Finding Aid to the Estelle Carpenter Papers, 1891-1948MS 1577A

Finding aid prepared by California Historical Society staff; revised by David Krah, 2009
California Historical Society
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2001, revised 2009
Finding Aid to the Estelle Carpenter Papers, 1891-1948

**Title:** Estelle Carpenter papers  
**Date (inclusive):** 1891-1948  
**Collection Number:** MS 1577A  
**Creator:** Carpenter, Estelle, 1874-1948  
**Physical Description:** 3 cartons, 1 box, 1 flat box (4.5 Linear feet)  
**Contributing Institution:** California Historical Society  
678 Mission Street  
San Francisco, CA, 94105  
415-357-1848  
reference@calhist.org  
URL: http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/  
**Language of Materials:** Collection materials are in English.  
**Physical Location:** Collection is stored onsite.  
**Abstract:** The Estelle Carpenter papers, containing her correspondence, a variety of published material by and about her, some personal effects, and a small collection of sheet music and audio recordings reflect her long and illustrious career as Director of Music in San Francisco Public Schools and as an active member of many musical societies in California and nationwide.  
**Access**  
Collection is open for research.  
**Publication Rights**  
Copyright has not been assigned to the California Historical Society. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Director of Research Collections. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the California Historical Society as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained by the reader.  
**Preferred Citation**  
[Identification of item], Estelle Carpenter Papers, MS 1577A. California Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.  
**Separated Materials**  
Photographs shelved as MSP 1577A.  
Pink silk dress belonging to Carpenter worn at 1924 Armistice Day celebration at Fairmont Hotel transferred to Fine Arts Collection, CHS.  
**Related Materials**  
Collections of Edith Carpenter Shepard and Thomas Munroe Shepard's diaries, journals, and letters available at the Northampton Historical Society, Northampton, Mass.  
**Existence and Location of Originals**  
Includes photocopies of letters held at the Northampton Historical Society, from a collection of papers of Edith Carpenter Shepherd, Estelle's sister.  
**Subjects and Indexing Terms**  
Saunders, Richard Drake  
Shepard, Thomas Munroe  
Shepherd, Edith Carpenter, 1876-1969  
Addresses.  
Concerts--California--San Francisco.  
Programs.  
Public schools--California--San Francisco.  
School music supervision--California--San Francisco.  
Phonograph records.  
Sheet music.  
Songbooks.  
**Immediate Source of Acquisition**
Gift of Northampton Historical Society, acquired on various unknown dates.

Accruals
No additions are expected.

Processing Information
Processed by CHS staff; additions processed by David Krah.

Arrangement
The Estelle Carpenter Papers are divided into five series: Series 1: Correspondence; Series 2: Articles and Publications; Series 3: Notebooks, Scrapbooks and Memorabilia; Series 4: Sheet Music; Series 5: Audio Recordings.

Biography
Estelle Carpenter served as Supervisor of Music for San Francisco Public Schools from 1897 to 1945. Known as that "dynamo in skirts," she inspired generations of school children to "breathe deeply," and sing praises to San Francisco, "the city we all love." It was under her guidance that the school system initiated one of the most innovative and thorough musical programs in the nation. As patriotic as she was gifted, Carpenter combined modern methods of instruction with tradition and sentiment.

Born in Brooklyn, New York on October 27, 1874, Carpenter learned to appreciate music at an early age. She studied both voice and instrumental music, and often attended performances of the New York Metropolitan Opera House. After her father's death, she moved to San Francisco and continued her musical education.

Serious about a musical career, Carpenter enrolled in William Tomlin's Conservatory of Music in Chicago. Tomlin was well respected for his innovative approach regarding the musical training of young children. It was under his tutelage that Carpenter developed her own distinctive style of instruction. While at Chicago, she came into contact with and studied under many diverse and well-known artists, such as William Piutti and Kate Douglas Wiggin.

Upon graduation, she returned to San Francisco and began teaching "experimental classes" in music. Impressed with both her talent and dedication, the San Francisco City Normal School appointed her as their Director of Music. Through her successful work as Director, Carpenter was offered the position of Supervisor of Music for all of San Francisco Public Schools.

Carpenter's rigorous program included the study of rhythm, musical history and theory, harmony, as well as individual and group instruction. Her goal was to combine appreciation, composition and performance in such a way as to "give an insight into the abiding spiritual power of music," and to "provide a medium of self expression through voice, body and instrument."

