

A LEGACY OF GENTILITY





Doris Duke and her father, James B. Duke

A LEGACY OF GENTILITY:

Doris Duke's Heirloom Jewelry

Because jewelry is a personal possession, owners often attach hidden meanings and associations to it. As long as it remains in the domain of one person or one family, as long as we know who bought it and who owned it, a piece of jewelry can suggest possible meanings far beyond those apparent in the physical reality of the object. However, with the passage of time, symbolism grows cloudy and meanings can fade, which is why

so much jewelry often changes hands or is dismantled. Doris Duke owned and kept a number of pieces of heirloom jewelry that must have meant something special to her, something that linked her life to those who came before her and lived very different lives from her own. While we cannot know for certain what these objects meant to her, the fact that she held onto these pieces throughout her life suggests to us that they held some sort of personal significance.

The jewelry that Doris Duke wore as a child, gifts from her family and friends, tells a story about the way children were valued by society in the early-twentieth century. The jewelry she inherited from her grandmother, Florine Russell Holt, speaks eloquently of what jewelry meant to middle-class women in America in the second half of the nineteenth century. The small group of jewelry that belonged to James Buchanan Duke must have held its own special significance, a connection to the man who loved her so unreservedly and died while she was still so young.

With a few exceptions, such as her gold bangle and the seed pearl jewelry, it is unlikely that Doris Duke wore any of this “legacy” jewelry. It was not in style by the time she was born and, more importantly, it was not her style as she grew and matured. Nonetheless, she held onto it because it connected her to her own heritage and reminded her of who she was and from where she came from.

1. Barrette and handy pins

Barrette marked Carter, Sloan & Co.,
Newark, New Jersey

Handy pins, stamped 14K

Pearls, gold

Length of barrette: 2 ¼ inches

Doris Duke would have worn this barrette as a young girl. When she grew older, it was replaced by more elaborate diamond-set examples.

2. Seed pearl locket

1923

Seed pearl, gold

Verso engraved "Doris Duke 1923"

L: 1 ⅛ inches

Pearls symbolized innocence and were given to young girls before they reached their maturity. This locket is such an example, probably given to Doris Duke by her father.

3. Bangle

c. 1912

Gold

Engraved in script "MM to DD"

Doris Duke was given this simple, unadorned bangle when she was a child, perhaps even a baby. The many dents suggest that it was often worn.





4. Pocketknife

c. 1900-1920
Gold
Monogrammed "J.B.D."
L: 3 inches

A watch and chain, pocketknife, signet ring, tie pin, and cuff links were *de rigueur* jewelry for men at the turn of the century.

5. Cuff links

Carrington & Co., Newark, New Jersey
1900-1920
Amethyst, gold

6. Cuff links

Carrington & Co., Newark, New Jersey
1900-1920
Moonstone, gold, platinum

7. Cuff links

Mark for Tiffany & Co., New York
1900-1920
Turquoise, gold



8. Coral demi-parure, comprising brooch and ear pendants

c. 1860s
Coral, gold
Length of brooch: 2 inches
Length of ear pendants: 1 3/4 inches

The grape was the archetypal plant of the mid-nineteenth century, symbolizing the fecundity and plenty of an expanding nation. This demi-parure retains its original box, keeping it safe from damage.

9. Coral bracelets

c. 1860s
Coral, gold
L: 6 1/2 inches

The florid naturalism popular in the mid-nineteenth century is evident in these bracelets. Such Italian-made coral jewelry was commonly worn among genteel women during the Civil War.





10. Pendant watch

Outer case: maker's mark with anchor/14K/
Dueber/mark with anchor within shield/1376156
Movement: Elgin Nat'l Watch Co/2983182
c. 1890

Yellow, green, and rose gold, diamond
Engraved "FH" on shield reserve
H: 2 ¼ inches

In place of the more traditional reliance on enameled and engraved, watchcase makers experimented with different color golds to produce polychromatic designs. This watch is set with a single diamond, a sparkle point to draw the eye to the decoration.

11. Demi-parure comprising cameo brooch and earrings

c. 1880

Agate, pearls, gold

Diameter of brooch: 1 ¼ inches

Cameo jewelry was ubiquitous among middle-class consumers from the time of the Civil War until the 1890s.



12. Pair of woven bracelets

c. 1880

Gold

Engraved "Holt" on underside of clasp

L: 7 inches





13. Chatelaine mesh purse

1900-1910

Diamonds, gold

Stamped "14K"

W: 6 ½ inches

Mesh purses were popular from the 1890s to the 1920s, usually worn suspended by a chatelaine clip from the waistband or belt. Only wealthy women carried gold mesh examples; only the wealthiest had them studded with diamonds.

14. Chatelaine vanity case

c. 1915

Sapphires, diamonds, green gold, mirror, ivory

Engraved on reserve on compartment: DDC

Engraved on lower rim: E.R. Stotesbury, Philadelphia U.S.A.

H: 3 inches

The vanity case, or *nécessaire*, was an essential part of a lady's attire. It was equipped with a mirror, ivory writing tablet, and compartments for powder and lipstick.

