



THE ROCKWOOD ARCHIVES: A VISUAL JOURNEY

University of Delaware

MCST 402 Exhibition

Fall 2011

Take a journey through a selection of photographs and letters documenting the lives of the Brighthurst family during their residence at Rockwood, a Victorian estate in Wilmington DE, and at Kilwaughter Castle, Larne, Ireland.

This catalog accompanies an exhibit organized and presented by students in MCST402, the research and writing seminar in material culture studies, during Fall Semester 2011. The exhibit is based on research conducted by the students in the archives of the Rockwood Museum. These archives, housed in the University Library's Special Collections, were a gift from New Castle County, which owns the Rockwood estate. We'd like to thank Rebecca Johnson Melvin and Jamie Margalotti in Special Collections for shepherding us so well throughout this project. Thanks, too, to the Friends of Rockwood and to New Castle County. We would also like to extend a thank you to Aunt Margaret's Antique Mall, LLC for their donations to our exhibit.

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EDWARD BRINGHURST AND PHOTOGRAPHY

- WILLIAM EATOUGH



The panorama of Bringhurst's dogs at Rockwood illustrates two continuing themes throughout his photographs in the archive. One is his pride in his material possessions, specifically his dogs and land, and the second is his skill as a photographer. Being of significant wealth in America allowed Bringhurst to pursue a variety of activities of prestige, especially that of dog breeding. He focused on breeding Great Danes for show competitions.

His development of amateur photography skills corresponds to his interest competitive dog breeding, as it was the best method to display prized dogs to others far away. To breed dogs for display, as opposed to utility is a form of dominating the animal. Having enough money and time to not only breed but photograph animals demonstrates wealth.

This domination is present in other photographs by Bringhurst. His focus on his house in the winter forms a narrative to his ability to overcome nature at its harshest. The framing of the house, so that it appears to be located higher than the viewer, makes it imposing. One notices how small they are in comparison to his home, his private area. It is important to note the power lines in the photograph. At the time this image was taken (c.1898-1902) most of America had not been electrified. It was a sign of modernity and upper class status to adapt to using electricity as opposed to gas lighting. Framing the left side of the photograph with the power line is a deliberate inclusion to show the high standings of the Bringhursts.

That he had the time and money to practice photography as a hobby also demonstrates his financial success and intelligence. The prints in the album I examined were gelatin based, that is to say that the silver (the material the image was printed onto) was suspended in a glossy coat over the paper. This method was less than thirty years old at the time of the photograph meaning that Bringhurst had access to the new technology and the technical prowess to use it. Through his photographs, one can create an image of Bringhurst as a man proud of his power and station in life.



THE DOGS OF ROCKWOOD

— KYLE HERRING

Dogs have been part of the Rockwood picture since Joseph Shipley built it in 1854. According to 1847 shipping receipts sent from England to Shipley, he had his dog Toby, a mixed breed dog, and another unnamed English pointer sent with the first shipments to Rockwood in order to make it feel like his home. This unnamed English pointer is rumored to be Hamlet, an ill behaved English pointer gifted to the Bringhursts by Joseph Shipley and mentioned in the Bringhursts letters. Dogs continued to become more prominent on the estate in 1892 when Edward Bringhurst Jr. acquired Rockwood from the Shipley family. The Bringhursts often had several terriers, beagles, and other breeds around the house as lapdogs. Edward's son, Edward Bringhurst III (later becoming Edward the V), bred dogs commercially at Rockwood and began documenting them and the other housedogs in photographs.

By 1900, dog shows became popular among the upper class; Edward, an avid lover of dogs, quickly joined in. His passion soon became the breeding and care of Great Danes. Edward registered "Broughton" as the on-site kennel name at Rockwood after Robert De Bringhurst, Lord of Broughton, who was the first documented Bringhurst. As Edward's involvement in dog shows grew, so did his other interest, amateur photography. Owners often photographed their competition dogs to be featured in ads to celebrate wins or as self promotion for upcoming events and Edward was no different. Edward's involvement in photography deepened as his participation in dog competition grew and he took more pictures of his dogs. This has provided excellent documentation of the dogs of Rockwood. The subject of a majority of Edward's photographs is Guido of Broughton. Guido was the Bringhurst's prized and award winning dog with 26 first place finishes in the Great Dane and Open categories listed in the 1904 Official American Kennel Club Stud Book. Guido is also mentioned in several articles including an article about breeding champion Great Danes featured in a 1908 edition of the magazine Country Life in America. Gretzel, Sandora, Stettin, and Tristen were other Great Danes often photographed.

