

Antonio Fernando de Navarro

Antonio de Navarro's father, Jose Francisco de Navarro, was born in San Sebastian, in Spain's Basque country. His mother, Ellen Amelia Dykers, was born in New York City but her father, John Hudson Dykers, was born in the West Indies. Both men were wealthy in 1858 when Jose and Ellen were married. The couple had three sons: John Dykers de Navarro, born in 1859; Antonio Fernando de Navarro, born 11 September 1860;ⁱ and Alfonso Gonzalo de Navarro, born 14 July 1863.ⁱⁱ John, who appeared as a twelve-year-old in the 1870 census, died in 1877.ⁱⁱⁱ

Antonio and Alfonso graduated in the same year, 1883, from the School of Law at Columbia College in New York City.^{iv} They established a law office together at 45 Broadway, and both were active in New York club life. Antonio belonged to the Union Club, "one of the oldest and most exclusive social organizations in New York;" the Racquet and Tennis Club, whose purpose was "to encourage all manly sports among its members but . . . more particularly to supply racquet and tennis courts, and a club house for those interested in such sports;" the Lawyers' Club; and the Association of the Bar.^v

The two men lived at home with their parents at 25 Washington Place, just off Washington Square, the eponymous center of Edith Wharton's novels of late nineteenth-century New York City society.^{vi} At this time, the social and economic power base of New York was shifting from the old aristocracy to the new aristocracy, men whose money was newly made. But there was little noticeable change in the constricting rules for conducting one's life. The small but powerful group of merchants, lawyers, bankers, and entrepreneurs lived quietly and privately among their peers, avoiding all unsuitable publicity.

The de Navarros belonged to this rarefied circle. Jose de Navarro made his money in investment banking: he organized the first steamship line between the United States and Brazil, served as a director of the Equitable Life Assurance Company, spearheaded the building of the Metropolitan Elevated Railway System, built one of the first large apartment complexes in New York City, and revolutionized the Portland cement industry in the United States.^{vii} Ellen busied herself with charitable works and was notable for her large gifts to the Roman Catholic Church.^{viii} Alfonso, who never married, continued to live in New York City, actively practicing law and eventually taking over some of the family's business interests. He was vice-president of the Portland Cement Company in 1917.^{ix} No records suggest that Antonio ever had anything that could have been called a gainful occupation. Despite his law degree, it is unlikely that he ever practiced law to any significant extent.

Mary Anderson was born in 1859 in Sacramento, California. The family moved to Louisville, Kentucky when Mary was very young. After her father's death, her mother married Hamilton Griffin. Griffin is identified as a physician in the 1870 census for Louisville; but in 1880, the family was in New Jersey, Mary was listed as an actress and her brother Charles Joseph Anderson as an actor, and Griffin himself as a "theatrical manager."^x By this time Mary's career, which had begun in Louisville in 1875, had blossomed. Having toured throughout the southern and western

United States and played in New York, she appeared for the first time in London in 1883 and continued her successful career in both countries. Mary was tall—the word “statuesque” was used to describe her—with a Grecian profile and a well-modulated voice. She very quickly became “our Mary” in the American press, where she was praised as fulsomely for her beauty, dignity, and purity as for her acting ability.

During the 1880s, the Griffin/Anderson and de Navarro families became close. Antonio was said to have attended Mary’s New York rehearsals regularly at her request and to have critiqued her work objectively. “When Miss Anderson has played in New York she has been much at the de Navarro home and has been accounted almost a member of the family for a long time . . .”^x Antonio was the best man at the wedding of Mary’s brother Joseph Anderson on 3 January 1889.^{xi}

