articles, and a number of speeches.

Other family letters include updates from cousin Richard Cutts Rust (1940-), who married Mom Luang Visumitra Pramoj, a Thai heiress, and Robert Barnett Flint, Jr. (1940-), regarding his life as part of the United States Antarctic Research Program.

May corresponded with her Vassar classmates and attended the 50th, 55th, and 60th reunions. The Vassar correspondence includes guest lists, programs, itineraries, donations, luncheons, and college updates.

The financial correspondence subseries deals with the contentious settlement of her father's estate. Irénée du Pont had few outstanding debts and left his estate in good shape. To settle his estate he named three executors, his son Irénée du Pont Jr., (1920-) and sons-in-law Ernest May, and Crawford H. Greenwalt

(1902-1993). The three executors struggled to reach unanimous decisions and often went with a majority vote. Ernest May was frequently the dissenting voice and was forced to accept majority decisions during the settlement process. Ernest May's concerns and disagreements are featured in the collection throughout correspondence with Sophie du Pont May, as well as copies of legal filings and agreements that were made by her husband.

The debate over the merger of DuPont and the Christiania Securities Company was another source of contention between the Mays and other family members and is included in the collection.

Also included trusts established for their nephews Colgate Whitehead Darden, III (1930-) and Pierre Samuel du Pont Darden (1933-1959). In addition to these trusts, Sophie du Pont May administered her mother's trust.

In addition, the subseries describes May's interest in philanthropy. May granted a pension to Gomez family and other former employees of the du Pont Cuban estate "Xanadu" who fled to Florida after Fidel Castro took power. The Mays kept in contact with Cuban Bishop Ervine Swift and exchanged correspondence about Swift's church. The collection includes a handmade booklet titled "The Cuban Mission." Additional philanthropic efforts include sponsoring students at the Wilmington Friends School and paying for the hospice care of a distant cousin, Dorothy Straub.

The subseries documents a number of charities and political groups to which May donated from 1972 through 1995. Organizations receiving money included the United Way, Red Cross, PBS, the Heritage Foundation, the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty (NEPL), High Frontier, the Republican Party, Congressman Ron Paul, Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, as well as a number of church groups and conservative charities. Oliver North accomplices Carl "Spitz" Channell and Richard R. Miller both wrote to Sophie du Pont May to thank her for donations to NEPL. Miller also included a letter proclaiming his innocence. The Hokkaido International School, provided her with regular updates of the program's progress.

Sophie du Pont May owned large tracts of farm land in Delaware and Pennsylvania. The collection has a number of folders devoted to the management of Brandenburg and Pierce farms, as well as land at Granogue. The papers include maps of the land, contracts, insurance, receipts, correspondence, and the sale of timber, livestock, and wheat.

In her later years, May resided at the Stonegates Retirement Community in Greenville, Delaware. Financial records pertaining to her condominium at Stonegates are included in the collection.

This series consists of the correspondence of Irénée du Pont (1876-1963) with his older sister Louisa d'Andelot du Pont Copeland (1868-1926) and covers a broad range of topics including Irénée du Pont's time at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, personal health, and family updates from 1882 through 1898.

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Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Provenance

Gift of Irénée du Pont May

Access Restrictions

Some records less than twenty-five years are closed.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Charitable uses, trusts, and foundations
- Philanthropists
- Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)
- Campaign funds
- Decedents' estates
- Correspondence.
- Financial statements
- Copeland, Louisa d'A du Pont (Louisa d'Andelot du Pont), 1868-1926

- May, Ernest N. (Ernest Nugent), 1900-1985
- Du Pont, Irénée, 1876-1963
- Du Pont family

Collection Inventory

Sophie du Pont May

Scope and Contents

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Personal Correspondence

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Title/Description	Instances
Arts	box 1
Cuban Refugees, 1961-1969/1989-1998	box 1
du Pont, Francis I., (1926-) (cousin), 1988	box 1
du Pont Pierre S., (1935-) (cousin), 1985-1997	box 1
Family letters, 1965-1991	box 1
Flint, Rob, (nephew), 1963-1995	box 1
Gomez Family, 1969-1998	box 1
Hagley, (Eleutherian Mills Historical Library), 1960-1969	box 1
Hayward, Pierre, 1971-1972	box 1
Hokkaido International School, 1978-1989	box 1
Hulse, Bishop Hiram Richard, 1935	box 2
Longwood Gardens, 1974-1975	box 2
May, Ernest (husband), 1937	box 2
May, Virginia, 1974-1986	box 2
May Family Meetings, 1971	box 2
Miscellaneous correspondence, 1985-1995	

	box 2
Rust, Dick (nephew), 1965-1985	box 2
Shoumatoff, 1982-1992	box 2
Swift, Bishop Ervine, 1953-1962	box 2
Trip journals, 1968-1973-1975	box 2
Vassar College, 1958-1991	box 2
Zaharko, Joe, 1942-1946	box 2

Financial Correspondence

Scope and Content

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Title/Description	Instances
Allan J. Henry Co., 1953-1945	

	box 2
AT&T, 1984	box 2
The Baldwin school	box 2
Craig, John, 1985-1986	box 2
Christiana Securities, 1972-1977	box 2
Donations, 1972-1995	box 3
Easement, 1980-1989	box 3
Estate Settlement, 1965	box 3
Farm Management, 1964-1984	box 3
Gifts to Heirs, 1963	box 3
Granogue Affairs, 1963-1987	box 3
Household Inventory, 1974-1977	box 3
Land Affairs, 1963-1964	box 3
Mill Creek Nurseries, 1960	box 4
Paintings, 1984-1997	box 4
Pets, 1985-1992	box 4
Reid, Scotia, 1963-1972	box 4
Rehoboth Cottage, 1965	box 4
Rugs, 1968	box 4
Straub, A.A., 1970	box 4
Straub, Dorothy, 1990-1991	box 4
Stonegates, 1982-1994	box 4
Trust agreements, 1937-1938-1984	box 4
Will, I. Sophie du Pont May, 1983	box 4
Wilmington Country Club, 1985-1997	box 4
Wilmington Friends School, 1987-1992	box 4
Wilmington Trust Company Safe deposit box inventory, 1986-1987	box 4

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Scope and Content

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Title/Description	Instances
Louisa d'Andelot du Pont Copeland, 1892-1898	box 4

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