Edward also breed Fox Terriers. His prized and most often featured Terrier was Dinah who has four 1st place finished attributed to her name in a 1904 show in Wissahickon, PA in the American Bred Terrier category. In addition to his role as a breeder, Edward also cared for many other dogs as family pets, which he named affectionately and photographed. Dinah's puppies were the subjects of many these other photographs with Horrace, Corron Nova, and Chester also often being captured in candid and posed shots around the grounds of Rockwood. Several other dogs are seen around Rockwood through out the vast collection of photographs but are mostly unidentified.





GARDENESQUE AT ROCKWOOD

- MICHELLE PLAKATORIS

The park has a six-acre well-kept, historic garden, a mansion, a gatehouse, a carriage house, and gardener's cottage creating a very Victorian country look. Joseph Shipley built these fabulous attributes at Rockwood between 1851 and 1854 to reflect the garden at Wyncote, which was Shipley's English country house.

Rockwood contains several different, unique gardening styles with over 300 trees and shrubs. Although several trees and shrubs have been re-planted over the years, there are still several trees that were planted by Shipley himself still in the gardens. When visiting Rockwood you entered on the North side. Along the entrance of the mansion Shipley planted weeping beech trees, which still remain today. This tree is not only there for its extreme beauty, but also for the ability to generate melancholy thoughts by those who pass it.

The opposite side of the mansion, the South garden, is known as the garden façade, which faces the Pleasure Garden. The Pleasure Garden is the highlight of Rockwood's landscape, and contains many rare ornamental trees and shrubs. Most of the plants in this garden have been replaced over the years, but the original design is still evident in the garden. The Pleasure Garden can be accessed by two different pathways; one from the conservatory and the other from the terrace. Surrounding the entire Pleasure Garden are ha-has', which were built to separate the garden from raised lawn and the open fields, it also helped to keep animals out. Keeping animals out of the garden was important because of the rarity of the trees and shrubs in the garden.





WHAT TO WEAR - ELIZABETH BRINGHURST GALT SMITH

- ASHLEY PAINTSIL



“Her neck is long and her head small, and she wore a superb tiara of diamonds and cabochon emeralds and earrings of gold chain and fine diamonds that almost touched her shoulder. The entire costume suited her to perfection.” Quoted from a letter written on January 4th, 1911, Elizabeth Bringhurst Galt Smith wrote to her sister-in-law Anna Webb Bringhurst, detailing one of the women who attended fabulous evening of high society at the Antrim Castle in England. A resident of a castle herself, Elizabeth Galt Smith was a member of society, married to wealthy linen merchant, John Galt Smith. So it was no surprise when she and her brother Edward Bringhurst Jr. were invited to the Court of St. James in Dublin, Ireland to be presented to King George V. The Court of St. James was attended by Elizabeth twice. According to Percy Armytage’s book “By the Clock of St. James”, being presented to court was a time honored tradition that dated back to the reign of Queen Victoria in England, who held “Drawing Rooms” where eligible women of society were presented before her and women who were presented to court were required to wear short-sleeved dresses of white, floral silks with petticoats, which was the standard dress created by Queen Victoria. Most ladies accessorized their dress and hair with plumes and artificial flowers in addition to diamonds on their necks and shoes. The men are required to wear full dress uniform with knee breeches or their military uniform if they were in the service. The even consisted of a royal procession, a dinner, and the presentation to the royal family.



FASHION OF THE VICTORIAN ERA - PARTY LIKE THE ROMANS DO

- KAITLIN CUNNINGHAM

The “Party Like the Roman’s Do” photograph shows friends and family of the Bringhurst's, who are dressed in costume portraying Roman Gladiators for the men and goddesses for the women. Although they are dressed in costume, the styles of the early 1900's are still very much noticeable. All of the women have their hair worn in an up-do to create a puffed up look with loose curls and minimal make up. For the accessories, the women are wearing jeweled and decorated head pieces to dress up their costume, however during this period women were known for adding decorated hair combs and hair pieces to accessorize their wardrobes. The men in this photograph are not wearing many accessories with their costume that they would actually wear in everyday life. However their facial hair and hair styles remain the same. The prominent hairstyle for men in the early 1900s was a natural, short and down look. Some men choose to wear facial hair, such as a thick mustache. Beards and side burns were also seen during this time period.