On 8 March 1889, after having failed to appear in two successive performances of *A Winter’s Tale*, Mary collapsed onstage at the Albaugh Theatre in Washington, D.C. On the advice of her physician, she cancelled the rest of her Washington engagement.^{xii} As time went on, there were more cancellations and Mary departed for “light travel” in Europe.^{xiii} By the time she had cancelled her upcoming season in London and dissolved her English company of 56 actors, breathless rumors of her grave illness, insanity, and entry into a private asylum were circulating.^{xiv} The facts, while less sensational, are also more difficult to establish. “Mary Anderson is wintering at Nice,” one newspaper reported primly in December.^{xv} According to other sources, Antonio de Navarro himself was ill: “Of late young Navarro has been in feeble health, and has been taking a rest in Europe with his mother for a companion and Miss Anderson for his sunlight.”^x “Young Navarro was an usher at the wedding of Joseph Anderson to the daughter of Lawrence Barrett last spring, and when his health gave out his mother decided that the climate in the near neighborhood of Miss Anderson’s hotel would be more beneficial to him than all the philters of Esculapius. For many months these two have been in each other’s company at London, Nice, San Remo and other European places.”^{xvi} Soon there were rumors of Mary’s impending marriage, rumors that were denied both by her in Nice^{xvii} and by Jose de Navarro in New York. “Miss Anderson and my son are old friends, but nothing more,” de Navarro said early in January. “He is traveling abroad with his mother and they met Miss Anderson at Paris and again at Nice. They are not traveling together as the dispatch says. The meeting was purely accidental. Miss Anderson was resting in London and paid a flying visit to Paris, where she met my wife and son. The families are very intimate and have been so for a long time. I think Miss Anderson is more likely to enter a convent than to get married . . . Recently in London she scrubbed the floor of one of the hospitals as an act of humility . . . He would be a lucky man who could get her for a wife; but I think her inclinations are the other way.”^{xviii} Two weeks later, de Navarro cabled his son to congratulate him on his engagement.^{xix} In April, Mary announced that she would never act again.^{xx}

Mary Antoinette Anderson and Antonio Fernando de Navarro were married on 17 June 1890 at St. Mary’s Church in Hampstead [**Is this Hampstead or Hempstead? I have seen both**] in a simple ceremony with only close family present. To a world eager for news of Mary’s husband, Antonio was described as “a

graduate of Columbia College and by profession a lawyer . . . He has travelled extensively abroad, is an accomplished linguist, a thorough musician of artistic temperament and tastes and a strict Catholic.” The couple left after the wedding breakfast for a honeymoon in Switzerland.^{xxi} Later that year, her brother was quoted, “I do not think my sister will ever go on the stage again. The strain was too great on her . . . She always rose about 7 o’clock in the morning to attend church; then came breakfast and rehearsals for three or four hours, and in the afternoon had scores of callers; then the evening performance, and to bed, seldom before 1 o’clock in the morning. Her health was so much impaired that it was impossible for her to go on.”^{xxii}

Antonio and Mary de Navarro had two surviving children: Alma Jose Maria de Navarro, born 17 September 1896, and Mary Elena de Navarro, born 28 July 1906.^{xxiii} A child who was a baby in 1899^{xxiv} did not appear again in the public records I consulted, and a son born on 7 December 1894 lived for only a few hours. Henry James wrote to his friend Henrietta Reubell about the de Navarros’ 1894 loss, “I have had some communication with the little Navarros; – he has been in anguish, but she is recovering happily. I shall see them when *I* have recovered [James’s play *Guy Domville* had recently failed on the London stage]. He seems a rather pathetic clinging little chap.”^{xxv}

The de Navarros came to know Henry James well, since he was a sometime participant in the high-spirited artistic and literary activity at Broadway. Antonio evidently wrote to Henry in 1905 complaining of ennui. James replied,