As Supervisor of Music, she staged numerous musical pageants for the City of San Francisco, including celebrations for the Portola Festival, 1909; Admissions Day, 1910; Panama Pacific International Exposition, 1915; Armistice Day Festivals, 1927-1941; and, the Golden Gate International Exposition, 1939. Following the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, she was active with the San Francisco School Reconstruction Fund, staging concerts and raising funds to rebuild the schools.

Among her many professional affiliations were the San Francisco Opera Guild, National Federation of Musical Clubs, as well as being a founding member of the San Francisco Light Opera Association, California Western Musical Conference, and the Young People's Concert Symphony.

In 1945 the San Francisco Board of Supervisors issued a testimonial of gratitude to Carpenter in recognition of her "meritorious and faithful service." When Estelle Carpenter died in 1948, thousands of former school children mourned.

Scope and Contents
The Estelle Carpenter Papers offer an insight into the personal and professional dedication of Estelle Carpenter, as well as the growth of music appreciation in San Francisco schools, and the great respect the community held for her. The collection's many publications contain Ms. Carpenter's approach to music education, and codify her philosophy of music as a "vital factor in education", and as a part of life.

The numerous programs, announcements and memorabilia remember the great impact she had on public life in San Francisco as she led choruses of often several thousand children at events such as the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition, Golden Gate International Exposition, The Portola Festival, the dedication of McLaren Park, and many annual celebrations.

Her role as an educator and pillar of the community is emphasized as well, reflected in letters of appreciation, documents pertaining to the reconstruction of San Francisco schools after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, articles about Carpenter and her work, a recording of a radio broadcast remembering her life, and detailed accounts of many of the pageants and performances that she orchestrated. Included also are sheet music, and personal effects such as sewing and art workbooks, notebooks and scrapbooks.
Series 1 Correspondence 1900-1948
Subseries 1.1 Correspondence with Edith Carpenter Shepard 1913-1947

Physical Description: 1 carton, 18 folders

Scope and Contents
Consists of letters from Estelle's sister, Edith Carpenter Shepard, as well as letters received from Estelle's brother-in-law (and Edith's husband) Thomas Munroe Shepard. Additional correspondence relating to Estelle's position as a music educator, including reports, letters of appreciation, and blank stationery from organizations and public events.

Arrangement
Series 1 is divided into two subseries: 1.1: Correspondence with Edith Carpenter Shepard, and 1.2: Professional and personal correspondence.

Subseries 1.1 Correspondence with Edith Carpenter Shepard 1913-1947

Physical Description: 10 folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

Existence and Location of Originals
Includes photocopies of letters held at the Northampton Historical Society, from a collection of papers of Edith Carpenter Shepherd, Estelle's sister.

Carton 1, Folder 1 1913-1918
Carton 1, Folder 2 1920-1929
Carton 1, Folder 3 1930-1931
Carton 1, Folder 4 1932-1934
Carton 1, Folder 5 1935
Carton 1, Folder 6 1923, 1932-1936
Carton 1, Folder 7 1936-1947
Carton 1, Folder 8 1942, undated
Carton 1, Folder 9 Correspondence with Thomas Munroe Shepard 1908-1917
Carton 1, Folder 10 Fragments and miscellaneous undated

Subseries 1.2 Professional and Personal Correspondence 1900-1948

Physical Description: 8 folders
Arrangement
Arranged by type of material.

Carton 1, Folder 11 Reports to Superintendent of Schools and California Federation of Music Clubs 1916-1940, 1941-1943
Carton 1, Folder 12-14 Miscellaneous correspondence 1908-1945
Carton 1, Folder 15-16 Letters of appreciation 1900-1948
Carton 1, Folder 17 Letters and tributes commemorating career at retirement 1945-1946
Carton 1, Folder 18 Stationery from organizations and public events 1909-1935
Series 2 Articles and Publications 1897-1948

Scope and Contents
Consists of whole publications, fragments, and typescripts and manuscripts of articles written by and about Estelle Carpenter. Included are miscellaneous biographical materials, consisting of encyclopedia entries, obituaries and other articles, and genealogical materials relating to the Carpenter family. Publications include several different education and music society bulletins, as well as newspaper clippings, a bound compendium of music-related articles, and the typescript and related materials of a KNBC radio broadcast about Ms. Carpenter's life.

Arrangement
Series 2 has been divided into four subseries: 2.1: Biographical Materials; 2.2: Typescripts and Manuscripts; 2.3: Printed Materials; 2.4: News Clippings.

Subseries 2.1 Biographical Materials 1932-1949
Physical Description: 2 folders
Arrangement
Arranged by type of material.

