

Guide to the Katherine Shapleigh Papers

RG 176



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2001

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Divinity Library
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<http://web.library.yale.edu/divinity/special-collections>

CALL NUMBER: RG 176

CREATOR: Shapleigh, Katherine, 1875-1942

TITLE: Katherine Shapleigh Papers

DATES: 1887-1976

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Letters, writings, photographs, and collected material document the fascinating life of Katherine Shapleigh, including her missionary work in China. Raised as a traditional Episcopalian, Katherine Chase Pratt Shapleigh married Alfred Shapleigh, a graduate of Harvard Medical School, and they served in Tianjin (Tientsin), China under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from 1896 to 1897. Apparently experiencing a transformation in their religious beliefs, the Shapleighs divested themselves of many of the wedding gifts and possessions given to them by their affluent families and returned to the U.S. where Alfred attended Bible schools and they engaged in home mission work until able to return to China under the more conservative China Inland Mission (CIM) board. They returned to China in 1904 but Alfred and their two children tragically died of smallpox shortly after arrival. Katherine Shapleigh remained in China under the CIM for several years (1904-1908, 1915-1920, 1926-1927). She served at the training school for future mission workers run by the China Inland Mission in Yangzhou (Yangchow) and in later years worked with Russian refugees at the Foreign Women's Home in Shanghai. Shapleigh later served as Dean of Women at Wheaton College in Illinois.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.176>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/divinity.176>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Stephen D. Pratt and Joan Morgan Anderson.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Preferred Citation

Katherine Shapleigh Papers (RG 176), Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library.

Processing Information

Place names were modernized in the description, with the name originally used in the collection material or in an older version of the finding aid in parenthesis: e.g. "Beijing (Peking)" or "Benin (Dahomey)".

Biographical / Historical

Date	Event
1875 December 29	○ Born in Worcester, MA
1892-1893	○ Attended St. Agnes School, Albany, NY
1895	○ Met Alfred Shapleigh in Princeton, MA where their families had summer homes
1896 June 2	○ Married Alfred Shapleigh; they had three children: Samuel Brooks (1897-1905), Gordon (1899-1900), Stephen (1903-1905).
1896-1897	○ Served in Tianjin (Tientsin), China under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
1897	○ Family returned to Worcester, MA, where Alfred took over practice of physician who was on leave
1898-1899	○ Moved to Boston, where Alfred was assistant to his father, who was president of the Shapleigh Coffee Co., and engaged in Bible study
1900	○ Alfred took Bible training courses at Nyack College in New York and Moody Bible Institute in Chicago
1901	○ Engaged in evangelistic home missionary work in California
1901-1902	○ Returned to Boston; worked with Salvation Army
1902-1903	○ Home missionary work in Colorado and California
1904	○ Returned to China under China Inland Mission

Date	Event
1905	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Alfred and two surviving sons died of smallpox shortly after the family's arrival in China. Alfred and the sons had not been vaccinated against smallpox, so did not survive the disease; Katherine suffered a mild case of smallpox but recovered.
1905-1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Katherine remained in China, engaging in language study and serving at missionary training school in Yangzhou (Yangchow)
1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Katherine returned to U.S. where she cared for her father and spoke in churches
1915-1916	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o In Yangzhou (Yangchow), followed by return to U.S.
1918-1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Working with women Russian refugees at Foreign Women's Home, Shanghai, followed by return to U.S.
1926-1927	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Working at Foreign Women's Home, Shanghai
circa 1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Appointed Dean of Women at Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL
1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Received B.A.
1937	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Following a severe heart attack, Katherine retired from Wheaton position and moved to North Carolina
1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Died in North Carolina

