

George Sturt:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Sturt, George, 1863-1927
Title:	George Sturt (pseud. George Bourne) Collection
Dates:	1893-1927
Extent:	2 boxes
Abstract:	This collection consists of holograph and typescript drafts of books, articles, and essays; typescripts of passages from Sturt's journals; and letters. These materials document the life and literary works of the English teacher, wheelwright, and writer who was best known for his books, essays, and articles on country people and life published under the pseudonym George Bourne.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04112
Language:	English.
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, 1968 (R4356)
Processed by	Bill Stingone, 1995
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

George Sturt was born in Farnham, Surrey, in 1863. He was a grammar school teacher until 1894 when his father died, after which George Sturt took over the family wheelwright shop in Farnham, where he lived for the rest of his life. He wrote numerous books and articles under the name George Bourne.

Sturt's first published book was *A Year's Exile* (1898), a novel--his only published novel--about country life among the people of Surrey. Many of Sturt's later books, essays, and articles dealt with country people and life, and at times with more specific and technical aspects of the practices and tools of the wheelwright and farmer. Among such books were *The Bettsworth Book* (1901), *Change in the Village* (1912), *Lucy Bettsworth* (1913), *A Farmer's Life, with a Memoir of the Farmer's Sister* (1922), and *The Wheelwright's Shop* (1923), often considered to be his best book. Sturt also authored a book on aesthetics titled *The Ascending Effort* (1910).

Although Sturt had friends in literary circles in London, he rarely left his village: he was devoted to the observation of the life and crafts there. Sometime in 1916 Sturt was struck with an illness which left him partially paralyzed; however, he continued to write until his death in 1927.

Scope and Contents

The George Sturt Collection (1893-1927) consists of holograph and typescript drafts of books, articles, and essays; typescripts of passages from Sturt's journals; and Sturt's holograph letters. The collection is arranged in three series: works, journals, and letters.

The works series is arranged alphabetically by the title of each piece. The manuscripts of articles, essays, and books represent the complete range of subjects and themes on which Sturt wrote. The works in the collection cover topics such as timber, tools, socialism, and philanthropy, all of which center in some way around village life and labor in the present and past. The manuscripts are in a variety of states of completion, but most manuscripts are in Sturt's hand and are heavily revised. Of his major work the collection includes two early versions of *The Ascending Effort*, a holograph manuscript titled "Evolution and Art," and a typescript, retitled "Art and Empire" ; a manuscript of the title sketch of *Lucy Bettsworth*; and the heavily revised manuscript of Sturt's unpublished novel "The Extinction of the Keens," accompanied by a letter to Sturt's friend, sent before Sturt began to write the novel, which outlines the book's plot.

Typescript passages from Sturt's journals appear to be transcriptions made from the originals with corrections in Sturt's hand. The two main periods covered by the journals are 1901-1905 and 1923-1927. The entries covering from March 1925 through January 1927 make up over half of the series. The journals contain the seeds of Sturt's published writing. Entries include descriptions of people and scenes in his village, but Sturt's reflections deal not only with village life but broader social issues, such as labor, free

trade, and spirituality; some entries are Sturt's reactions to books or articles he had recently read. It is not known if the original journals are extant.

The bulk of the letters series is comprised of Sturt's holograph letters to William W. Kennerley, 1893-1925. In these letters Sturt confides his literary ambitions and describes the everyday activities of his life. Among these letters is Sturt's translation from the Latin of Chapters IX and XIII of Cicero's *De Senectute*, with notes describing the syntactical difficulties of translation. The same envelope, postmarked 19 February 1893 and addressed to Kennerley, contains Sturt's synopsis of his first published book, the novel *A Year's Exile*. This is the sole item in the collection representing Sturt's published fiction. Other letters are to Alfred Eggar and Dr. Henry C. Mercer and discuss tools and other implements.

Index Terms

Subjects

Villages--England.
Peasantry--England.
Labor and laboring classes--England.
Carriage and wagon making.

Document Types

Diaries.
First drafts.

Series I. Works, 1899-1926*The Ascending Effort* (1910)

"Evolution and Art." Revised holograph draft, [1900]

**box 1
folder 1**"Art and Empire." Corrected typescript of *Evolution and Art*, nd**folder 2**

The Blacksmith. Revised holograph draft and corrected typescript, "5th February 1907"

**folder
3**

Brute Force. Corrected typescript, nd

folder 4*Change in the Village* (1912). Revised holograph draft of possible chapter on "village philanthropists," nd**folder
5**

Crossing Sweepers. Revised holograph draft, 1922 February 15

folder 6

England's Spirituality. Revised holograph manuscript, [c. 1916]

folder 7

"The Extinction of the Keens" (1899). Revised holograph manuscript, 1899 June 5

Chapters 1-20

box 1 folder 8

Chapters 21-45

folder 9

Chapters 46-61

folder 10

Iron. Revised manuscript, nd

box 2 folder 1*Lucy Bettsworth* (1913). Bound manuscript of opening sketch, 1902 May**folder 2**

Medieval Timber. Revised holograph draft, 1926 January-1926 February 8, and corrected typescript, nd

**folder
3**

[Memoranda from Aubrey]. Sturt's holograph transcription of "The Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey""Aubrey Ed. 1718"

**folder
4**

[Ochertyre House]. Revised holograph draft, 1922 April 5	folder 5
Notes on Pit Saws, Etc. Corrected holograph draft, 1925 March 28	folder 6
Peasant Farmers. Revised holograph draft, 1922 April 17	folder 7
Peasantry. Revised holograph draft, nd	folder 8
Rustic Intellect. Revised typescript, nd	folder 9
[Sir Walter Scott's <i>The Antiquary</i>]. Revised holograph draft, nd	folder 10
Socialistic Tendencies. Revised holograph draft, nd	folder 11
A West Country Peasantry. Revised holograph draft, 1922 May 6	folder 12
Wood Fires. Corrected typescript, "27th October 1921" crossed out on final page	folder 13
Unidentified manuscripts. Holograph drafts of and fragments from various writings, nd	folder 14

Series II. Journals, 1901-1927

Typescripts of journal entries with some corrections

1901 December 2 - 1903 May 24; 1904 June 8 - 1905 May

box 2
folder
15

1923 November 19 - 1924 April 20; 1925 March 1 - 1927 [January 27]

folder
16

Series III. Letters, 1893-1925

Eggar, Alfred, 1925

box 2 folder 17

Kennerley, William W.

1893-95

box 2 folder 18

1896-99

folder 19

1916-18, 1925

folder 20

Mercer, Henry C., Dr., 1925

folder 21