Carton 2, Folder 1
Miscellaneous biographical articles and obituaries 1932-1949
Carton 2, Folder 2
Carpenter genealogy undated

Subseries 2.2 Typescripts and Manuscripts undated
Physical Description: 4 folders
Arrangement
Arranged by type of material.

Carton 2, Folder 3-4
Articles and speeches by Estelle Carpenter undated
Carton 2, Folder 5-6
Articles and radio broadcasts about Estelle Carpenter undated

Subseries 2.3 Printed Materials 1906-1951
Physical Description: 8 folders, 1 volume
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by publication title.

Carton 2, Folder 7
California Federation of Music Clubs 1923-1927
Carton 2, Folder 8
California Parent-Teacher Bulletin 1929-1939
Carton 2, Folder 9
Carton 2, Folder 10-12
Miscellaneous publications 1906-1948
Carton 2, Folder 13
KNBC Broadcast - This is Your Home 1951
Carton 2, Volume 1
Music and Dance in California and the West 1948
Oversize Box 1, Folder 1
Music and the Allied Arts 1935-1936
Subseries 2.4 News Clippings 1897-1948

Physical Description: 4 folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

1897-1899, 1923-1945

Scraper book undated

Miscellaneous clippings undated

Series 3 Notebooks, Scrapbooks, and Memorabilia 1891-1948

Physical Description: 1 carton, 16 folders
Scope and Contents
Consists of Estelle Carpenter's personal effects and memorabilia including programs, invitations, tickets, announcements, and certificates, notebooks and workbooks containing writing and sewing and art exercises, and scrapbooks reflecting her interests in poetry and culture.
Arrangement
Arranged into 2 subseries: 3.1 Programs and Memorabilia, and 3.2 Notebooks, Scrapbooks, and Workbooks.

Subseries 3.1 Programs and Memorabilia 1891-1948

Physical Description: 5 folders, 1 volume
Scope and Contents
Contains miscellaneous programs, announcements, and invitations to various public events, as well as certificates of achievement and membership to various clubs and organizations.
Arrangement
Arranged by type of material.

1905-1947

Announcements and certificates 1895-1948
Invitations 1911-1945

Where Nature Leads Through Paths of Peace 1916
Dedication of Elizabeth Carpenter's (Estelle Carpenter's mother) internment at Cypress Lawn Cemetery.

Subseries 3.2 Notebooks, Scrapbooks, and Workbooks 1894-1924

Physical Description: 11 folders
Arrangement
Arranged by type of material.

Music notation workbooks undated
Textbooks, publications and receipts undated
Weaving and sewing workbooks undated
Miscellaneous workbooks undated

Scrapbook undated
Carton 3, Folder 12-15
Carton 3, Folder 16

Notes:

Notebooks undated
Rubber stamps [3 items] undated

Series 3 Notebooks, Scrapbooks, and Memorabilia 1891-1948
Subseries 3.2 Notebooks, Scrapbooks, and Workbooks 1894-1924

Finding Aid to the Estelle Carpenter Papers, 1891-1948

Physical Description:
2 folders

Scope and Content
Consists of some whole and some fragmentary sheet music either used or composed or adapted by Estelle Carpenter.

Arrangement
Arranged in two folders.

Carton 3, Folder 16

Rubber stamps [3 items] undated

Series 4 Sheet Music undated

Physical Description:
2 folders

Scope and Content
Consists of some whole and some fragmentary sheet music either used or composed or adapted by Estelle Carpenter.

Arrangement
Arranged in two folders.

Oversize Box 1, Folder 2-3

Sheet music undated

Series 5 Audio Recordings undated

Physical Description:
8 phonograph records

Scope and Contents
Consists of eight 78 RPM phonograph records pertaining to Estelle Carpenter's life and career as a music educator. It includes 2 discs from the Standard School Broadcast series, a Standard Oil-produced music education program, on whose advisory board Ms. Carpenter participated. 4 discs comprise a 1951 KNBC broadcast of a show entitled This is Your Home, a regular series of San Francisco reminiscences written by Samuel Dickson, in which the author recounts his experience as a student of Ms. Carpenter's. Also included is a recording of California Lullaby, performed by Rudy Seiger's Fairmont Hotel Orchestra. Ms. Carpenter led a performance of this song with a cadre of her students, accompanied by Mr. Seiger's orchestra, at the Fairmont hotel.

Box 1, Disc 1-2
Standard School Broadcast undated
This is Your Home 1951

Box 1, Disc 3-6
Freedom's Call, by Schreiber, Felix undated

Box 1, Disc 7
California Lullaby/ My Dearest Prayer performed by Rudy Seiger's Fairmont Hotel Orchestra. undated

Box 1, Disc 8