George Sterling Papers: Finding Aid

Processed by The Huntington Library staff in September 1955; supplementary encoding and revision supplied by Brooke Dykman Dockter and Diann Benti.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

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Overview of the Collection

Title: George Sterling Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1895-1927

Collection Number: mssGS 1-611

Creator: Sterling, George, 1869-1926.

Extent: 666 pieces in 12 boxes

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Abstract: This collection contains correspondence, manuscripts, photographs and watercolors pertaining to the life and work of California lyric poet George Sterling (1869-1926). Much of the correspondence in the collection is between Sterling and other American writers and poets, who discuss their own work and the work of other individuals. Almost all of the correspondence in the collection by Sterling is addressed to his friend, and fellow author, Jack London (1876-1916).

Language: English.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. George Sterling Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Purchased from Thor Liliencrantz, nephew of George Sterling, in 1954.

Related material in the Huntington Library

Additional manuscripts and letters by George Sterling may be found in the Samuel Loveman Papers. (Call number: mssHM 46222-46267)

Biographical Note

George Sterling (1869-1926) was an American poet, prose stylist and playwright. Sterling was born in Sag Harbor, New York, and moved to California in 1892, where he met and became a pupil to Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?). Sterling's poetry was first published through the aid of Bierce, who included some of Sterling's verse in his San Francisco Examiner column. In 1903, Sterling's first book of poetry was published, The Testimony of the Suns, and was followed by nine more volumes of verse in the years to come, including A Wine of Wizardry and Other Poems (1908). In 1908 Sterling and his wife, Caroline Rand, moved from Oakland to Carmel. Then, after several years in New York, Sterling lived at the Bohemian Club in San Francisco. Sterling was good friends with author Jack London. Sterling died by his own hand in 1926.

In addition to writing poetry Sterling also wrote several plays (many of which he composed for the Bohemian Club of San Francisco to perform), short stories, and a critical text on Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962). He published ten volumes of verse, five separately published poems, four dramatic poems, and much uncollected magazine prose and verse. Carey McWilliams writes of Sterling: "The remarkable range and the intimate quality of his acquaintance, coupled with his long residence in the West, gave a cultural significance to his career quite apart from his writing."

Scope and Content

This collection contains correspondence, manuscripts, photographs and watercolors pertaining to the life and work of George Sterling. Contents include 544 pieces of correspondence; 116 manuscripts; 3 photographs; 2 watercolors, and an agreement with Douglas Fairbanks Pictures Organization (received as addenda).

Much of the correspondence in the collection is between Sterling and other American writers and poets, who discuss their own work and the work of other individuals. Almost all of the correspondence in the collection by Sterling is addressed to his friend, and fellow author, Jack London (1876-1916). The collection contains manuscripts written by Sterling as well as
manuscripts by Ambrose Bierce and others. Most of the collection's manuscripts are poems, although the section also contains epigrams, diaries, vocabulary aids and prose. The photographs within the collection are of Sterling and his friends and associates, and all of the collection's watercolors were painted by Sterling.

Subjects addressed within the collection include Ambrose Bierce, American poetry (1915-1925), Prohibition (with frequent mention in H. L. Mencken's letters), and European description and travel (chiefly in the early letters of Herman George Scheffauer).


Persons represented by five or more pieces:
- Bynner, Witter: 5 pieces, 1913-24
- Cobb, Margaret Smith: 34 pieces, 1923-26
- Coolbrith, Ina Donna: 26 pieces, 1907-26
- De Casseres, Benjamin: 8 pieces, 1926
- Greenwood, May Snowdrop: 65 poems 1917-26
- Hopper, James: 5 pieces, 1926-28
- Humphries, Rolfe: 6 pieces, 1924-25
- Jeffers, Robinson: 12 pieces, 1924-26
- Jennings, Leslie Nelson: 45 pieces, 1917-22
- London, Jack: 18 pieces, 1902-16
- Loveman, Samuel: 19 pieces, 1915-26
- Neihardt, John Gneisenau: 50 pieces, 1912-25
- Sterling, George: Poems: 43 to Miscellaneous persons: 5 To London: 72 (1910-16)
- Mihan, Leo Bergin: 5 pieces, 1924-26
- O'Carroll, Joseph: 9 pieces, 1923-26
- O'Hara, John Myers: 5 pieces, 1911-16
- Robertson, Louis Alexander: 7 pieces, 1904-08
- Scheffauer, Herman George: 57 pieces, 1904-21
- White, Edward Lucas: 5 pieces, 1925
- Wilcox, Ella (Wheeler): 5 pieces, 1914-15

