Porter and Sesnon Family Papers MS.196

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Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: University of California, Santa Cruz
Title: Porter and Sesnon Family Papers
Creator: Porter (Family: Porter, George K.)
Creator: Sesnon (Family: Sesnon, William T.)
Identifier/Call Number: MS.196
Physical Description: 8 Linear Feet14 boxes
Date (inclusive): 1880-1997
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Preferred Citation
Porter and Sesnon Family Papers. MS 196. Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Scope and Contents
This collection includes correspondence, family photographs, writings, ephemera and realia related to the prominent Porter and Sesnon families of Santa Cruz, California.
Biographical / Historical
The Porter legacy in California stretches back to the Gold Rush Era, when a trio of Porter cousins, George K., John T., and Edward F. "Ned" Porter, made their way from New England to Santa Cruz County and engaged in a wide array of entrepreneurial activities.
In 1854, another cousin, Benjamin Franklin Porter made his way to California by crossing the Isthmus of Panama on foot, before joining his family members in Soquel. He became active in the local economy and, in the mid 1850s purchased the Soquel Tannery along with his cousin George and C.W. Moore.
In the autumn of 1867, Benjamin returned to New England, where he married his childhood family friend, Kate Hubbard. The couple returned to California, where they started a family. Mary Sophia "May" Porter was born in Soquel on October 9, 1868. Mary's sister Sadie died of typhoid fever at the age of 24. Mary was the lone descendant and heir of her father and mother's vast estate, and of her Uncle Ned's, who also had extensive residential and commercial holdings in the Soquel township.
In 1896, Mary married William T. Sesnon, of Alameda, a businessman and civic leader who served as clerk of San Francisco County. William expanded the Porter family business and real estate holdings into successful oil ventures, manufacturing sites, and land development. The couple had four children - Porter, Katherine, Barbara and William Jr., who were raised spending their summers at the Pino Alto estate in Soquel.
When William Sr.'s health deteriorated in the late 1920s, the once thriving salons at Pino Alto came to an end. William died in 1929, and Mary passed away the following year. The property was eventually sold off, first to the Salesian order, before it was finally purchased by Cabrillo College in 1978, where it became known as the Sesnon House.
Descendants of the Porter-Sesnon clan have always been active and generous in the community. Porter College at the University of California Santa Cruz is named after Benjamin Franklin Porter, while his daughter's love of art is memorialized at the Mary Porter Sesnon Gallery.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Santa Cruz County (Calif.) -- History -- Sources
Correspondence 1890-1956

Scope and Contents
This series contains incoming and outgoing correspondence between Porter and Sesnon family members and friends.

Box 1, Folder 1
- Mrs. B.F. Porter, 17th [no month] from Frank, "Dear Ma" circa 1892

Box 1, Folder 2
- Mrs. B.F. Porter from Frank, "Dear, Dear Ma" February-March 1892

Box 1, Folder 3
- Mrs. B.F. Porter from Frank, "Dear Ma" circa May, December 1892

Box 1, Folder 4
- Kate H. Porter from Frank, "Dear Ma" circa August 19, 1893

Box 1, Folder 5
- Mrs. B.F. Porter from Frank, "Dear Ma" October 1893

Box 1, Folder 6
- Mrs. B.F. Porter from Frank, "Dear Ma" December 1893

Box 1, Folder 7
- May S. Porter from Albert Eisenberg October 23, 1891

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- Telegram Eisenberg to Miss May Porter. Milano October 26, 1891

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- Miss May S. Porter from Albert Eisenberg, "Dear May" November 17, 1891

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- May to B. F. Porter "My dearest Papa" June 28, 1891

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- May to B.F. Porter "My dearest Papa" October 24, 1891

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- Miss M. S. Porter, from N-, "My darling Ritz" May 18, 1892

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- Mademoiselle Marie Porter from Eugene Frankfurter, "Ma chere amie" February 14, 1893

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- Wedding Invitation to Miss May Porter, announcing the marriage of Anna Fisher Meeks to Dr. Frederick Oscar Chamberlain July 17, 1893

Box 1, Folder 18
- Miss May Porter from Frank Howard, "My dear Miss May" August 1893

Box 1, Folder 19-20
- Miss May Porter from Frank Howard, "My dear Miss Porter" April 2, 1896

Box 1, Folder 21
- Molly to Miss May Porter "My dear May" June 1894

Box 1, Folder 22
- Sophie to Miss May, "My darling May" June-August, 1894

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- Miss May from E.E. Park [?], "My very dear friend" August 5, 1894