Scope and Contents

Series I, Correspondence consists primarily of family correspondence. Letters from Shapleigh to her family and their replies document in detail the changing paths of her life. Brought up in an affluent, traditional Episcopalian household, Katherine may have been headed toward a rather sheltered existence, but her marriage to Alfred Shapleigh and their subsequent work in China exposed her to a vastly different world. The Shapleighs' dissatisfaction during their first period of work in China under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions led to a return back to the United States where they engaged in a variety of educational, commercial, and missionary activities before being appointed by the China Inland Mission to return to China. The tragic deaths of Katherine's husband and sons shortly after their arrival in China did not deter her from remaining with the mission and finding a new way of life there. While Katherine had been largely preoccupied by her language study and baby son during their first period in China, her subsequent years alone in China were spent at the CIM Yangchow training school and the Foreign Women's Home in Shanghai, which provided shelter to Russian women refugees who came to China following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Katherine found fulfillment in her work with her mission colleagues but clearly had continuing strong ties to her family at home. In addition to the correspondence documenting Shapleigh's life, there are also letters of other family members and material related to the John Singer Sargent portrait of Katherine that was painted when she was in her late teen years.

Series II, Writings, includes some early school essays but consists primarily of poetry written by Katherine Shapleigh. Katherine was an accomplished poet who had her work published.

Series III, Personal Items and Memorabilia, includes a variety of materials documenting Katherine Shapleigh's life, from early school report cards to biographical sketches by family members. Of particular note in this section is the application letter submitted by Katherine to the China Inland Mission when she and her husband sought appointment to China by CIM. This autobiographical letter provides explanation of the religious beliefs that significantly influenced the course of the Shapleighs' lives. Series III also includes a number of interesting photographs from the Shapleighs' early years in China, 1896-1897, which show their well-equipped Western-style home in China, their Chinese language teachers, and so forth. Later photographs show Katherine in Yangzhou (Yangchow) and members of the China Inland Mission Kiangsu Conference.

Arrangement

- I. Correspondence
- II. Writings
- III. Personal Items and Memorabilia

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence

KS to family		
b. 1, f. 1-2	Childhood letters to parents	1887-1892
b. 1, f. 3	To parents while at St. Agnes School, Albany, NY	1893 Jun– Oct 11
b. 1, f. 4-9	From St. Agnes School	1893 Oct 12-1894 Nov
b. 1, f. 10	To parents, incl. honeymoon	1896 Mar-Jul
b. 1, f. 11	To family, en route to China	1896 Aug-Sep
b. 1, f. 12	To family, from Tianjin (Tientsin)	1896 September-October
b. 1, f. 13-15	From Tianjin (Tientsin)	1896 November - 1897 February
b. 1, f. 16	From Tianjin (Tientsin), including birth of son, Samuel Brooks	1897 March-April
b. 1, f. 17	From Tianjin (Tientsin) and Beidaihe (Pei-Tai-Ho) (vacation resort)	1897 May
b. 1, f. 18-19	From Beidaihe (Pei-Tai-Ho)	1897 June-August
b. 1, f. 20	From Tianjin (Tientsin)	1897 September-November
b. 2, f. 21-22	From USA / Princeton, Allston, MA	1898 Jun - 1899 Dec
b. 2, f. 23-24	From USA	1900 Jan-Dec
b. 2, f. 25	From USA / California	1901 Jan-Apr
b. 2, f. 26	From USA / California, Allston, MA	1901 May-Dec
b. 2, f. 27-28	From USA	1902 Jan-1903 Oct
b. 2, f. 29	From USA / En route to China	1904 Jan-Dec
b. 2, f. 30	From Shanghai, Zhenjiang (Chinkiang), including death of Alfred and sons	1905 January-April
b. 2, f. 31-32	From Yangzhou (Yangchow)	1905 May-December
b. 2, f. 33	From Yangzhou (Yangchow), Zhenjiang (Chinkiang)	1906 January-December
b. 2, f. 34	From Zhenjiang (Chinkiang), Shanghai	1907 January-February