FASHION IN THE VICTORIAN ERA - FRANK WEBB AND AN UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN

During the late 1800s the period of dress was known as the late Victorian era. Skirts were very full and the fullness was located in the back. During the late 1800s small bustles and even small pads were used to create some aspect of volume to the skirt. Leg of mutton sleeves were also popular at that time. These sleeves were tapered at the bottom and were fuller toward the top of the arm. The princess dress was also popular at that time period. The dress was form-fitted, usually did not have a waist seam, and had a cuirasse that was similar to a very tight bodice. The woman of this picture are wearing dress typical to this time period with very fitted waist, skirts gathered at the waist, and large leg of mutton sleeves. The women are also wearing day dresses which composed of high necks and bell-shaped skirts.





FASHION IN THE VICTORIAN ERA - A VISION: A BRIDE

- APRIL MEZZADRI

This beautiful portrait showcases Edward's daughter in a beautiful fur trimmed robe. When examining the photograph, I had noticed that the clothing Elizabeth was wearing was not indicative of the 1890s or 1900's, because in that point in history women would have rarely worn a bustle. Instead, this photo was more likely from 1885. This is appropriate, as I soon found out that Elizabeth Shipley Bringham Salt Smith was married in Ireland in 1886 to John Gait Smith. After further examining the photo I noticed that the sheer headpiece that she is wearing is a veil. Elizabeth's elegant robe is covering a floor-length lace gown, which we cannot see the details of. As for the dove that she is posed with, through my research I discovered that white doves are supposed to symbolize innocence and fidelity and have been present since ancient Greek and Roman times at weddings as a gift from the bride to the groom.





FASHION IN THE VICTORIAN ERA - FASHIONABLE VICTORIAN WOMEN

- KATHERINE MEINHARDT



Fashion during the Victorian Era was eccentric, ornamented, and elaborate. Queen Victoria's influence began in the 1830's and continued through the early 1900's. The women of the Bringhurst family were certainly impacted by this and tailored their dress to the most elaborate fashions of the time. The accessories during the time period are truly exquisite.

Hats became larger and were the most important accessory among women during this time period. They were used primarily as protection from the sun but eventually became known as a symbol of class and authority. Hats were an essential part of a woman's appearance and, therefore, were worn whenever a woman left the house. Typically, they were made of velvet, satin, or cotton and had a wire base to form their shape. They were commonly adorned with pompous decorations including straw braids, feathers, ribbons, artificial flowers, twisted fabric, fruits, veils, and often, stuffed birds. Hats that lacked these embellishments were balanced with extremely wide brims. Hat pins became popular in the late part of the turn of the century. These were used to fasten the hat to the head by sticking it through the hat from the outside to catch the hair on the inside. Just like the hats, the hat pins were also an indication of class. Average women had only a few, simple pins to be used with multiple hats and outfits. Wealthy women had a full collection kept in their 'hat pin holder'.

Shoes were also a notable accessory during this time period. It wasn't until the 19th century that shoes were made with a right foot and a left foot, rather than one interchangeable size. Further into the century, boots were becoming acceptable and popular for women to wear. They were generally made of leather and almost always had a heel and a pointed or squared toe. These boots were fairly pricy for the time period and, again, represented women of a higher class, such as the Bringhurst family.

Other common accessories of the turn of the century were shawls, cloaks, mantles, scarves, and small aprons. Gloves were also very popular, as was the parasol—women were constantly trying to protect themselves from the sun. In terms of jewelry, large brooches were worn at the throat and earrings of different sizes could be found as well.



CHILDREN AT ROCKWOOD

- ELANOR SONDERMAN

The photographs in the Rockwood archives provide a very interesting look into the world of the children there. Children, however, are not as often pictured as adults in the albums maintained by The Shipleys and Bringhamsts and in loose prints of the families and their friends also in the archives. Considering how much modern Americans photograph their children, this suggests an interesting discrepancy in time. But the clothing, poses, and setting of children in these photographs help us understand the norms and roles of children during the Victorian Era and the early 1920s.

I found it especially interesting to compare the clothing of girls and boys according to age. Having sex-specific clothing for young children is actually a fairly recent cultural construct. In the Victorian Era, it seems that the age of children was more important than gender. This neutrality with the clothing of young children could be related to the high death rate of children under 5. Perhaps if all children were marked the same, it was less of a social loss than if one invested fully in dimorphic clothes from the start. Clothing catalogs from the time period do advertise pants for young boys, but the earliest age I saw for male-gendered clothing was age

3. At this age, boys wore short pants or knickerbockers. The full-length pants were only sold in sizes for boys older than 7. Corsets and shirtwaists were marketed to both boys and girls. For girls, corseting could start as early as 9 or 10, generally with one wearing a formed shirtwaist before that age.

