The Othman Ali Abbott family has roots in America beginning in 1640 at Andover, Massachusetts. Othman was born at Hartley, Canada, September 19, 1842. The family moved to DeKalb County, Illinois. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Othman enlisted in Co. I, 9th Illinois Cavalry. He moved up in rank and was discharged October 31, 1865 as a First Lieutenant, having been wounded twice in battle. After the war he settled at Grand Island, Nebraska, and was admitted to the Nebraska Bar in 1867. Abbott was a member of the state's first and second Constitutional Conventions in 1871 and 1873. In 1876 he was elected the first Lt. Governor of Nebraska and served from 1877-1879. He was a member of the G.A.R., the Loyal Legion, and the Grand Lodge of Nebraska. He died at Grand Island in June of 1935.

Mr. Abbott married Elizabeth M. Griffin of Sycamore, Illinois, February 9, 1873. Elizabeth was born January 20, 1845, in DeKalb County, Illinois and was raised in a log house. She was a pioneer teacher in Illinois and was teaching in Iowa at the time of her marriage. She had been president of the first woman suffrage association organized in Grand Island; served as president and a member of the Women's Park Association in the early 1900's; was a member of the public library board of Grand Island for 48 years; an officer in the Nebraska Woman Suffrage Association; and an officer of the State Federation of Women's Club. In 1886 she was appointed as a delegate to the 13th National Conference of Charities and Corrections at St. Paul, Minn. Elizabeth died in 1941 at the age of 96.

The Abbotts had four children, Othman A., Jr., 1874-1954, a graduate of the University of Nebraska College of Law, a Grand Island attorney, and four-time Mayor of the city; Edith and Grace, leaders in social welfare reforms; and Arthur Griffin, 1880-1969, a graduate of the University of Chicago, a Hall County Attorney, 1907-1912 and 1918-1921, a Chicago, Illinois attorney, 1912-1918, and Grand Island City Attorney, 1921-1956. The most noted of the four children were Edith and Grace, who became prominent in the area of social welfare and reform.

Edith was born at Grand Island, September 26, 1876. She attended a boarding school, Brownell Hall, in Omaha and was a graduate of the University of Nebraska in 1901. Awarded a fellowship in economics at the University of Chicago, she received her Ph.D. there in 1905. In 1906 she studied at the London School of Economics and Political Science of the University of London. After returning to America, she taught a year at Wellesley College and then joined a group of social reformers at Hull House, to set up a program of social investigation and to work with Jane Addams. The Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy (later School of Social Service Administration) at the University of Chicago was established by a grant of the Russell Sage Foundation. Edith was connected with the College beginning in 1913, and later became dean, 1924-1942 and dean emeritus, 1942-1955, becoming the first woman dean of a graduate
school in an American university and the first dean of the first school of social work in the nation.

Edith and her sister, Grace, were founders of the Immigrant Protective League. Edith was instrumental in founding the Cook County Bureau of Public Welfare and was a member of its advisory Committee, 1926-1957. She helped to found the Children's Division of the Chicago Welfare Dept.; served in the Council of Social Agencies (now Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago); was a member of the National Women's Trade Union League; a writer for Harper's Weekly; and in 1931 was appointed Chairman of the Wickersham Commission's Committee on Crime and Foreign Born. From that time, she served on various federal committees concerned with social welfare and she promoted the work of the U.S. Children's Bureau of which her sister, Grace, was head.

Miss Abbott's greatest contribution to formulation of public policy was in the area of social security legislation. Her book, Public Assistance - American Principles and Policies, was the result of many years of research and teaching. She remarked once that the two great events in her life were the constitutional amendment for universal suffrage and the passage of the Social Security Act.

Edith's interests ranged over the whole field of social welfare, and she became a recognized authority in immigration, working women and children, housing, public assistance, and poor-law reform. She wrote books and published articles on the subject, particularly in the Social Service Review, of which she was founder and editor for 25 years. Her first book, "Women in Industry", was published in 1910. Edith died at Grand Island, Nebraska in 1958 at the age of 80.

Grace Abbott, internationally known social worker and reformer, was born at Grand Island, Nebraska on November 17, 1878 and died June 19, 1939 at Chicago, Illinois. She had attended Grand Island College, the University of Nebraska, Universities of Chicago and London, and taught high school in Nebraska. She loved Nebraska but there were limited jobs for women here and she left the state to become director of the Immigrants' Protective League of Hull House in 1908. In 1917 she was appointed director of the Child Labor Division of the U.S. Children's Bureau, and bureau chief in 1921. As chief, she influenced public opinion in favor of child labor reform and related social legislation. She was widely recommended for a Cabinet post and recognized as "one of America's twelve most distinguished women" by Good Housekeeping magazine in 1931. She is honored on a memorial tablet by the National League of Women Voters in Washington, D.C.; was made "Woman of the Month" by the Woman's Journal, August 1930; and the Grace Abbott Fellowship in Public Administration was established in her honor by the Delta Gamma Fraternity, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Unmarried and childless, she was known as the foster mother to the nation's 43 million children. On October 8, 1951, the Peoria State Hospital in Illinois dubbed the new Children's Unit "The Abbott Building," the first such unit devoted to the care and treatment of mentally ill children and dedicated in the name of Grace Abbott. Likewise, the Grace Abbott House in Mitchell, South Dakota, a foster, retraining home, was dedicated on March 25, 1940. Grace Abbott was twice a U.S. delegate to the International Labor Organization conferences in 1935 and 1937. Her writings were published in scholarly journals, the public press, and several books. Her two-volume, The Child and the State, became a classic.
Mrs. Elizabeth Abbott, Edith, and Grace are enrolled in the Women of Nebraska Hall of fame. The Abbott home in Grand Island, built in 1884 by Governor Abbott, was considered a Grand Island historic home, but was auctioned off in 1976 to benefit the Edith Abbott Memorial Library in Grand Island. The fixtures were given to the Stuhr Museum and the house destroyed.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**


