

Archives & Manuscript Collections
National Sporting Library
Middleburg, VA

**Alexander Henry Higginson
Scrapbooks
1899-1926**

Name: **Higginson, Alexander Henry (1876-1958)** **MC0012**

Materials: Scrapbooks

Dates: 1899-1926

Volume: 6 cubic feet

Donation: Gift of Thomas Marston, 1978 and 1979

Usage: Unless otherwise stated by NSL staff, these records are open for research without restrictions.

Biographical Note

Alexander Henry Higginson was born on April 2, 1876, the son of prominent Bostonians Major Henry Lee and Ida Agassiz Higginson. A businessman, Henry Lee was a patron of the arts and education in Boston: he donated the land and money for Harvard University's Soldier Field and the student union. He was best known for the establishment and lifelong patronage of the Boston Symphony. His wife, Ida, was the daughter of famed biologist Jean Louis Agassiz, professor of Natural History at Harvard. Being born into such a family afforded young Alexander many opportunities not enjoyed by many. He received his early education from private tutors because he often misbehaved at school and was often asked to leave. After graduating from the school of John Hopkinson of Boston in 1894, Higginson followed in his father's footsteps and entered Harvard. He graduated in 1898, having studied mostly science and history in an attempt to become an ornithologist. A specimen-collecting stint for the government in Columbia Falls, Montana in November 1898 quickly erased that idea from his mind.

Higginson returned to Massachusetts and settled into the life of a country gentleman at his farm in Lincoln. His ability to do so was due wholly to the efforts of his father, who recognized in the young man an ardor for the sporting life of leisure and little inclination for business. As such, it was Henry Lee Higginson who purchased the farm in Lincoln and provided his son with enough funds to begin his own kennels and stables; this level of support would continue even

after the elder man's death, when Higginson's mother supplemented his income.

Having been given the opportunity to pursue his penchant for foxhunting on a full-time basis, Higginson established his Middlesex Hounds in 1899; the hunt was named for the hunt country traversed by the hounds, Middlesex Meadows, acreage which Higginson would later own by 1906. He served as MFH of Middlesex for nearly twenty years, ending his service only when he dissolved the hunt in 1919. During this tenure, the Middlesex Hunt developed a reputation as one of the best in the country, although this was not uncontested. In 1905, after having taken up an argument in favor of English foxhounds with fellow MFH Harry Worcester Smith, Higginson and the Middlesex Hounds competed against Smith's Grafton Hounds in the Great Hound Match. The match, a two-week trial of hunting in the Piedmont Valley of Virginia, ultimately ended in defeat for Higginson and his English hounds, but it served to establish the Piedmont as the hunting capital of the United States. Although defeated in the match, the Middlesex Hounds were still regarded as one of the best groups in the country, and as such received several invitations to visit other hunts for another fourteen years. Higginson disbanded the kennels and sold off his hounds at the close of the First World War due to lack of funds and interest from a war-weary public.

Despite no longer having a pack of his own, Higginson continued to be active in hunting. From 1919 to 1921 he served as a huntsman of the Millbrook (New York) Hunt during cubbing, to which a fair portion of the Middlesex Hounds had been sold. Around 1923, Higginson accepted an invitation to act as Joint MFH of the Harford Hunt in Maryland. Meanwhile, since 1912 he had been venturing to England on several occasions to hunt with several renowned sportsmen, including the Duke of Beaufort. After an extended stay in Dorchester, Dorset, England in 1928, Higginson moved to Dorset on a more permanent basis, and served as MFH (sometimes jointly) of the Cattistock Hounds (Dorchester) from 1930 to 1939.

During World War I, Higginson had served in the United States Army's remount Service. He was stationed in North Carolina and Illinois, and never saw combat. When World War II erupted, Higginson was in England, but, being too old for regular military duty, he served his new country by organizing an outfit of Local Defense Volunteers and by continuing to maintain hunts in Dorset to help alleviate the oppression of war on the countryside. He was Joint MFH of the South Dorset Hunt from 1942 to 1945. He retired from mastership but not from hunting entirely, and would remain enthusiastic about the sport until his death.

Higginson had developed a reputation as an expert in all things foxhunting. He served the Masters of Foxhounds Association in different capacities for nearly fifty years, most notably as its president from 1915 to 1930. He was also active on the Hunts Committee of the National Steeplechase and Hunt Association. Higginson also authored several seminal books and articles on foxhunting and related subjects, including Letters from an Old Sportsman to a Young One, The Hunts of the United States and Canada, and Hunting in the United States and Canada. He was particularly

proud of having been keeper of the Foxhound Kennel Stud Book, publishing The English Foxhound Kennel Stud Book of America (vols. I-IV), and The Foxhound Kennel Stud Book of America (vol. V). In addition, Higginson served as judge at countless hound shows, including the illustrious Peterborough Hound Show in 1946, thus becoming the first foreigner and first American to do so.