Some notable items include:
- Coolbrith, Ina. 1907, Feb. To Blanche Partington. He is the best boy in the world as well as one of its few great poets...
- Jeffers, Robinson. 12 letters, mostly about poetry. 1924-26
- Lindsey, Vachel. 1913, June 1. Long letter on his own career and poetry.
- London, Jack. 1908, Feb. 10. And I speculate and speculate, trying to make you out, trying to lay hands on the inner side of you...
- Mencken, Henry L. 63 letters, containing numerous references to Prohibition
- Scheffauer, Herman George. 1904, June 19. Description of visit to St. Louis fair.
- Scheffauer, Herman George. 1904, Sep. 8. Description of trip through Scotland and England
• Scheffauer, Herman George. 1904, Dec. 20. Letter of 52 pages, octavo, describing trip through Germany and France. His letters are of above average interest.
• Sterling, George. Notebook containing vocabulary aid. c.1915.
• Sterling, George. 1919, Apr. 9. To W. S. B. Braithwaite. Draft of a letter of protest over the misprinting of his poems.

Arrangement
The collection has been arranged with the correspondence and manuscripts first, in alphabetical order by author, followed by ephemera, photographs, and watercolors.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

Subjects
Bierce, Ambrose, 1842-1914?
Sterling, George, 1869-1926.
American poetry -- 20th century.
Poets, American -- 20th century.
Prohibition -- United States.
Europe -- Description and travel.

Forms/Genres
Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 20th century.
Manuscripts -- United States -- 20th century.
Photographs -- United States -- 20th century.
Watercolors -- United States -- 20th century.

Alternate Authors
Bierce, Ambrose, 1842-1914?
Cobb, Margaret Smith.
Cooksey, Sidney Bert, 1903-
Coolbrith, Ina D. (Ina Donna), 1841-1928.
Cullen, Countee, 1903-1946.
De Casseres, Benjamin, 1873-1945.
Greenwood, May S.
Hopper, James, 1876-1956.
Humphries, Rolfe.
Jeffers, Robinson, 1887-1962.
Jennings, Leslie N. (Leslie Nelson), 1892-
Lewis, Sinclair, 1885-1951.
Lindsey, Vachel.
London, Charmian.
Loveman, Samuel, 1887-1976.
Mihan, Leo Bergin.
O'Carroll, Joseph.
O'Hara, John Myers, 1870-1944.
Robertson, Louis Alexander, 1856-1910.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919.
Sandburg, Carl, 1878-1967.
Scheffauer, Herman George, 1878-1927.
Sterling, George Ansel.
Towne, Charles Hanson, 1877-1949.
Belasco, Grace Wallace.
Wells, H. G. (Herbert George), 1866-1946.
White, Edward Lucas, 1866-1934.
Wilcox, Ella Wheeler, 1850-1919.
Wilshire, Gaylord, 1861-1927.

Box 1  **A-Cooks**

This box includes:

- Atherton, Gertrude, 1907-25 (4 pieces to George Sterling)
- Austin, Mary to Mrs. Liljencranz, 1927 (1 piece)
- Bender, Albert M., 1926 (2 pieces to George Sterling)
- Benet, William Rose, 1921 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Bierce, Ambrose to Lora (Mrs. C. A. Bierce), 1912 (1 piece)
- Bierce, Albert S., 1913 (10 pieces to George Sterling)
- Bierce, Ambrose, manuscript (1 piece)
- Burbank, Luther, 1926 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Burgess, Gelett, 1907 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Bynner, Witter, 1903 (4 pieces to George Sterling)
- C., Sarah M. to Maria, 1839 (1 piece)
- Cabell, James Branch, 1920 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Cooksley, S. Bert, Poems (6 pieces)

Box 2  **Cool-Gre**

This box includes:

- Coolbrith, Ina, 1907-26 (26 pieces to George Sterling)
- Cobb, Margaret, 1923-26 (34 pieces to George Sterling)
- Cullen, Countee, 1926 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- De Casseres, Benjamin, 1926 (8 pieces to George Sterling)
- Finger, Charles J., 1925 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Flanner, Hildegarde, 1925 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Greenwood, May Snow, Poems (40 pieces)

Box 3  **Gri-Jef**

This box includes:

