

# **Louise Deshong Woodbridge glass negatives**

**08**

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Faith  
Charlton through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden  
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

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Last updated on October 28, 2013.

Delaware County Historical Society

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Delaware County Historical Society
<b>Creator</b>	Woodbridge, Louise Deshong, 1848-1925
<b>Title</b>	Louise Deshong Woodbridge glass negatives
<b>Call number</b>	08
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1884-1905
<b>Extent</b>	2 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Louise Deshong Woodbridge (1848-1925), a member of the prominent Deshong family of Chester (Delaware County, Pennsylvania) was an active socialite as well as an amateur photographer and painter. Taking up photography in the early 1880s, Woodbridge had a fairly successful career with her work being exhibited at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Louise Deshong Woodbridge glass negatives, 1884-1905, consist of approximately 200 primarily glass plate negatives with some 4x5" film negatives that document the creator's family, friends, and social activities. They also document Delaware County and the surrounding area around the turn of the 20th century, particularly historic structures, such as the Woodbridge and Deshong mansions, and landscapes. Of special interest are some photographs of the White House, including the White House conservatory, and First Lady Ida McKinley.</p>

## Biography/History

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Louise Deshong Woodbridge (1848-1925) was an active socialite as well as an amateur photographer and painter. A member of Philadelphia's art and literary scene around the turn of the twentieth century, Woodbridge was particularly involved with its community of scientists and photographers.

Woodbridge began to take up photography in the early 1880s, and had a fairly successful career. The technical skill and strong aesthetic sense that her work demonstrates was likely enhanced by her relationship with members of the Photographic Society of Philadelphia. Some of Woodbridge's photographs were displayed at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, for which she served on the Delaware County Women's Committee for the Pennsylvania delegation. Her pieces were exhibited along works by some of the most prominent photographers of the day, including Frederick Gutekunst. That same year, her work was also exhibited at the Sixth Joint Annual Exhibition of Photography held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Louise D. Woodbridge was a member of the Deshong family who lived in Chester, Delaware County, Pennsylvania for over 125 years. Her ancestor Peter Deshong, a Huguenot, settled in the area in 1760. The family amassed a great deal of wealth as successful financiers and industrialists. Louise was one of five children of John Odenheimer Deshong (1808-1881) and Emmeline Terrell (1810-1897).

Woodbridge attended Brooke Hall Academy in Media, PA, where she befriended Ida Saxton, First Lady to President William McKinley. She married Jonathan Edward Woodbridge (1844-1935) in 1876. Woodbridge was a great-grandson of preacher Jonathan Edwards, a prominent Civil War veteran who fought under Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson, and a mechanical engineer for the Navy.

Both Jonathan and Louise had an avid and active interest in natural science, travel, history, and art. They were members of numerous such organizations, including the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Philadelphia Art Alliance, the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art (now University of the Arts), the University Museum of Science and Art (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology), the Geographical Society of Philadelphia, and the Botanical Club of the University of Pennsylvania, among others. They were also founding members of the Delaware County Historical Society (established in 1895). Louise also sponsored a lecture series entitled "Afternoons with Science" with speakers that included professors from the University of Pennsylvania and their colleagues. The yearly series ended with a coaching trip.

Woodbridge was also concerned with women's issues and supported women's education and their active involvement in society. She was one of the founders of the New Century Club of Chester (established in 1893), "a progressive feminist organization devoted to improving city condition[s] and offering opportunity for women"; she served as its president for two years. The club founded a local branch of the Young Women's Christian Association and a horticultural society, and in 1896 hosted President William McKinley. In her will, Woodbridge left her home to the City of Chester to be used as a home "for gentlewomen" - including those who were alone and could not support themselves. "The Louise" remained as such until 1975.

## **Bibliography:**

Panzer, Mary. "The L.D.W. Collection at the Delaware County Historical Society." (Fall 1980-Spring 1981). Article found in vertical file for Louise D. Woodbridge.

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## **Scope and Contents**

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This collection consists of approximately 200 primarily glass plate negatives with some 4x5" film negatives taken by photographer Louise Deshong Woodbridge. It documents Woodbridge's life, as many photographs depict her family, friends, and social activities--there are many portrait and group shots. They also document Delaware County and the surrounding area around the turn of the 20th century, especially historic structures and landscapes that were in the midst of disappearing due to industrial development. Some of the buildings documented include the Woodbridge mansion (exterior and interior), Deshong mansion, Crozer mansion, and St. David's. Of special interest are some photographs of the White House, including the White House conservatory, and First Lady Ida McKinley.

Captioned silver contact prints for the glass plates were made by the Historical Society for research use. There is an inventory for the collection available on-site.

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## **Administrative Information**

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Delaware County Historical Society

Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Faith Charlton through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.

### **Sponsor**

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

### **Access Restrictions**

Contact Delaware County Historical Society for information about accessing this collection.

## **Processing Information Note**

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2012-2014 as part of a project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.

In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact Delaware County Historical Society directly for more information.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Corporate Name(s)**

- Deshong Mansion (Chester, Pa.)
- White House (Washington, D.C.)
- Woodbridge House (Chester, Pa.)

### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Delaware County (Pa.)
- Philadelphia (Pa.)

### **Personal Name(s)**

- Woodbridge, Louise Deshong, 1848-1925

### **Subject(s)**

- Historic buildings
- Photography