

Collection #
M 1235
OM 0617

**GENE STRATTON PORTER
COLLECTION, 1843–1999 (BULK 1910S–1930S)**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 4 manuscript boxes; 2 oversized folders; 4 photograph boxes; 3 photo albums; 1 folder color photos; 1 box postcards; 4 OVA folders of photos; 8 cased images; 5 tintypes; 8 4X5 acetate negatives.

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive, 1843–1999; bulk, 1910s–1930s

PROVENANCE: American Eagle Auction Company, Livonia, Michigan, June, 2016

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2016.0183

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Geneva Grace Stratton was born on a farm in Wabash County on Aug. 17, 1863, the youngest of 12 children. Her father, Mark Stratton, was a licensed Methodist minister and prosperous farmer. Gene's mother, Mary (Shallenberger) Stratton, became ill when her youngest was 5 and died in 1875.

At an early age, Gene had little formal schooling but developed a lively interest in nature and wildlife. When her family moved to the city of Wabash in 1874, she began to attend school on a regular basis and completed all but the last term of high school.

On April 21, 1886, she married Charles D. Porter, a druggist in Geneva, Ind., who was 13 years her senior. The couple's only child, Jeannette H., was born in 1887. After oil was discovered on some farmland Mr. Porter owned, Gene Stratton-Porter used the new family wealth to construct a 14-room home, which she designed herself, near the Limberlost Swamp.

The Limberlost Swamp was where Stratton-Porter soon began to photograph birds and animals in their natural habitat. She sent these photographs, with no explanation, to *Recreation* magazine. Impressed by her efforts, the magazine asked her to write a camera department and paid her with new photographic equipment. A year later, *Outing* magazine hired her to do similar work.

Encouraged by these accomplishments, she turned to writing fiction. Her first novel, *The Song of the Cardinal*, met with modest success, but her next book, *Freckles*, established her tremendous popularity with the reading public. Despite critics' complaints that her work was overly sentimental and idealistic, Stratton-Porter continued to enjoy popular acclaim with works like *A Girl of the Limberlost*, *Laddie*, *Michael O'Halloran* and *A Daughter of the Land*.

In 1913, after the Limberlost Swamp had been drained, Stratton-Porter moved to northern Indiana where she built a new home – "The Cabin at Wildflower Woods" – on the shores of Sylvan Lake at Rome City. In 1920, she moved to California where she organized her own movie company and based a number of films on her books. Stratton-Porter died on Dec. 6, 1924, in Los Angeles following a traffic accident and was buried in Hollywood Cemetery. In 1999, Stratton-Porter's body and that of her daughter were buried on the grounds of the Gene Stratton-Porter Historic Site in Rome City, Ind.

Sources: Indiana Historical Society Web site: <http://www.indianahistory.org/our-collections/reference/notable-hoosiers/gene-stratton-porter#.V6YDn-srK70>

Other individuals figuring prominently in the collection are Mark Stratton, Merlin Wilson, Gladys Wilson Lawshe, and Donald Wilson.

Mark Stratton, Gene's father was born in New Jersey in 1812. After several moves with his family, he ended up in Warren County, Ohio. In 1835 he married Mary Shellenbarger, and three years later they moved to Wabash County, Indiana, where he farmed as well as becoming a Methodist Minister in 1857. Stratton also served as a township trustee and county commissioner. The Stratton's had twelve children. Mary Stratton died in 1875 and Mark raised the younger children alone. He died in 1890.

Merlin Wilson (1885–1946) was the son of Frank and Ada Stratton Wilson (Gene's sister) and was born and raised in Wabash County but spent most of his life in Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana, where he worked as an insurance salesman.

Gladys Wilson Lawshe (1887–1970) was also the daughter of Frank and Ada Wilson . She moved to Los Angeles in the 1910s and married James S. Lawshe, from Fort Wayne.

Donald R. Wilson (1890–1961) also a son of Frank and Ada Wilson, attended Wabash College from 1909–1912. On 29 July 1917 he enlisted in the United States Army serving in the 82nd and 494th Aero Squadrons in Texas and France. He rose to rank of 2nd Lieutenant and served mainly as an administrative officer until November, 1919. After the war he returned to Wabash where he was employed as a construction worker.

Sources:

Ancestry, Library Edition, Accessed 27 September 2016
Information in Collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains items relating to Gene Stratton Porter, Donald Wilson, Merlin Wilson and their families.

Gene Stratton Porter materials include correspondence, photographs, items relating to the Limberlost, and movies based upon her books. Most of Gene's letters are from the time she was residing in California to her sisters, Ada Wilson and Florence Compton in Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana, December, 1922–November, 1924, many reaching over ten typed pages regarding family news and information. Stratton Porter writes of her movies and books, as well as relating the scenery and fishing in California. Also included are newspaper clippings and correspondence regarding Gene's death including letters from Frances Foster who was staying with her daughter while straightening up her affairs.