Box 1, Folder 25
- C. Jus. to Miss M. Porter, "My dear Friend" November 17, 1894

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- Miss May [and] Sarah Porter from Mom, "My darlings" December 1894

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Box 1, Folder 35-36
- Miss May [and] Sarah Porter, Monday, A.M. from Mom, "My darlings" circa 1894

Box 1, Folder 37
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- Misses May and Sarah Porter, [partial letter] from Mom, "...wishes I shall" undated

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- Alicia M. to The Missis May and Sarah Porter, "My dear Missis May and Sarah" March 12, 1895

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- "Dear Miss Porter" from W.B. Jorry [?] Jr. April 19, 1895

Box 1, Folder 41
- G.S.G. to Miss Porter, 7.30 P.M. "Mr. Sesnon has" April 26, 1895

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- George to Miss M.S. Porter "Dear May & Auntie Kate" March 22, 1896

Box 1, Folder 43
- May Porter from M [annie?], "My Dearest May" July 12, 1896

Box 1, Folder 44
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Box 1, Folder 45
- Sarah Porter from Alice Reese [?] "My dear La-" September 19, 1893

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- W. Sesnon Esq. from W.K. Vickery, "Dear Sir" January-March, 1895

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- Gift card: To May from Will, "To my dearest May" December 25, 1893

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- Silver Wedding Anniversary Invitation for Mr. and Mrs. John T. Porter April 28, 1884

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Benjamin F. Porter from Kate H. Porter July-December 1891

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Box 5, Folder 79
Mr. and Mrs. Porter Sesnon from Goodwin and Virginia Knight October 1956

Photographs 1880-1976
Scope and Contents
This series includes photographic portraits of family members, groups and organizations, outdoor excursions and travel.

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Portraits of Mary Porter Sesnon, William T. Sesnon, groups, family travel, and a movie set. circa 1880-1950

Box 7, Folder 1-7
Cocktail parties, hunting and fishing parties, Cow Palace livestock shows, PG&E group, Sonoma County Trail Blazers annual trek. circa 1940-1957

Box 8, Folder 1-6
Hunting and fishing parties, political meetings, Sonoma County Trail Blazers annual trek. circa 1950-1976

Box 9, Folder 1-9
Portraits of William T. Sesnon, Mary Porter Sesnon, Helen Sesnon, family home and grounds, images from the "oil and gas file", and small album - Kern Board of Directors Meeting at Orcadia Lodge Spider Lake, Wisconsin. circa 1920-1968

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Scope and Contents
This series includes diaries, speeches, letters, and William T. Sesnon’s Pan Pacific International Exposition materials.

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Notebook of typewritten speeches by William T. Sesnon 1912-1913

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Diary - William T. Sesnon re: Pan Pacific International Exposition, Europe, speeches circa 1914-1915

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William T. Sesnon speech to Japanese Consul circa 1910-1915

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William T. Sesnon speech to San Francisco Chamber of Commerce circa 1910-1915

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William T. Sesnon address to Chamber of Commerce at Palace Hotel 1913

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William T. Sesnon dedication speech for Porter Memorial Library January 27, 1913

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William T. Sesnon speech regarding banking circa 1910-1915

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William T. Sesnon address to San Francisco Chamber of Commerce February 2, 1914

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William T. Sesnon address to California Cattleman’s Association Convention April 8, 1919

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Paraphrase of telegram mentioning William T. Sesnon for Pan Pacific International Exposition April 17, 1912

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| Box 10, Folder 15 | Proposal of William T. Sesnon to pursue San Francisco Chamber of Commerce policies as a director of the Pan Pacific International Exposition circa 1915 |
| Box 10, Folder 16 | Letter and translation to William T. Sesnon from Emile Dupont and A. Roger Sandoz, General Secretary of French Committee for Foreign Expositions 1912 |

**Ephemera and Realia 1890-1997**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains Sesnon and Porter family histories, clippings, menus, dance cards, programs, travel documents, plaquettes, and the research materials of James Dolkas.

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| Box 11, Folder 5 | &quot;First Regular Smoke&quot; invitation May 12, 1893 |
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| Box 11, Folder 8 | Dining documents - invitation, seating plan, place card for dinner honoring President Wm. Howard Taft 1911 |
| Box 11, Folder 9 | Baggage declaration and entry form of William T. Sesnon from the <em>Lusitania</em> April 24, 1912 |
| Box 11, Folder 10 | Menu to &quot;Banquet to the President of the U.S.&quot; - Pan Pacific International Exposition October 13, 1911 |
| Box 11, Folder 11 | Menu to &quot;Banquet to Hon. Wm. Randolph Hearst.&quot; - Pan Pacific International Exposition January 3, 1912 |
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