To Antonio de Navarrro
November 1st 1905

My dear Tony,

Your letter touches and interests me, and I thank you, very tenderly, for all the sympathy it expresses and to which I unreservedly respond. But, alas, I shall not be able to be in town for at least three weeks to come. . . . But I am very sorry to hear of your depressions and lassitudes. I scarcely know what to say to you about them. The want of a commanding, that is of an imperative occupation is a fertile source of woe—to an *âme bien née*—and you are in some degree paying the penalty of your “material advantages” themselves, your freedom of expatriation, your fortune, your living in a terrific “modernity” of cosmopolite ease (which has the drawback of not working you actively into the scheme of things here) . . . From the bottom of my heart I pity you for being without some practicable door for getting out of yourself. We all need one, and if I didn’t have mine I shouldn’t—well, I shouldn’t be writing you this now. It takes at the best, I think, a great deal of courage and patience to live—but one must do everything to invent, to force open, that door of exit from mere immersion in one’s own states. You are young and gallant and intelligent—so, *allons donc*, there are still horizons! . . . On this I embrace you and bid you goodnight. I hope your poor little boy came

bravely through the oculist's hands the other day, and I greet very heartily his radiant mother. And I am, my dear Tony, your always affectionate old friend

Henry James^{xxvi}

American passports were valid for only two years in those days, and since Antonio de Navarro never relinquished his American citizenship there are records of his regular applications for new passports. When an occupation was called for on these applications, he left the space blank or listed "lawyer," "literary work," or "letters." During the First World War, from 1915–1919, his passports were issued for residence in England and temporary residence in France, where he travelled to engage in hospital work with the Red Cross. On at least one occasion Mary accompanied him.^{xxvii}

In 1921, he was required to attach to his passport application an affidavit explaining his protracted foreign residence. "My wife, the well-known actress Mary Anderson, of Kentucky, became in precarious health about two years before our coming to England in 1890, and upon advice of physicians in Washington, D.C., and New York City she came abroad. As her condition has not greatly improved, we have upon the best medical advice continued to reside in our country home in Worcestershire."^{xxviii}

The de Navarros made a brief trip back to the United States in 1899 and returned to New York for the death of Antonio's father early in 1909,^{xxix} following which his mother and brother visited for several months in England.^{xxx} Ellen de Navarro died in 1910.^{xxxi} Antonio died on 19 October 1932, and Mary on 29 May 1940.^{xxxii} They are buried in St. Saviour's Churchyard, Broadway, along with their son Jose, who died in 1979. A single memorial stone commemorates all three.^{xxxiii}

In addition to *Causeries on English Pewter*, Antonio de Navarro wrote *France Afflicted—France Serene* after the First World War and, shortly before he died, a book of *Offerings to Friends*.^{xxxiv}

ⁱ *Passport Applications 1906–1925*, National Archives and Records Administration. Antonio de Navarro Passport, issue date 19 January 1916 (www.ancestry.com).

ⁱⁱ *Passport Applications 1906–1925*, National Archives and Records Administration. Alfonso de Navarro Passport, issue date 9 July 1917 (www.ancestry.com).

ⁱⁱⁱ 1870 U.S. Census Record for New York City, New York, p 118B (www.ancestry.com); *Accessing the 1862-1948 New York City Death Index in One Step* (www.stevemorse.org).

^{iv} *Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Columbia College (originally King's College) in the City of New York 1754-1888* (New York: Printed for the College, 1888), p 236.

^v *Club Men of New York: Their Occupations, and Business and Home Addresses* (New York: Republic Press, 1893), pp 36, 42, 155.

^{vi} *New York City Directory, 1889* (www.ancestry.com).

