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Helen Haskell Noyes Diary

ca.1885

1 vol. (0.1 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 072 bd



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A fine bookbinder and daughter of New Thought dietary reformer Charles C. Haskell, Helen Haskell Noyes ("Nellie") was raised in privilege in Deer Isle, Maine, and Norwich, Conn. At the age of 21, Nellie and a group of friends embarked on a grand tour, visiting Switzerland, Italy, France, and England over the course of several months, taking in the usual fare of art and antiquities, cathedrals, palaces, fortifications, museums, and hotels.

In her diary for 1885, Noyes kept a careful record of her experiences while on her grand tour. In sometimes perfunctory, but often interesting and humorous detail, she notes the challenges and pleasures of European travel, but more importantly, she offers a reflection of a young American woman's first encounter with a foreign culture and her growing fascination with the deep

art history in Italy.

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Background on Helen G. Haskell

Born in Deer Isle, Maine, on March 23, 1864, Helen Gowen Haskell ("Nellie"), was the second child of Charles Courtney Haskell (1840-1914) and Charlotte Lufkin Saunders, and part of growing family that included sisters Evelyn Belle (b. 1862) and Margaret "Margie" White (b. 1866) and younger brothers Charles Houston (b. 1869) and Henry Saunders (1871-1955).

From humble beginnings as a common school teacher in Deer Isle, Charles Haskell went on to enjoy success as a publisher and author, affording his children the benefits of wealth and a sound education. Following Charlotte Haskell's death in Dec. 1875, Charles married Mary Alexander (b. July 1839) in June 1877, relocating his family to her home of Norwich, Conn. Like his colleague Edward Hooker Dewey, Haskell became known as a health reformer and a leading advocate for the "fasting cure," which applied New Thought ideals to the promotion of bodily well-being. Haskell's theorized that freedom from illness and longevity could be achieved through a regimen that included total abstention from breakfast, refusal to eat except when hungry, thorough mastication, and never drinking at meals. His widely-distributed book *Perfect Health: How To Get It and How To Keep It, By One Who Has It* (1901), along with his Correspondence School of Perfect Health, influenced dietary reformers and writers from Bernarr McFadden to Upton Sinclair.

Interested in the arts from a young age, Helen Haskell was treated to a grand tour of Europe when she turned 21. Traveling with a group of other "girls" that included May Bartholomew and the sisters, Emeline and Katherine G. Vaill, Helen wound her way through Switzerland, Italy, France, and England over the course of several months, absorbing the usual fare of art and antiquities, cathedrals, palaces, fortifications, museums, and grand hotels. Her experiences on that trip appear to have cemented her love of the arts. Within a few years, she emerged as a noted hand bookbinder. As a member of the New York Guild of Arts and Crafts and an early officer (as Secretary and Treasurer) of the Guild of Bookworkers, her work was prominently featured at exhibitions in New York City, and she remained active in the book arts community throughout her marriage to Charles William Noyes (1854-1921), earning the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Guild of Bookworkers in 1937. In 1920, she and a fellow bookworker, Emily Preston, became authors of a book, *The Voice from Space*, detailing their experiences in communicating with the dead through a Ouija board.

Noyes lived in New York City until her death in 1940. Both she and her husband are buried in the Castine Cemetery, Castine, Me.

Scope of collection

In her diary for 1885, Noyes kept a careful record of her experiences on a grand European tour. In sometimes perfunctory, but often interesting and humorous detail, she notes the challenges and pleasures of European travel, but more importantly, she offers a reflection of a young American woman's first encounter with a foreign culture and her growing fascination with the deep art history in Italy. During her tour, Noyes passed through Lausanne, Geneva, Nice, Cannes, Naples (with Pompeii), Rome, Florence, Lake Como, Bellagio, Paris, London, Oxford, and the north of England.

Although the year of the diary is nowhere recorded, Haskell's name appears on the manifest of passengers aboard the *Servia*, along with those of three companions to whom she alludes in the diary. The *Servia* departed Liverpool and arrived in New York on Aug. 31, 1885.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Provenance unrecorded, Mar. 2005 (2005-070).

Processing Information

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Switzerland--Description and travel--19th century

Contributors

Noyes, Helen Haskell [**main entry**]

Haskell, Nellie Gowan

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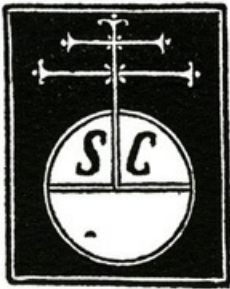
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