- Grierson, Francis, 1913 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- H., E. N., 1915 (1 piece to George Sterling)
- Harrison, William Greer to J. Corbett, 1914 (1 piece)
- Hoppner, James to Mrs. Flora Liljencranz, 1927 (5 pieces)
- Humphries, Rolfe, 1924-25 (5 pieces to George Sterling)
Box 4  
**Jennings**  
This box includes:  
• Jennings, Leslie N., 1917-22 (44 pieces to George Sterling)

Box 5  
**Jo-Ma**  
This box includes:  
• Larkin, Edgar Lucien, N.D. (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Lewis, Sinclair, 1923-26 (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Lindsay, Nicholas Vachel, 1913 (3 pieces to George Sterling)  
• London, Charmian, 1926- (3 pieces to George Sterling)  
• London, Jack, 1912-16 (17 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Lovejoy, Samuel, 1915-26 (19 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Mathews, Albert, 1923 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Maugham, William Somerset, 1920 (1 piece to George Sterling)

Box 6  
**Me-Ne**  
This box includes:  
• Mencken, Henry L., 1916-26 (64 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Michaels, Aline, 1926 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Middleton, Scudder, 1918, 1926 (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Mihan, Leo Bergin, 1924-26 (5 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Monroe, Harriet, 1926 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Nathan, George Jean, 1920 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Neale, Walter to Ambrose Bierce, 1906 (1 piece)

Box 7  
**Neihardt**  
This box includes:  
• Neihardt, John, 1912-25 (49 pieces to George Sterling)

Box 8  
**O-Scha**  
This box includes:  
• O’Brien, Frederick, 1926 (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
• O’Carroll, Joe, 1923-26 (24 pieces to George Sterling)  
• O’Hara, John Myers, 1911-16 (6 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Osbourne, Lloyd, 1895 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Parker, Gilbert, 1917 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Partington, Blanche, 1925 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Rehan, Ada to Mrs. George Sterling, 1897 (1 piece)  
• Rehan, Arnold to Thadora Duncan, 1917 (1 piece)  
• Rihani, Ameen, 1921 (4 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Riplens, Victor Odle Lockwood, 1846 (1 piece)  
• Robertson, Louis A., 1904-8 (7 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Robinson, Edward Arlington, 1920-21 (3 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Rorby, James, 1925-26 (4 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Roosevelt, Theodore, 1914 (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
• Sandburg, Carl, 1916 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
• Schauffler, Robert Haim, 1912-20 (4 pieces to George Sterling)
Box 9  
**Scheffauer**  
This box includes:  
- Scheffauer, Herman George, 1904-21 (54 pieces to George Sterling)

Box 10  
**Sterling (GS 451-519)**  
This box includes:  
- Sterling, George to Mr. Brathwaite, 1919 (1 piece)  
- Sterling, George to George Wharton James, 1912 (1 piece)  
- Sterling, George. Meek Ranch [1925?] (GS 453)  
- Sterling, George to Jack London, 1910-1915 January

Box 11  
**Sterling (GS 520-571, 610)**  
This box includes both manuscripts and correspondence such as:  
- Sterling, George to Jack London, 1915 February-1916  
- Diary (2 pieces)  
- Epigrams (1 piece)  
- Miscellaneous manuscripts (7 pieces)  
- Poems (37 pieces)  
- Poems (typescripts, signed) (9 pieces)  
- Vocabulary aids (2 pieces)

Box 12  
**Sti-W; Ephemera/Photographs**  
This box includes:  
- Stillman, J. M., N.D. (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Tabbs, John B., 1903 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Teasdale, Sara, 1914 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Taggard, Genevieve, 1924 (4 pieces to George Sterling)  
- Towne, Charles Hanson, 1925 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- W., J. F., N.D. (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Van Doran, Mark, 1926 (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
- Wallace, Grace, Poems (5 pieces)  
- Williams, B. W., The Seats of the Mighty(1 piece)  
- Wilcox, Ella Wheeler, 1914 (5 pieces to George Sterling)  
- Welch, Marie De La, 1926 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Wells, H. G., 1904 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Wheelock, John Hall, 1914 (3 pieces to George Sterling)  
- White, Edward L., 19 (4 pieces to George Sterling)  
- Wilshire, Gaylord, 1926 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Wilson, H. L., 1916 (1 piece to George Sterling)  
- Wood, Charles Erskine Scott, 1925 (2 pieces to George Sterling)  
- Wright, Willard, 1919 (3 pieces to George Sterling)  
- Wurdemann, Audrey, Poems (2 pieces)  
- Wurdemann, Meek's Ranch, manuscript (2 pieces)  
- Wurdemann, Revenge, manuscript (1 piece)

Loose envelope  
**Watercolors (2 pieces)**