

# NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## LIBRARY

Manuscripts  
No. B70

Date processed: December, 1986

I. Title Pierson, Mary Laetitia Verdery, 1915-1982. Collection, 1940-1982

II. The papers of Mary Laetitia Verdery Pierson deposited in the Library on June 1985, by George Wilson Pierson ~~as~~ as ~~converted the deposit to~~ a gift.

III. Linear feet of shelf space occupied: 7'  
Approximate number of items: 5,100

IV. Restrictions: None

V. Literary rights of the unpublished writings of in these papers, and in other collections of papers in the custody of the New Haven Colony Historical Society Library, have been dedicated to the New Haven Colony Historical Society.

VI. Press release was issued on

VII. Biographical note: Mary Laetitia Verdery (1915-1982) was born in Flushing, New York, the daughter of Marion Jackson Verdery, Jr. and Eleanor Hearn Simonds. She attended schools in New York City and Switzerland, later taking courses at Columbia and Yale School of Fine Arts. For details of her education and

artistic training see the autobiographical sketch (Box 1, Folder A) which she prepared in 1959 in support of her application to the Cosmopolitan Club in New York City.

In 1936 she married George Wilson Pierson (1904- ); they had two children - Norah, b. 1940 and Laetitia Deems, b. 1943.

Mrs. Pierson had been a sculptress and artist, and was an avid gardener. She was a self-taught landscape designer. In the 1950's and 60's she became a free-lance landscape adviser who designed many gardens in New Haven and surrounding towns. Although she also designed a small number of gardens outside of Connecticut, those records have not been retained in this (cont.)

MSS B70 Pierson, Mary Laetitia Verdery, 1915-1982. Collection 1940-1982

Biographical note (Cont.): collection. Her sketches and plans for gardens in and around New Haven form part of this collection.

While an active volunteer in many capacities, her main efforts in New Haven were with the Creative Arts Workshop, of which she was President for many years. She was obviously the real driving force behind their awe-inspiring building program which took them from 1965 in rented rooms in the John Slade Ely House, 51 Trumbull Street, through the basement of the old Temple Mishkan Israel, Orange and Audubon Streets, to their own magnificent building on Audubon Street in 1972, with the mortgage fully paid two years after they moved in.

The Arts Council of Greater New Haven is a federation of over sixty organizations, organized to help the community meet the needs of the arts. Mrs. Pierson was a member since its founding in 1965, and its President from 1976 to 1978. She was also a longtime member of the Garden Club of New Haven, and its President from 1957-1959.

Outstanding among her artistic endeavors was the planning and designing of decorations for the New Haven Symphony Orchestra Carnival in Venice Benefit Ball in 1962. The records, sketches, photographs, etc. of this event are included in the collection.

Mrs. Pierson's activities, as shown in this collection, were a fantastic example of volunteerism and the lasting impact of one person's outstanding efforts on a community.

VIII. Analysis: This collection is housed in eight boxes and two long oversize boxes of rolled-up items. It consists of Mrs. Pierson's files of her main interests and activities. While these are not complete records of the organizations concerned for the inclusive years, they nevertheless give a fairly comprehensive picture of each group. These records are particularly interesting because many of them are extensively annotated by her and are interspersed with her own handwritten notes and plans. They have been arranged as follows:

Landscape Advising - Arranged alphabetically  
by the name of the owner of the property

The Garden Club of New Haven, 1940-1977

New Haven Symphony Orchestra Carnival in Venice  
Benefit Ball, 1962

Creative Arts Workshop, 1962-1982

Arts Council of Greater New Haven, 1966-1980

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