

# Christine Ladd-Franklin Papers

## Finding Aid

Windsor Historical Society  
96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095

**Creator:** Ladd-Franklin, Christine, 1847-1930

**Dates:** 1859-1948, bulk 1875-1902

**Extent:** .25 linear feet (1 box)

**Accession #:** 1976.21

### Biographical/Historical Note

Psychologist, logician, and mathematician Christine Ladd-Franklin was born to parents Eliphalet and Augusta (Niles) Ladd in Windsor, Connecticut on December 1, 1847. Eliphalet Ladd, a Windsor merchant, was the nephew of William Ladd, the founder of the American Peace Society, while Augusta Niles Ladd was the niece of John Milton Niles, founder of the *Hartford Times* and Postmaster-General under President Van Buren.

Traveling between Windsor, New York City, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Christine Ladd attended Elm Grove School in Poquonock before graduating as valedictorian of her Wesleyan Academy class in Wilbraham, Massachusetts. While completing her undergraduate degree at Vassar College, from which she graduated in 1869, Ladd studied under the well-known astronomer Maria Mitchell. Seeking to pursue an advanced degree, she applied to the newly formed Johns Hopkins University in 1878, despite the fact that the university barred women from admission. Although her passion was physics, the exclusion of women from research laboratories led to her pursuit of mathematics. As a result of the urging of the English mathematician James Joseph Sylvester, who recognized her publications from the English journal the *Educational Times*, Ladd was admitted with a three year fellowship. Her graduate years continued her study of mathematics with the addition of the study of logic, psychology, and the theory of color vision. Despite completing her PhD in 1882, Ladd did not receive public acknowledgement of her degree until 1926, four years before her death.

After completing her studies at Johns Hopkins University, Christine Ladd married fellow mathematician Fabian Franklin, a professor at the university. As a married woman, she was barred from official faculty appointments, but nonetheless lectured and taught at both Johns Hopkins and Columbia University throughout her career. Her dissertation work established Ladd-Franklin as a pioneer in the study of symbolic logic. In the 1890s, she traveled to Germany to study under G. E. Muller and Hermann von Helmholtz, leading to the development of her own theory of color vision. In 1893, Ladd-Franklin was one of the first two women to be elected to the American Psychological Association, and in 1909 established an endowed fellowship for female professors. Her

only child, Margaret Ladd-Franklin, went on to publish a book on the history of women's suffrage.

Christine Ladd-Franklin died of pneumonia at the age of 92 in New York on March 5, 1930.

## **Scope and Contents**

This collection includes primary materials by and about Christine Ladd-Franklin. Items include personal notes, poetry, and newspaper clippings collected by Franklin and correspondence, the bulk of which is addressed to Franklin. Series are organized chronologically.

## **Arrangement**

**Series I.** Personal

**Series II.** Correspondence

## **Box and Folder Lists**

### **Series I. Personal, 1881-1948**

- Anecdotes about daughter Margaret Ladd-Franklin by Christine Ladd-Franklin, 1881-1893
- "*La Non-Existence de L'Existence: L'Idealiste pur et le Realiste Hypothetique,*" 1931
- Genealogical chart for Margaret Ladd-Franklin, undated
- Poetry, undated
- Newspaper clipping, undated

### **Series II. Correspondence, 1876-1912**

- Correspondence, predominately addressed to Christine Ladd-Franklin. Letters of note include one letter written by Ladd-Franklin to her husband and letters written by Maria Mitchell, Ogden Rood, and James Joseph Sylvester.

## **Related Materials in Windsor Historical Society**

Account Book Collection

Ladd family files

Niles family files

## **Subject Terms**

Ladd-Franklin, Christine, 1847-1930

Mitchell, Maria, 1818-1889

Rood, Ogden N. (Ogden Nicholas), 1831-1902

Sylvester, James Joseph, 1814-1897

Franklin, Fabian, 1853-1939

Johns Hopkins University

Vassar College

## **Custodial history**

Materials from the Christine Ladd-Franklin Papers were donated from the estate of Helen M. Hotchkiss, friend of Margaret Ladd-Franklin to Windsor Historical Society in 1976. The collection was accessioned by Erin Stevic in June of 2005 and processed by Kathryn Angelica in 2017.