



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Royal York and Royal Albion visitors' book**

1915-1939

MssCol 18378

Compiled by Kit Messick, 2010

## Summary

**Creator:** Collings, Beatrice

**Title:** Royal York and Royal Albion visitors' book

**Date:** 1915-1939

**Size:** .13 linear feet (1 volume)

**Source:** Patricia Cornwell, 2009

**Abstract:** Beatrice Collings managed the Royal York hotel (and later, the Royal Albion) in Brighton, England, with her sister's husband, boxing and sports promoter Sir Harry Preston. The visitors' book includes photographs, autographs, sketches, caricatures, and remarks on the hotels from a variety of sports, theatrical, military, and other prominent figures. Among the many notable guests represented in the volume are boxers Jack Dempsey and Joe Beckett; actors Gladys Cooper and Sybil Thorndike; entertainers George Robey and Flotsam & Jetsam; artist Walter Richard Sickert; writers Hillaire Belloc, Hall Caine and A. E. W. Mason; and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Also present are newspaper clippings related to the hotels, and to Preston and his family.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** Royal York and Royal Albion visitors' book, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

**Processing note:** Compiled by Kit Messick, 2010

### Related Materials:

Forms part of [Patricia Cornwell collection](#)

## Creator History

Sir Harry Preston (1860-1936) was born in Cheltenham, England. He entered the hotel trade in 1900, and in 1901, he purchased and refurbished the Royal York hotel in Brighton, a property which had fallen

into disrepair as Brighton's popularity as a seaside resort dwindled. In 1913, he followed suit with the derelict Royal Albion, and helped Brighton reestablish itself as a tourist destination. An active sportsman, Preston was involved in the promotion of early automobile road races and the management of boxers. He was knighted in 1933 for service to charity and sport.

The Royal York and Royal Albion were managed by Preston's sister-in-law, Beatrice Collings, who created and maintained the visitors' book, and continued to manage the hotels after Preston's death.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The visitors' book includes photographs, autographs, sketches, caricatures, and remarks on the hotels from a variety of sports, theatrical, military, and other prominent figures. Among the many notable guests represented in the volume are boxers Jack Dempsy and Joe Beckett; actors Gladys Cooper and Sybil Thorndike; entertainers George Robey and Flotsam & Jetsam; artist Walter Richard Sickert; writers Hillaire Belloc, Hall Caine and A. E. W. Mason; and evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Also present are newspaper clippings related to the hotels, and to Preston and his family.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Autographs  
Caricatures  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks  
Sketches  
Visitors' books

### **Geographic Names**

Brighton (England) -- Social life and customs -- 20th century

### **Occupations**

Hotelkeepers -- England  
Promoters -- England

### **Subjects**

Hotels -- England -- Sussex  
Tourism -- England -- Sussex

### **Names**

Preston, Harry, 1860-1936 -- Sir  
Royal Albion hotel (England)  
Royal York hotel, Brighton