KS to family (continued)

b. 2, f. 35-36	From USA	1908 Apr-1914
b. 2, f. 37	From USA / En route to China / Yangzhou (Yangchow)	1915 January-December
b. 2, f. 38	From Yangzhou (Yangchow), etc.	1916 January-December
b. 2, f. 39	From China, various / From USA, Baltimore	1917 Jan-Nov
b. 2, f. 40	En route to China / From Jinan (Tsinan)	1918 August-December
b. 2, f. 41	From Jinan (Tsinan), Guling (Kuling), Shanghai	1919 January-December
b. 3, f. 42	From Foreign Women's Home, Shanghai (work with Russian refugees)	1920 Jan-Oct.
b. 3, f. 43	From Foreign Women's Home, Shanghai	1926-1927
b. 3, f. 44	Traveling in Europe	1930
b. 3, f. 45-46	From Wheaton College	1934-1937
Circular Letters of KS		
b. 3, f. 47	From China Inland Mission station in Yangzhou (Yangchow / Yang-chow); including re: death and funeral of J. Hudson Taylor	1905-1906
From family to KS		
b. 3, f. 48-55	Parents	1893 Sep-1906 Nov
b. 3, f. 56-58	Sister	1905-1906, 1913
b. 4, f. 59	Brothers	1904, 1906, 1940
b. 4, f. 60	Mother-in-law	1905 Feb-Mar
b. 4, f. 61	Father-in-law	1905 Feb-Apr
b. 4, f. 62	Sister-in-law	1905 Feb-Apr
KS to / from others		
b. 4, f. 63	Miscellaneous letters to KS	
b. 4, f. 64	Letters re. KS heart attack, Wheaton	1937 Jun-Sep
Correspondence of others		
b. 4, f. 65	Frederick Pratt (father) to/from various people	
b. 4, f. 66	Arthur Shapleigh, Sr. to Frederick Pratt	1895, 1907
b. 4, f. 67	Elizabeth (sister) to parents	1888-1893
b. 4, f. 68	Letters re. loan of John Singer Sargent portrait of Katherine Shapleigh	1893-1946

Correspondence of others (continued)

b. 4, f. 69	Re. insurance policies on paintings	1924, 1942
b. 4, f. 70	Letters from John S. Sargent and photos	1890
b. 4, f. 71	Fragments and unidentified; Partial log of "Aunt Kitty" letters compiled by Stephen D. Pratt	

Series II: Writings of KS

b. 4, f. 72	Early school essays	1890s
b. 4, f. 73-75	Poetry	n.d.
b. 4, f. 76	Correspondence re. publishing poetry	
b. 4, f. 77	Article: "A Visit to a New Station"	n.d.

Series III: Personal Items and Memorabilia

b. 4, f. 78	Letters of condolence upon death of husband and sons	1904
b. 4, f. 79	Birth, wedding certificates; will of ALS, consular papers	
b. 4, f. 80	Letters from Brooks (son) to grandparents	1904
b. 4, f. 81	Booklets and programs	
b. 5, f. 82	Childhood report cards; French and Latin letters to/from KS and brother	
b. 5, f. 83	Early school notes and workbooks of KS	
b. 5, f. 84	Catalogs re. works of John Singer Sargent	
b. 5, f. 85	Miscellaneous, incl. cable codes, letter re. gravestone	
b. 5, f. 86	Biographical information: incl. autobiographical letters by KS and AS to China Inland Mission board, family tree, biographical sketch of KS by sister Elizabeth Pratt Clark, Katharine Irving Morgan's Tuesday Club Paper on "Aunt Kitty", delivered in March 1976	1896-1976
b. 5, f. 87	Photographs: KS, family, home in China, Chinese language teachers	1897-1897
b. 5, f. 87	Photographs: KS, family, missionaries on ship to China	1904
b. 5, f. 87	Photographs: Katherine Shapleigh, colleagues in Yangzhou (Yangchow), China Inland Mission Kiang-su Conference	1906-1907

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Missionaries
Missions -- China

Names

Shapleigh, Katherine, 1875-1942

Corporate Body

China Inland Mission