Finding aid of the Ina Coolbrth Papers C057956

Finding aid prepared by Alexandria Brown
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Title: Coolbrith, Ina Papers
Identifier/Call Number: C057956
Contributing Institution: Society of California Pioneers
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 folder 2 folders
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1918-1923
Date (inclusive): 1892-1923
Abstract: This folder contains one folder of correspondence and newspaper clippings from Ina Coolbrith to Lorenzo Sosso; one folder of correspondence, newspaper clippings, and a photograph from Charles B. Turrill to Ina Coolbrith; and two letters from Ina Coolbrith to Zoeth Eldridge.
creator: Coolbrith, Ina, b. 03/10/1841, d. 02/29/1928
Conditions Governing Access note
Collection open for research.
Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions on access.
Existence and Location of Originals note
The Society of California Pioneers, 300 Fourth Street, San Francisco, CA, 94107
Scope and Contents note
This folder contains one folder of correspondence and newspaper clippings from Ina Coolbrith to Lorenzo Sosso; one folder of correspondence, newspaper clippings, and a photograph from Charles B. Turrill to Ina Coolbrith; and two letters from Ina Coolbrith to Zoeth Eldridge.
Biographical/Historical note
Born Josephine Anna Smith in Nauvoo, IL to Agnes Moulton Coolbrith and Don Carlos Smith, she was the niece of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. After Don died Agnes married Joseph under the Levirate regulation. After he was killed by an anti-Mormon, anti-polygamist mob in June 1844 she moved to St. Louis, MO and married William Pickett, a non-Mormon lawyer and printer. They had twin sons and then moved to Los Angeles, CA in 1851. While riding the wagon train, Pickett read to Ina the works of Shakespeare and poetry by Lord Byron, fostering her early love of poetry. She crossed into California on the horse of Jim Beckwourth, a famous African-American scout. Once in LA, Agnes changed her family's name to avoid association with Mormonism and Ina became "Josephine Donna Coolbrith".
She was briefly married at 17 to iron-worker and actor Robert Carsley. He was abusive, and after the death of their infant son he and Pickett got into a heated argument. Carsley was shot in the hand and had to have it amputated. Ina divorced him on 12/30/1861 in a very public trial where he accused her of infidelity. She moved with her family up to San Francisco in 1852 and shortened her name to "Ina".
Within a few years she had become a famous poet. She formed the "Golden Gate Trinity" with Bret Harte and Charles Warren Stoddard, and often held literary salons in her home. She served as the Oakland City Librarian for 19 years (where she mentored a young Jack London and Isadora Duncan) before retiring to write and autobiography and history of California. Most of her work was destroyed in the fires that consumed the city after the 1906 earthquake, but she soon recovered. On 06/30/1915 she became the first California Poet Laureate and the first poet laureate of any state. The park at 1715 Taylor St., SF was named for her in 1911, and in 1915 she was named President of the Congress of Authors and Journalists for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. She fell ill from arthritis in 1923. Ina is buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland in Plot 11.
Donor
Donor and date of acquisition unknown.
Preferred Citation note
Ina Coolbrith Papers. The Society of California Pioneers.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Eldridge, Zoeth S.
Sosso, Lorenzo
Turrill, Charles B.
Correspondence
Obituaries.
Photographic prints--20th century