

Contacts: Thea M. Page, 626-405-2260, tpage@huntington.org
Lisa Blackburn, 626-405-2140, lblackburn@huntington.org

Anna Katharine Green (1846–1935)

The Huntington's presentation of "The Artistic Furniture of Charles Rohlfs" is supplemented with a section focusing on Rohlfs' wife, Anna Katharine Green, featuring her books and other materials drawn from The Huntington's library holdings.

The popular novelist was born in 1846 in Brooklyn. Her father was a lawyer, a likely influence on her later decision to focus her writing career on detective and mystery stories. She graduated in 1866 from Ripley Female College in Poultney, Vt.

Green met Rohlfs, then an actor, through a mutual friend in early 1877. She was 30 at the time; he was seven years her junior. Her literary career took off soon after meeting him; and Green's novel, *The Leavenworth Case*, published in late 1878, established her as a leading literary figure. The book sold some 750,000 copies, became an international bestseller, and was recognized as a breakthrough in American detective fiction. Featuring memorable characters Ebenezer Gryce, a middle-aged New York police officer, and Amelia Butterworth, spinster sleuth, the book and those that followed used a variety of key plot devices successfully, including expert witnesses and ballistics experts.

Considered by literary critics to have made major contributions to the detective story genre, Green had substantial influence over a range of 20th-century writers, including Agatha Christie. Christie's Miss Jane Marple appears to be directly inspired by Green's Miss Amelia Butterworth, for example.

Before marrying Rohlfs, Green lived and worked as a writer in Manhattan and Brooklyn, where she published the *Sword of Damocles* (1881), which she described as "the fruit of much thought." She said, "I conceived its plot and general plan immediately after the publication of *The Leavenworth Case* and then gave it two years of thought before putting pen to paper." *The Defense of the Bride, and Other Poems* was published in 1882.

Green and Rohlfs were married on Nov. 25, 1884, in Brooklyn, and had baby Rosamond in 1885. Neither pregnancy nor domestic chores, however, interfered with Green's career. In 1886, she published *The Mill Mystery* and *Risifi's Daughter*. A year later, in May, she gave birth to a son, Sterling. *A Detective Story* was published that June. A third child, Roland, was born in 1892.

In 1887, the family moved to Buffalo, where Rohlfs began designing and making the furniture for which he became so renowned. Anna Katharine and Charles shared a design sensibility, and she created watercolor illuminations of manuscripts with motifs that are similar to those that appear in Rohlfs' furniture. The curator of "The Artistic Furniture of Charles Rohlfs," Joseph Cunningham, writes extensively on Green's influence on Rohlfs' work in the catalog that accompanies the exhibition.

Even while involved in these collaborative efforts, Green continued her work as a published author and provided the family with its primary source of income. Her last book, *The Star on the Stair*, was published in 1923. She died in 1935, at age 88, at home in Buffalo.



THE ARTISTIC FURNITURE OF

Charles Rohlfs

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