There are very few candid photographs of the Bringhamst children. Most are posed with the children in formal dress. Edward and Edith are frequently photographed on the grounds of Rockwood or in the Conservatory. The Rockwood archives have many photographs of other children, either from the Shipley family or family friends of the Shipleys and Bringhamsts. Edward is the most frequently photographed of the Bringhamst children and is frequently posed with dogs or in costumes, either in the conservatory or outside on the porch. Despite the number of pictures of Edward alone or with male friends, I chose to display the image of Edward and Edith because it shows so well the sex ambiguity of very young children.





BEHIND THE KITCHEN DOOR

- CHERYL BLANN, CAROLYN CLARK

Mary Ronald, author of *The Century Cook Book*, wrote in 1895 that “the machinery of the household [should be] as invisible as possible. There should be no . . . audible speech among the servants.” (Ronald 12) This is an apt description of the servant’s life at Rockwood. Many of Edward Bringham’s servant photographs are not labeled with names and dates so even today they remain silent and anonymous. Even with the anonymity, the photographs provide a vision of the life these “silent” workers led as part of the early twentieth century Rockwood staff.

At the pinnacle of the Rockwood servant hierarchy stood the butler, Robert McCormick who worked at Rockwood from 1892-1920. McCormick, as he would have been known in his butler position, is seen here with his wife and children. He is dressed in typical livery of the Victorian era – dark suit, white shirt, and bow tie. Most of Edward’s photographs included in the archives are posed pictures of the servants, such as the photograph of the Robert McCormick family, but some of the archive letters give a word picture of exactly what McCormick’s duties involved. In a letter home, Bessie assured her mother that she told McCormick “he would have drawing room, dining room, library & hall to take entire charge of: to sweep, dust, wash windows, polish floors, open fires to attend in 3 rooms, & everything silver and all in connection with table and Father’s clothes to clean and brush.” Bessie further mentioned that all the rooms had to be dusted before the Bringhursts ate their very early breakfast. . .” (Paula Schwartz “The Servants at Rockwood” 1852-1920). We were told by staff at Rockwood that the woman pictured is Robert’s wife, Mary A, along with three of their children. Mary is dressed in the costume of the women on staff who were seen by the family and guests. The livery included a dark dress, white apron, white collar, and white cuffs. All of the photos depict a very neat, clean appearance.

The second person in the servant hierarchy was Sarah Maguire. Sarah held at least three positions in the Bringham household over a span of about twenty five years. We know that she first served as Edward’s nanny until he was old enough for a governess (File, 33). Out of fondness, the Bringham family kept her on as a lady’s maid in 1900 (U.S. Census 1900). By 1910, she became the housekeeper (U.S. Census 1910). She is pictured here without the typical livery of the other female servants. Her dress is more detailed with no apron. Is the stern look and hand on hip a reflection of her position in the servant hierarchy or does she just not want her photo taken? This stern look would, most assuredly, have kept the rest of the staff in line. Although Robert McCormick was referred to by his last name, as a female staff member, Sarah Maguire was always just “Sarah.” McCormick and Sarah were the link between the Bringhursts and the other staff. These two trusted servants would report servant indiscretions to Anna Bringham.

When Lottie Rollins worked as cook at Rockwood (c. 1904), the indoor staff included a butler, a “lady’s maid,” a kitchen helper, and a laundress. (Files 76-77) The cook, kitchen helper, and laundress were not seen by the family or guests as they went about their daily duties. Lottie served as head of this staff. Here she is pictured in action. Perhaps she is tossing potato peelings which she carried in her pail. Although the Bringhursts often purchased food from professional caterers such as D.B. Jones and Henry S. Black & Co., in Wilmington, the cook was responsible for the preparation and clean-up of the everyday meals for the family and the servants. (Receipts) While the family ate in the formal dining room; the servants ate in the kitchen at two segregated tables, one for white staff and one for black staff. (Smith) The cook was also in charge of baking bread and cakes, preserving vegetables, and preparing whatever food Mrs. Bringham didn’t have catered. Lottie Rollins began breakfast preparations in time to serve the meal



Cora McNitt also served in several positions while in the Bringhursts' employ. Not only did she assist Lottie with the meal preparation, but she was also the laundress. She is dressed in much the same way as Lottie Rollins is. She does not wear the traditional livery of the house maids but is certainly neat and clean. The posed photograph gives us one side of Cora, but the side view shows that working in the kitchen was not all hard work. As Edward pursued his hobby of photography, he was able to have fun with the kitchen staff as is depicted in the photograph of Cora covering her mouth to hide her wide grin.

The photograph of an elderly, frail Maria Fleming must have been taken in her later years. The notation reads "Mary T. Bingham's nurse" although she is listed on the 1900 census as a cook. One can picture this kindly lady providing nursing care to her mistress, Mary.