-
- vii "Jose F. deNavarro Dead at Eighty-Six," New York, NY, *The New York Times*, issue of 4 February 1909.
- viii "Mrs. Ellen A. D. deNavarro," New York, NY, *Evening Post*, issue of 22 March 1910 (fultonhistory.com).
- ix 1870 U.S. Census Record for Louisville, Jefferson County, KY, p 615A; 1880 U.S. Census Record for Eatontown Township, Monmouth County, NJ, p 35C (both www.ancestry.com).
- x "Some Facts About Antonio Navarro and His Family," Sacramento, CA, *Sacramento Daily Union*, issue of 8 February 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xi "Wedded with Pomp," Chicago, IL, *The Daily Inter Ocean*, issue of 4 January 1889 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xii "Mary Anderson," Central City, CO, *Weekly Register-Call*, issue of 15 March 1889 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xiii "Mary Anderson Departs," Philadelphia, PA, *The North American*, issue of 4 April 1889 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xiv "An Insane Actress," Denver, CO, *Rocky Mountain News*, issue of 18 March 1889; "Mary Anderson's Illness," Philadelphia, PA, *The North American*, issue of 27 June 1889 (both www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xv "The Play's the Thing," Portland, OR, *Morning Oregonian*, issue of 22 December 1889 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xvi "Mary Anderson," Williamsport, PA, *Daily Gazette and Bulletin*, issue of 20 January 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xvii "Brief Cablegrams," San Francisco, CA, *Daily Evening Bulletin*, issue of 9 January 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- xviii "As Was Expected, Mary Anderson Not About to Get Married," Houston, TX, *Galveston Daily News*, issue of 3 January 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*). The claims and counterclaims about Mary's health and future were summarized by one exasperated journalist: "Mary Anderson, enterprising London correspondents have ascertained, has retired from the stage for good, is in greatly improved but in very ill health, is engaged to a young New Yorker, and also to open a season on October 28 in New York, is still undetermined about her future plans and declines to discuss them in public. It is suspected that the last is about the most reliable" (Denver, CO, *Rocky Mountain News*, issue of 12 January 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*)). Another wag commented, "If Mary Anderson would marry some mild young man and quietly settle down for life she would save a great deal of newspaper space" (Atchison, KS, *The Atchison Champion*, issue of 16 January 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*)).

-
- ^{xix} “Miss Anderson’s Engagement,” Milwaukee, WI, *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, issue of 18 January 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- ^{xx} “Mary Anderson Returns,” Philadelphia, PA, *The North American*, issue of 26 April 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- ^{xxi} “Our Mary’ Weds,” Milwaukee, WI, *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, issue of 18 June 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- ^{xxii} “Concerning Mary Anderson,” Portland, OR, *Morning Oregonian*, issue of 8 November 1890 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- ^{xxiii} Certificate of Registration of American Citizen for Antonio F. de Navarro, dated August 1914, *U.S. Consular Registration Certificates*, National Archives (www.ancestry.com).
- ^{xxiv} “Mary Anderson de Navarro,” Denver, CO, *The Denver Evening Post*, issue of 27 April 1899 (www.americanancestors.org external database *19th Century U. S. Newspapers*).
- ^{xxv} *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, ed. Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 1999). A letter to Henrietta Reubell, pp 271-273.
- ^{xxvi} *The Letters of Henry James, Volume 4: 1895–1916*, ed. Leon Edel (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp 372–3.
- ^{xxvii} *Passport Applications 1906–1925*, National Archives and Records Administration. Antonio de Navarro Passports, application dates 19 March 1915, 10 December 1915 (with Mary), 10 January 1916, 15 June 1917, 6 November 1919 (www.ancestry.com).
- ^{xxviii} “Affidavit to Explain Protracted Foreign Residence and to Overcome Presumption of Expatriation,” *Passport Applications 1795–1925*, National Archives and Records Administration microfilm publication M1372 (www.ancestry.com).
- ^{xxix} “Mary Anderson Enraptured at Again Seeing Native Land,” New York, NY, *The Evening Telegram*, issue of 4 December 1908; “Jose F. de Navarro Dead at Eighty-Six,” New York, NY, *The New York Herald*, issue of 4 February 1909 (both fultonhistory.com).
- ^{xxx} Ship Manifest for Alfonso and Ellen A. de Navarro arriving in New York from Liverpool, 24 September 1909 (www.ellisland.org).
- ^{xxxi} “Mrs. Ellen A. D. de Navarro,” New York, NY, *New York Evening Post*, issue of 22 March 1910 (fultonhistory.com).
- ^{xxxii} Both death records are found as a “Report of the Death of an American Citizen,” National Archives and Records Administration (www.ancestry.com).
- ^{xxxiii} Findagrave.com memorial #116443515.
- ^{xxxiv} “Antonio F. de Navarro, F.S.A., K.C.S.G.,” obituary published in the *Tablet* (archive.thetablet.co.uk), abstracted on the page headed by the Rev. T. Bergin.