

# **Anny Elston papers**

**SC.530**

**Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.**

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Last updated on November 17, 2011.

Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center

2009.08.26

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## Summary Information

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**Repository** Drexel University: College of Medicine Legacy Center

**Creator** Elston, Anny, Dr., 1895-1975

**Title** Anny Elston papers

**Call number** SC.530

**Date [bulk]** 1944-1972

**Date [inclusive]** 1918-1976

**Extent** 2 linear feet

**Language** English

**Language of Materials note** While the majority of the collection is written in English, there is a considerable amount of material in German. The heaviest concentrations of material in German may be found in Box 1, Folder 2, which contains documentation of Dr. Elston's education and career in Germany and Box 1, Folder 12, which contains general correspondence.

**Abstract** Anny Elston (1895-1975), a German born and trained pediatrician, immigrated to the United States in 1941 due to the "Racial Laws" in Nazi Germany. After obtaining her New York State Medical License in 1942, she began practicing medicine in New York City until retiring in 1972. The Anny Elston papers include information regarding Dr. Elston's medical credentials and continuing education, her medical practice in New York City, and patient records.

**Cite as:**

Anny Elston papers, 1918-1976, bulk 1944-1972. Drexel University College of Medicine, Legacy Center: Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine and Homeopathy

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## Biography/History

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Dr. Anny Elston (nee Halpert) was a pediatrician born at Gera in Thuringia, Germany on March 21, 1895. The daughter of Eugene Halpert, a textile manufacturer, Dr. Elston was educated in Germany at a secondary school for girls at Gera and the "Real-gymnasium" for girls at Leipzig. Dr. Elston, in her curriculum vitae describes the "Real-gymnasium as a type of German high school that combines the teaching of classical and modern subjects. She studied medicine at the University of Freiburg, Jena, Heidelberg and Munich, receiving her medical degree in 1920. During World War I, while continuing her studies, Dr. Elston worked as a Red Cross Nurses Aid and as a Red Cross Student Nurse, quite frequently in military hospitals. She also interned at the Medical Clinic at the University of Heidelberg, the Municipal Hospital for Women and the County Hospital of Milbitz in Thuringia. After passing the Medical State Examination at the University of Jena, Dr. Elston served her "practical year" at the Medical University Clinic Kiel where she completed her experimental research work and obtained her degree of Medical Doctor. From 1920 to 1924, Dr. Elston worked as intern and then resident at the Kaiserin Auguste Viktoria Haus, Reichsanstalt zur Bekämpfung der Säuglings--und Kleinkindersterblichkeit.

In 1922, Dr. Elston married Freidrich ("Fritz" and "Fred") Gerhard Edelstein, an attorney, and they had two sons in 1924 and 1928. In 1924, Dr. Elston opened her own practice in Berlin-Wilmersdorf as a pediatrician and continued in this practice until October 1938 when she "lost [her] profession by the Racial Laws in German," (Curriculum Vitae, Box 1, Folder 1) which prohibited her from practicing medicine because was Jewish. Dr. Elston and her husband considered themselves "racial Jews" only, as they were members of the Lutheran Church.

In 1938 she had her necessary legal documents translated into English at the American consulate and in 1939, she and her husband sent their sons (Gerhard, or Gerd and Wolfgang, or Wolf) to a boarding school for refugees in England. She and Fritz immigrated to the United States on April 25, 1941 and changed their name to Elston. Shortly before the end of the war, Gerhard and Wolfgang joined their parents in the United States. In 1942, she passed her New York state board exam and began work at the New York Infirmary for Women and Children.

Dr. Elston's husband Fritz taught German and math at Seton Hall College in New Jersey for many years until he died of a heart attack in 1956. Her son Wolfgang earned a Ph.D. at Columbia University and continues to work as Professor Emeritus in Geology at the University of New Mexico. Dr. Elston retired

on March 31, 1972 after 48 years in medical practice, citing an eye-ailment and a decreased ability to read as one of the reasons. She died in 1975, shortly before her 80th birthday.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection contains material regarding Dr. Anny Elston's medical career in Germany and the United States after immigrating to New York in 1941 as a result of Nazi Germany's "Racial Laws." The collection includes Dr. Elston's medical credentials from Germany that allowed her to obtain her New York State Medical License as well as a number of certificates and membership from her medical career as a pediatrician in the United States, material regarding the financial operation of her medical practice, and patient records. The patient records are restricted until 2042. The collection includes materials such as official documents, correspondence, receipts, memorabilia, notes, photographs and patient records.

This collection is a valuable resource for researchers interested in women's medical careers in the 20th century, the process of establishing a career in the United States following immigration, and the minutia of running a medical practice in New York City.

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## Administrative Information

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Drexel University, College of Medicine Legacy Center

2009.08.26

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

### Sponsor

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

### Access Restrictions

The first two series of this collection are open for research use. However, the third series which is composed of patient records is restricted until 2042. For more information, please contact the Archives.

## Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Drexel University College of Medicine, Legacy Center: Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine and Homeopathy with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

## Custodial History note

The Anny Elston papers were donated by Wolfgang E. Elston, Ph.D., son of Anny Elston, of Albuquerque, NM in 1994.

## Processing Information note

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

This collection was *minimally processed* in 2009-2011, as part of an experimental project conducted under the auspices of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries to help eliminate processing backlog in Philadelphia repositories. A minimally processed collection is one processed at a less intensive rate than traditionally thought necessary to make a collection ready for use by researchers. When citing sources from this collection, researchers are advised to defer to folder titles provided in the finding aid rather than those provided on the physical folder.