The collection also contains a good deal of information about Porter's Limberlost grounds including the use of the property by the Boy Scouts, 1928–1935; correspondence between Gene's daughter, Jeannette Porter Meehan, and Merlin Wilson, regarding the financial status and upkeep of the property, 1924–1946; and correspondence regarding the transfer of the property to the State of Indiana, 1945–1947.

Mark Stratton materials include financial records, legal papers, correspondence, real estate dealings and sermons, 1843–1890.

A large part of the collection deals with Gene's sister, Ada Stratton Wilson's, family. In addition to Ada's address book and accounts from 1946, there are the financial dealings of her son, Merlin, 1930s–1940s, and the World War I materials from another son, Donald F., 1917–1919.

Among the photographs housed in the collection are private photos of GSP and her family from childhood to her time in California, 1870s–1920s including parents, siblings and trips and outings in California and Indiana; photos of members of the Stratton family, ca. 1860s–1880s; Limberlost related photos, including two albums from around the 1930s entitled "The Thatch;" photo albums from the Lawshe and Wilson families in California and Indiana; and Donald F. Wilson's World War I photo album. Additional items include photographs from movies taken from Porter's novels, *Laddie*, *The Harvester*, and *The Girl of the Limberlost*.

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Series 1: Gene Stratton Porter (GSP) Correspondence and Related Materials

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Charles Porter letter to Genevieve (Gene) Stratton, 18 September 1884	Box 1, Folder 2
GSP Correspondence, 1916–1920	Box 1, Folder 3
GSP Correspondence, Dec., 1922–March, 1923	Box 1, Folder 4
GSP Correspondence, April, 1923	Box 1, Folder 5
GSP Correspondence, May–Sept., 1923	Box 1, Folder 6
GSP Correspondence, Oct.–Dec., 1923	Box 1, Folder 7
GSP Correspondence, Jan.–March, 1924	Box 1, Folder 8
GSP Correspondence, April–June, 1924	Box 1, Folder 9
GSP Correspondence, Aug.–Nov., 1924	Box 1, Folder 10
Materials Regarding Death of GSP, 1924–1927	Box 1, Folder 11
Wedding Invitation and Dress Material Receipts, 1886	Box 1, Folder 12
GSP Related Newspaper Clippings, 1904–1970	Box 1, Folder 13
Printed Items, GSP's works	Box 1, Folder 14 & OM 617, Folder 1
Jeannette Porter Meehan Correspondence, 1912–1954	Box 2, Folder 1
Jeannette Porter Meehan Correspondence with Merlin Wilson, 1924–1946	Box 2, Folder 2
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Jeanette Porter Meehan Newspaper Clippings, 1924–1926	Box 2, Folder 4
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Mark Stratton, Financial Papers, 1833–1886	Box 2, Folder 11
Mark Stratton, Insurance, 1875–1888	Box 2, Folder 12
Mark Stratton, Receipts (1 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 13
Mark Stratton, Receipts (2 of 2)	Box 2, Folder 14
Mark Stratton, General Materials, 1833, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 15
Mark Stratton, Legal Papers, 1849–1877	Box 2, Folder 16
Mark Stratton, Obituaries, 1887, 1890, 1923	Box 2, Folder 17
Mark Stratton, Civil War Sermon, 7 Aug. 1864	Box 2, Folder 18
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Series 3: Limberlost and Movie Related Materials

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Limberlost Camp, Boy Scouts, 1928–1935 (1 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 1
Limberlost Camp, Boy Scouts, 1928–1935 (2 of 2)	Box 3, Folder 2
Limberlost Cabin/Wildflower Woods Report, July–Aug., 1930	Box 3, Folder 3
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Transfer of GSP Property to State, 1945–1947	Box 3, Folder 5

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"The Thatch," Limberlost Photo Album #1	Album Storage: PAA
Loose Item Removed from "The Thatch" # 1	Photographs: Box 4, Folder 10
"The Thatch," Limberlost and other photos, Photo Album #2	Album Storage: PAA
Acetate Negatives of Limberlost Scenes (8)	4 X 5 Acetate Negatives
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Mark Stratton Portrait, ca. 1880s

GSP's Mother

GSP (?) with Doll

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GSP's Siblings, Florence, Ada, Jerome

Ada Wilson, Gladys Wilson Lawshe

Jeannette Porter Monroe/James Meehan Wedding,
1924

GSP, Family Outings, 1920s

GSP Cabin, Wildflower Wood, Rome City, ca. 1916

GSP's Grandchildren

Charles D. Porter, 1924

GSP Funeral

CONTAINER

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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 6

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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 14

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Movie Stills, Laddie (folder 7 of 9)

Movie Stills, Laddie (folder 8 of 9)

Movie Stills, Laddie (folder 9 of 9)

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CONTAINER

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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Photographs:
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Lawshe/Wilson Photo Album, 1915–1929 (2 of 18)

Lawshe/Wilson Photo Album, 1915–1929 (3 of 18)

Lawshe/Wilson Photo Album, 1915–1929 (4 of 18)

Lawshe/Wilson Photo Album, 1915–1929 (5 of 18)

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CONTAINER

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Baby photograph removed from album	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2