The unlabeled photographs are very intriguing. Edward poses a young, African-American woman and man with a small terrier. In one photograph, the woman is looking up at the man with a huge smile on her face. The man is wearing a suit, tie, and long-sleeved white shirt indicating that he worked where he would be seen by family and guests. The woman, however, does not wear typical livery but is attired in a long skirt, striped-long sleeved blouse, high collar and white cap. There is no indication of her position in the household, but according to her dress, she probably worked "behind the scenes." A photograph of the same scene depicts the couple with Robert McCormick peering over the brick wall behind them. Did Edward pose this photograph or was McCormick just being a bit mischievous.

Just as Bessie writes in her letter about giving Robert McCormick the details of his employment at Rockwood, all the Bringhurst servants were given explicit instructions of what conduct was acceptable as a Rockwood staff member before they were given employment. The policies included how and when to address the family members and how to answer the bell when called. (Docent) Cleanliness was also a requirement and it was not uncommon for Mrs. Bringhurst to inspect hands at odd moments. In those days most people bathed once a week, but Mrs. Bringhurst required her servants to bathe twice a week. (Spigel) The photographs attest to the fact that the staff were expected to be neat and clean.

Since servant turnover at Rockwood was very high, Mrs. Bringhurst was always on the lookout for good help. She often enlisted the help of her oldest daughter, Bessie, who moved to Ireland after her marriage. (Smith) Archive letters allude to the fact that only Sarah McGuire, Robert McCormick and George Taylor stayed long enough to earn a pension. The cause for this is not completely known. Perhaps servant dissatisfaction might have resulted from the Bringhursts' opposition to servants having a social life. (Docent) Most servants lived at Rockwood during the early years and did not go out in the evenings. (Smith)

Although working as a servant during the Victorian age was indeed a hard life with very little pay and with families' heavy demands, the smiles seen in some of Edward's photos of the servants suggest such a life was not all drudgery.





CARRIAGES AND CARTS OF KILWAUGHTER CASTLE

- MOLLIE ARMSTRONG

Born in 1863, Elizabeth “Bessie” Shipley Bringham was the oldest child of Edward Jr and Anna Bringham. In June 1886, Bessie married John Galt Smith, a linen merchant from Belfast County, Ireland. Bessie and J.G. Smith resided at Kilwaughter Castle near Larne, Ireland. Kilwaughter Castle maintained a variety of carts, carriages, and coaches – no less than eight. While several of the carts were more practical, used for transportation and carrying goods, many of the carriages at Kilwaughter Castle also represented a shift towards driving as a social and leisure activity.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, improvements in the roads meant lighter carriages were less likely to become stuck in muddy and uneven roads. Alice Newlin from the Metropolitan Museum of Art comments, “...the established types of carriage were gradually refined in a tendency towards clean elegance of line....Many open pleasure carriages...were built so that people could enjoy driving in open air and show themselves as well”. Mr. and Mrs. J.G. Smith possessed several pleasure carriages including the phaeton and the landau, which Bessie referred to as the “Victoria”.



Introduced in the 1750's, the phaeton style carriage was an open top, doorless carriage with four wheels. Early phaetons had small bodies, high off the ground with enough space for one or two passengers. Generally unstable, phaetons were popular for sporting. The phaeton owned by the Smiths represented a later style of phaeton which was more stable due to its lowset body and popular among ladies and gentlemen in the mid-19th century.

Another style of pleasure carriage, which developed from the phaeton, was the Victoria. The Victoria was a semi enclosed carriage with a low floor meant to be driven by a coachman. The Victoria was a favorite of Bessie's. In letters to the Bringham family, she describes frequent outings and social visits in the Victoria and laments her inability to use the Victoria due to Ireland weather. She writes, “Just now it is raining. I am afraid I must go in the closed carriage which I don't like as much as the Victoria!”

Despite Bessie's affinity for the Victoria, the carriage calls “Victoria” more closely resembles a landau style carriage. Like the Victoria, the landau is meant to be driven by a coachman and had folding hood roofs. However, the landau had doors and enough seating for four passengers who sat facing each other, two on each side.

As a fundamental form of transportation, carriages played an important role in the lives of the Smiths and the Bringhursts until 1905 when the two families began to replace their carriages with automobiles. Carriages were used to transport goods from the Kilwaughter Castle to the nearby town of Larne, to go on social visit, and to accommodate long distance travel around Europe and Ireland. More than just a mode of transportation, carriages allowed for social visibility and public display of wealth.