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# Guide to the Edward Morris House Collection 1913-1919



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## **Descriptive Summary**

**Identifier**      ICU.SPCL.EDWARDMORRISHOUSE

**Title**                Morris, Edward House. Collection

**Date**                1913-1919

**Size**                1 linear ft. (1 box)

**Repository**        Special Collections Research Center  
University of Chicago Library  
1100 East 57th Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

**Abstract**            This collection consists of an album of photographs and a social invitation. The album contains 40 photographs of the Edward Morris House, located at 4800 S. Drexel Boulevard in Chicago. The photographs depict both interior and exterior views of the house, the garage, and the greenhouse. Some of the photographs focus specifically on the landscaping. The home was designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw and was completed in 1913. The landscape plan for the gardens has been attributed to Rose Standish Nichols. The invitation is dated 1919 and requests that Edward Morris, Jr., attend dinner at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, Toronto, to meet the Prince of Wales.

## **Information on Use**

### **Access**

Open for research. No restrictions.

### **Citation**

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Morris, Edward, House. Collection, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

### **Biographical Note**

Edward Morris was President of Morris & Company, one of the three main meat-packing companies in Chicago at a time when that city was known as the meatpacking capital of the world. Upon his death, Morris was said to have amassed a personal fortune of \$40 million.

Morris was born in Chicago on October 1, 1866. His father, Nelson Morris, founded Morris & Co. Edward was educated in Chicago public schools, and his natural aptitude and interest in his father's business led him to begin spending time there at age 14. In 1890, Morris married Helen

Swift, a daughter of one of his two main competitors. The couple had four children, Nelson II, Edward, Jr., Ruth, and Muriel. Muriel Morris Gardner later became a renowned psychiatrist.

Edward Morris' professional interests extended beyond meatpacking. He was the largest individual stockholder in several of Chicago's largest financial institutions. He was a director of the First National bank, the National Livestock Bank, and the National Packing Company. He also personally managed the finances of Morris & Company.

A shrewd businessman, Morris cooperated with his two main competitors, Armour and Swift, to their mutual benefit. The three began proceedings around the turn of the century to combine their assets and form the National Packing Company. Muckraker Charles Edward Russell's 1905 book on the existence of a "beef trust," *The Greatest Trust in the World*, spurred the federal government to begin antitrust proceedings. Morris and his colleagues were not indicted on antitrust charges, but they voluntarily dissolved the National Packing Company in 1912. Morris and his employees clashed on issues of wages and working conditions, but at the time of his funeral, the Morris family hosted a two-hour reception for company employees in their home.

Morris died in 1913 after a prolonged battle with kidney disease. In 1917 his widow Helen married Francis Nielson, a journalist, and in 1920 she helped to fund Nielson's short-lived publication, *The Freeman*. Helen also became a significant donor to the University of Chicago Library.

The architect of the Edward Morris House was Howard Van Doren Shaw. Shaw designed twenty-one homes in the Hyde Park and Kenwood areas. A native of Chicago's South Side, Shaw was born in 1869. He returned to his hometown after attending Yale and M.I.T. and traveling to Europe. Many critics believe that Shaw's exposure to European design inspired his unique interpretation of the Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts movements that dominated residential design at the turn of the century. Edward Morris represented a typical member of Shaw's client base, which generally consisted of members of Chicago's growing mercantile and industrialist elites. The Morris House was completed in 1913, the year of Edward Morris' death.

The Morris House landscape plan is believed to have been designed by Rose Standish Nichols, one of the first American women to become a professional landscape designer. Nichols was a resident of the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Boston. Many of her projects are now recorded in the Archives of American Gardens of the Smithsonian Institution. She wrote three books and numerous articles on European landscape design. One of the founding members of the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom, Nichols never married, instead devoting her personal life to the suffragist and international pacifist movements.

## **Scope Note**

The collection includes one unbound album of photographs and a social invitation.

The photograph album contains 40 mounted photographs of the Edward Morris House and its grounds. The photographs depict both the interior and exterior of the house from a variety of angles and distances. Interior photographs of the home include depictions of the billiard room, the foyer, and several fireplaces. There are interior and exterior photographs of the greenhouse, and an exterior photograph of the garage. Photographs of the grounds and landscape include varying levels of detail.

The photographs are labeled to indicate the name of the subject and, for those depicting the exterior of the house, which façade of the structure is shown.

The invitation invites Edward Morris, Jr., a son of Edward and Helen Morris, to attend dinner at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club, Toronto. The invitation indicates that the Prince of Wales will be in attendance at the dinner.

## **Related Resources**

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

## **Subject Headings**

- Shaw, Howard Van Doren, 1869-1926
- Architects -- United States
- Meat Industry -- United States
- Landscape Architecture

## **INVENTORY**

### **Box 1**

Edward Morris House, photograph album, 1913

### **Box 1**

Invitation to Edward Morris, Jr., 1919