Employing processing strategies outlined in Mark Greene's and Dennis Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing Approaches to Deal With Late 20th-Century Collections*, the project team tested the limits of minimal processing on collections of all types and ages, in 23 Philadelphia area repositories. A primary goal of the project, the team processed at an average rate of 2-3 hours per linear foot of records, a fraction of the time ordinarily reserved for the arrangement and description of collections. Among other time saving strategies, the project team did not extensively review the content of the collections, replace acidic folders or complete any preservation work.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Corporate Name(s)

- Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

### Form/Genre(s)

- Account books
- Correspondence
- Memorabilia
- Notebooks
- Patient records
- Photographs
- Receipts (financial records)

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

- Germany
- New York (N.Y.)

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

- Elston, Anny, Dr., 1895-1975

### **Subject(s)**

- Abortion
- Anti-Semitism
- Medicine
- Physicians
- Women in medicine
- Women pediatricians
- Women physicians

## Collection Inventory

### Series I. Medical Credentials and Continuing Education, 1918-1974.

#### Scope and Contents note

The "Medical Credentials and Continuing Education" series provides a unique glimpse into Dr. Anny Elston's efforts to establish herself as a licensed doctor in the United States after fleeing Nazi Germany. In this series, a researcher will find documentation of Dr. Elston's education and career in Germany, the required steps for obtaining a medical license in New York, and certificates and memberships. A researcher will also find materials regarding Dr. Elston's continuing education and interest in medical issues. Included in the collection are several notebooks which probably result from her attendance at medical conferences and a folder of notes on loose pieces of paper.

|   | Box | Folder |
|---|-----|--------|
| Curriculum Vitae, circa 1938.   | 1   | 1      |
| Education and Career in Germany, 1918-1942.   | 1   | 2      |
| Correspondence regarding Obtaining Medical License in the United States, 1942-1943. | 1   | 3      |
| Certificates and Memberships, 1942-1974.  | 1   | 4      |
| Medical Conferences, 1930-1973.   | 1   | 5      |
| Medical Conference Memorabilia, undated.  | 1   | 6      |
| Notebooks (probably from Conferences), 1963-1971.                                   | 1   | 7      |
| Notes, undated.   | 1   | 8      |
| Printed Material regarding Issues in Medicine, 1964-1973.                           | 1   | 9      |



**Series II. Medical Practice Records**

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|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| Literature regarding Abortion, circa 1971. | 1 | 10 |
| Newspaper Clippings, 1962-1971.            | 1 | 11 |

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**Series II. Medical Practice Records.**

**Scope and Contents note**

The "Medical Practice Records" series contains information regarding the workings of Dr. Elston's medical practice. It includes mostly financial records: receipts for medical equipment, telephone bills, pharmacy services, insurance, and medical services performed. Of the receipts for medical services, a large number are from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Residences, which provided residential care to troubled young women who could not live in their own homes. This series also includes information on Dr. Elston's office at 39 Gramercy Park in New York City and information regarding her own insurance. There are also several photographs of her patients, and most notably, of Dr. Elston at work.

|   | Box | Folder |
|---|-----|--------|
| General Correspondence, 1944-1976.        | 1   | 12     |
| Account Book, 1950.                       | 2   | 1      |
| Receipts for Medical Equipment, 1943.     | 2   | 2      |
| New York Telephone Receipts, 1961-1962.   | 2   | 3      |
| Pharmacy Receipts, 1959-1963.             | 2   | 4      |
| Insurance Company Receipts, 1965-1969.    | 2   | 5      |
| Insurance Company Receipts, 1970-1973.    | 2   | 6      |
| Receipts for Medical Services, 1962-1963. | 2   | 7      |

**Series III. Patient Records [RESTRICTED]**

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|  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| Receipts for Medical Services, 1964.                   | 2 | 8  |
| Receipts for Medical Services, 1965-1966.              | 2 | 9  |
| Receipts for Medical Services, 1967-1971.              | 2 | 10 |
| Office Information and Map, undated.                   | 2 | 11 |
| Insurance Information, 1964-1972.                      | 2 | 12 |
| Photographs of Patients, circa 1962.                   | 2 | 13 |
| Photographs of Dr. Anny Elston in her Office, undated. | 2 | 14 |
| Unidentified Medical Equipment, undated.               | 2 | 15 |

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**Series III. Patient Records [RESTRICTED], 1950-1973.****Scope and Contents note**

The Patient Records series contains 1 folder of correspondence with patients, usually regarding their medical condition, 4 folders of patient information which was originally housed in two binders, and a card-file box containing index cards with patient information. Only one such box exists and it contains letters D through the beginning of H. This series is restricted from use until 2042. For further information, please contact the Archives.

|  | Box | Folder |
|--|-----|--------|
| Correspondence with Patients, 1960-1974. | 3   | 1      |
| Patient Book, A-L, 1964-1970.            | 3   | 2      |
| Patient Book, M-Z, 1964-1970.            | 3   | 3      |

**Series III. Patient Records [RESTRICTED]**

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|                                    |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Patient Book, A-M, 1965-1972.      | 3 | 4 |
| Patient Book, N-Z, 1965-1972.      | 3 | 5 |
| Patient Card File, D-F, 1947-1962. |   | 4 |