In 1898, Higginson had married Rosamond Tudor, a girl he had met while still at Harvard. In July 1899 the couple had a son, Henry Lee Higginson II (named for his grandfather); Henry was to be Higginson's only child. He and Rosamond separated and divorced after only four years of marriage. In 1907 he remarried, taking Jeanne Calducci as his bride. Jeanne shared his love of dogs; she herself raised champion Wirehaired Fox terriers and West Highland White terriers. However, Jeanne's health was ruined by her part in the war effort during World War I, and she slowly declined until her death around 1923. Higginson's love of the theater eventually evolved into love for an actress, Mary Newcomb, whom he married in 1926. Mary's successful career on the stage played a large part in keeping the couple in England for the rest of their lives. In 1934 they purchased Stinsford House in Dorchester, ending their days at that estate.

In 1951 Higginson published his autobiography entitled An Old Sportsman's Memories, 1876-1951. He would live another seven years, and passed away at Stinsford House on November 12, 1958 after a brief illness, with Mary and his son Henry by his side.

Collection Description

The Alexander Henry Higginson Scrapbooks consist of eight large scrapbooks compiled by Higginson to chronicle the history of the Middlesex Hunt in Lincoln, Massachusetts. The scrapbooks, bound and labeled, cover the history of the hunt, the hounds themselves, Higginson's race horses, and the famous Grafton-Middlesex hound match of 1905. Materials in each scrapbook include newspaper clippings, cards, programs, printed announcements, handwritten accounts, correspondence, and photographs. The scrapbooks have been arranged chronologically, with the three volumes of hunt history being treated as one large work.

Series and Subseries

- I. Scrapbooks, 1899-1926** **4.0 cubic feet**
1. **"A History of the Middlesex Hunt," 1899-1910**
Covers the establishment of the Hunt, first with beagles and then with foxhounds, the outcomes of early meets and competitions in hound shows, changes in hunt staff, the breeding program at the kennels, and the Great Hound Match of 1905.
 2. **"A History of the Middlesex Hunt," 1911-1916**
Accounts of hunt meets, hound show results, including the Westminster Kennel Club, staff names, descriptions of the Middlesex Entries, losses caused by a fire in January 1914.
 3. **"A History of the Middlesex Hunt," 1917-1926**
Accounts of Middlesex hunt meets for 1917-1918 season and then with Harford, hound show results, materials pertaining to joint-mastership of Harford Hunt, correspondence.
 4. **"The Middlesex Hounds," 1899-1909**
Consists mostly of photographs of hounds, hunters, and hunt staff for Middlesex Hounds, including the origins of the pack in 1897, and a list of hunt staff.
 5. **"The Middlesex Hounds (early clippings and photographs)," 1901-1914**
Photographs of hunt staff, hounds, horses, and puppy shows. Clippings cover mostly puppy show results, as well as the dispersal of the pack.
 6. **"The Middlesex Hounds (photographs and clippings)," 1914-1920**
Articles on other American hunts, the Middlesex Hounds entries, shows results, various invitations for Higginson, the sale of the pack, MFHA business, Middlesex Hounds and hunt staff.
 7. **"Grafton-Middlesex Match, Piedmont Valley, VA," 1905**
Clippings, photographs, and correspondence chronicling the buildup, results, and aftermath of the celebrated and controversial match between Higginson's English hounds and Smith's American hounds.
 8. **"'Mr. Chetland' Race Horses," 1910-1916**
Clippings, photographs, and charts of horses and racing at Pimlico, MD, Toronto and Montreal, Canada, Long Island and Saratoga, NY, Framingham and South Lincoln, MA, and Norfolk, VA.

**Container List
MC0012**

I. Scrapbooks, 1899-1926

<u>Location</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Dates</u>
MC0012 01	"A History of the Middlesex Hunt"	1899-1910
MC0012 02	"A History of the Middlesex Hunt"	1911-1916
MC0012 03	"A History of the Middlesex Hunt"	1917-1926
MC0012 04	"The Middlesex Hounds"	1899-1909
MC0012 05	"The Middlesex Hounds (early clippings and photographs)"	1901-1914
MC0012 06	"The Middlesex Hounds (photographs and clippings)"	1914-1920
MC0012 07	"Grafton-Middlesex Match, Piedmont Valley, VA"	1905
MC0012 08	"'Mr. Chetland' Race Horses"	1910-1916

This collection was processed by George Hottel, May 2004.