Ellen Steele Sturges Papers: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Stephanie E. Clayton, April 1, 2011.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
Manuscripts Department
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San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
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Overview of the Collection
Title: Ellen Steele Sturges Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1852-1946
Bulk dates: 1852-1894
Collection Number: mssSturges papers
Creator: Sturges, Ellen Steele.
Extent: 40 items. 1 box.
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Abstract: This collection contains 40 items by and related to Ellen Steele Sturges (1837-1930) of Michigan, Montana, and San Bernardino, California, and her family. Items chiefly include manuscripts of short stories by Sturges, some ephemera, and a few letters, notably including an 1852 letter from Sturges' father, Ebenezer Steele (1808-1901), with a report of his missionary work among the Ojibwa Indians, in Michigan.
Language: English.
Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. Ellen Steele Sturges Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
Gift of Joanna P. Leonard, June 8, 1948.
Biographical Note
Ellen Steele Sturges (1837-1930) was the daughter of Ebenezer Steele (born 1808). She was born on October 21, 1837, in Connecticut. Her mother, Mary Pilgrim, died in 1848, most likely due to complications from the birth of her third child. Ellen’s father remarried that fall. His second wife, Phebe, was a former teacher and a widow. By 1852, Steele was working as a missionary in Michigan for the Methodist Episcopal Church among the Ojibwa tribe.
Ellen (also known as "Nellie") married teacher David Brainerd Sturges (1839-1910) in 1860. Ellen graduated from Wesleyan Seminary in Albion in 1858, and graduated from nursing school in December 1864. She began teaching in 1865 and the Sturgeses taught in Montana before moving to San Bernardino, California, in 1876.
David Sturges was a county superintendent in 1881 and he founded the Sturges Academy in San Bernardino in 1883. The school was coeducational and was one of the first college preparatory schools in the area. Sturges closed the school around 1894 and taught at the local high school. He was a principal from 1897-1903 and a vice-principal in 1903. His work in the school district ended with his death in 1910. Sturges High School (now closed) and Sturges Theater (now Sturges Center for the Performing Arts) were named after him.
Ellen wrote short stories for family and friends throughout the late 19th century. Most of the tales are set on the frontier. She may have sent a few out for publication under the name “Elwhit Steele.” Ellen Sturges died on March 10, 1930.
Scope and Content
This collection contains 40 items (17 manuscripts, 4 letters, and 19 pieces of ephemera) by or related to Ellen Steele Sturges (1837-1930) of Michigan, Montana, and San Bernardino, California, and her family. Items chiefly consist of manuscripts of short stories written by Sturges, as well as two hymns. There is also a short 1-page autobiography by her father, Ebenezer Steele, and a small collection of genealogical and biographical notes detailing Ellen Steele Sturges’s family and David Brainerd Sturges’s life. One letter in the collection is a rejection notice from S.S. McClure Limited and includes an edited copy of “The Little Somnambulist.” An 1852 letter contains a report by Ebenezer Steele regarding his missionary
work in 1852 with an Ojibwa tribe in Michigan at “Na-yuh-mah-kauny” (or Naomikong). There is also a short note from Ellen’s stepmother, Phebe Steele, recounting Ebenezer Steele’s recollections of “Training Day” in Massachusetts. The ephemera includes Ellen Steele Sturges’s nursing certificate, a Montana homestead certificate from 1877 to David Sturges, and a Confederate States bond issued by the Central Business College of Sedalia, Missouri, from 1864. There is also an obituary for Ellen Steele Sturges, a photograph of David Brainerd Sturges, two photographic postcards of their house in San Bernardino, California, and a view of buildings in Virginia City, Montana, by photographer O.C. Bundy, circa 1875.

- Steele family correspondence. (Call number: mssHM 73830-73862)

Arrangement
Manuscripts and correspondence arranged alphabetically by author, followed by ephemera and photographs.

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

Subjects
Sturges, David Brainerd.
Sturges, Ellen Steele -- Archives.
American fiction -- Women authors.
Frontier and pioneer life -- Fiction.
Hymns, English -- United States.
Missionaries -- Correspondence.
Ojibwa Indians.
Women -- California.
Women authors, American -- 19th century -- Archives.
San Bernardino (Calif.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
San Bernardino (Calif.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.
Virginia City (Mont.) -- Photographs.

Forms/Genres
Hymns -- United States -- 19th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 19th century.
Manuscripts -- United States -- 19th century.

Additional Contributors
Bundy, O. C.
Steele, Ebenezer, 1808-1901.

Physical Description: 1 item (6 pp., typescript, and an address card).


Physical Description: 3 items (26 pp., handwritten).

Folder 7  Sturges, Ellen Steele. *The Little Somnambulist* [short story]. [1894].

Physical Description: 1 item (5 pp., typescript).


Physical Description: 1 item (2 pp., handwritten).


Physical Description: 1 item (7 pp, handwritten).

Folder 10  Sturges, Ellen Steele. *What the Mistletoe Hid in a California Cottonwood* [short story]. [Undated].

Physical Description: 1 item (4 pp., typescript).

Folder 11  Sturges, Ellen Steele. *Wonderful Times in Wonderland* [manuscript of Sketch Nos. 1 and 2 by "Aunt Hattie Storytell"]; [Undated].

Physical Description: 2 items (14 pp., handwritten).

Folder 12  -----*. Biographical and Genealogical Notes*. [Before 1948].

Physical Description: 3 items.

Folder 13  McClure, S.S. 1 rejection letter to Ellen Steele Sturges [with 5 pp. typescript copy of story "The Little Somnabulist" with manuscript edits]. 1894 April 13.

Physical Description: 2 items

Folder 14  Steele, Ebenezer. 1 letter to Rev. J.H. Pitezel. 1852 January 30

Physical Description: 1 item (2 pp., handwritten).

Folder 15  Steele, Phebe. 1 note "About Training Day." 1893 November

Physical Description: 1 item (1 leaf, handwritten).

Folder 16  **Miscellaneous Ephemera. 1864-1877.**

Physical Description: 3 items (1 damaged).

Consists of Ellen Steele Sturges’s nursing certificate from the Office of Superintendent of Women Nurses, a Montana homestead certificate from 1877 to David Sturges, and a Confederate States bond issued by the Central Business College of Sedalia, Missouri, from 1864.

Folder 17  **Newspaper Clippings. 1939-1946.**

Physical Description: 5 items.

Folder 18  **Photographic Material. [Undated].**

Physical Description: 8 items.

Consists of a studio portrait photograph of David Brainerd Sturges; a photograph of the exteriors of a church and buildings with a handwritten caption "Log hut above x is building where Mr. & Mrs. Sturges taught in Virginia City" by O.C. Bundy of Virginia City, Montana; two photographic postcards of the Sturges house in San Bernardino; and 4 commercial images of Glacier National Park, Montana, published by Kiser Photo.
Folder 19

**Poems. 1857 and undated.**

- Physical Description: 3 items (6 leaves, handwritten).
- Consists of handwritten copies of poems including one set transcribed by Ellen Steele Sturges to David Sturges, dated 1857.