**Series One**, Othman A. and Elizabeth M. Abbott, contains photocopies of correspondence by and to Othman, 1879-1945; newspaper clippings on the 50th and 59th wedding anniversaries and deaths of Othman and Elizabeth, a copy of an address delivered by Abbott at the unveiling of the Historical Marker of the Overland Trail, a tribute to Othman at age 90 by the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, a clipping on the career of Mr. Abbott, and a resolution of condolence by the Hall County Bar Association on the death of O. A. Abbott. Also included in Series One is miscellany including a memorial to Charles Schroeder, Grand Island painter, correspondence and printed matter concerning Woman Suffrage belonging to Elizabeth Abbott, the Abbott's marriage certificate and wedding announcement, calling cards, a memoir of O. S. and Elizabeth Abbott by their son Arthur, and resolutions passed after Elizabeth's death. Some materials in this series refer to son Othman A. Abbott, Jr.

**Series Two**, Edith Abbott, contains copies of biographical clippings and articles concerning the Edith Abbott Fellowship Fund, the Grand Island Library Board, and the Edith Abbott Memorial Library at Grand Island. The Printed Matter in this series includes articles and speeches by Edith and memorials printed after her death. Finally, there is a typescript copy of the preface for her book about the life of her sister, Grace Abbott.

**Series Three**, Grace Abbott, consists mostly of photocopies of correspondence, 1914-1978, newspaper clippings and published articles concerning her life and career, two reports written by Grace Abbott, and reproduced portraits.

**Series Four**, the Abbott Family, contains an envelope of the Abbott Family Christmas cards, 1937-1952, depicting artwork by Nebraska artists, clippings about Edith and Grace, clippings and other ephemera concerning the Abbott home in Grand Island, campaign ephemera of O. A. Abbott, Jr., and miscellany relating to Emeline Griffin (Elizabeth Abbott's mother).

This collection was compiled from various sources, some unidentified. The majority of Edith and Grace Abbott papers are held at the University of Chicago Library.

See also Photograph Department for family photographs.
DESCRIPTION

Series 1 - Othman Ali and Elizabeth M. Abbott, 1879-1945

Box 1
Folder

1. Correspondence (copies), O. A. Abbott, 1879-1932
2. Newspaper clippings, 1923-1976
3. Miscellany, including tribute to Charles Schroder, Grand Island resident, n.d.
4. Woman Suffrage - Eliz. M. Abbott, 1881-1919, including memorials to Susan B. Anthony and Dr. Anna Howard Shaw
5. Marriage certificate, wedding announcement, calling cards
7. Resolutions re: Elizabeth Abbott upon her death, 1941

Series 2 - Edith Abbott, 1917-1958

Box 1
Folder

2. Printed Matter, 1924-1958

Series 3 - Grace Abbott, 1914-1978

Box 1
Folder

1. Correspondence (copies), 1917-1939
2. Clippings and articles (copies) on career & work of Grace Abbott with U.S. Children's Bureau, 1917-1962.
3. Clippings (copies) on the retirement of Grace Abbott from the U.S. Children's Bureau, 1934
4. Memorial to Grace Abbott, 1930-1952
7. Clippings and book reviews on the works of Grace Abbott, 1939-1942
9. Photocopies of obituaries and memorials to Grace Abbott, 1939-1978
Box 2
Folder

2. Report on the Problem of Immigration in Massachusetts (by Grace Abbott), 1914
3. Portraits of Grace Abbott

Series 4 - Abbott Family, 1847-1976

Box 2
Folder

3. Campaign ephemera on O. A. Abbott, Jr.
4. Miscellany, Emeline Griffin (mother of Elizabeth Abbott), 1847, 1867, 1887
5. Clippings, print and broadside on Abbott Family Home, c. 1976
6. Certificate (1920) and correspondence to Elizabeth Abbott from the National Woman Suffrage Association. Correspondence is from Carrie Chapman Catt (1920) and Susan B. Anthony (1881). (See OB063)
Subject headings:

Abbott, Othman Ali Sr., 1842-1935
Abbott, Elizabeth M. (Griffin), 1845-1941
Abbott, Edith, 1876-1957
Abbott, Grace, 1878-1939
Abbott, Charlotte
Addams, Jane, 1860-1935
Anthony, Susan Brownell, 1820-1906
American Friends Service Committee (Quakers)
Child welfare
Colorado Fuel and Iron Company
Eliot, Martha May, 1891-1978
Grand Island, Nebraska -- History
Hall County, Nebraska -- History
Illinois Welfare Association
Kelly, Florence (Finch), 1859-1932
Lotka, Alfred James, 1880-1949
National American Woman Suffrage Association
Nebraska. University
Nebraska Woman Suffrage Association
Roche, Josephine Aspinwall
Rocky Mountain Fuel Company
Schroeder, Charles
Shaw, Anna (Howard), 1847-1919
U.S. Department of Labor. Children’s Bureau
University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration
Wilkinson, Ellen Cicely, 1891-1947