

Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company



**Music Division, Library of Congress
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Prepared by the Music Division of the Library of Congress

Finding aid encoded by Jane Cross and Shantel Lambert, 2023 August

Collection Summary

Title: Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company

Inclusive Dates: 1864-1951

Bulk Dates: 1871-1921

Call No.: ML31.F57

Creator: Fite, E. M. S. (Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson), 1868-1928; American National Opera Company

Extent: approximately 125 items

Extent: 1 container

Extent: .5 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018571968>

Summary: This collection documents the efforts of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite to establish the American National Opera Company, a performing organization that endeavored to present operas in English, but did not realize that vision." Reflected in the materials is the involvement or opinions of noteworthy musicians such as George Whitfield Chadwick, Reginald De Koven, Arthur Foote, Victor Herbert, and others. It also contains correspondence addressed to other individuals, possibly related to Fite's work at *The Circle and Success* magazine, published in New York in the first decade of the twentieth century. Also included is correspondence and documents believed to be related to Fite's family members as well as a small number of photographs, clippings, and autographs.

Acquisition Information

Purchased from a manuscripts dealer, date unknown

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Processing History

Stefan Patejak processed the Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company in 2008, and Pamela Murrell completed reprocessing in 2019. Jane Cross and Shantel Lambert created the finding aid in 2023.

Other Repositories

Horrmann Library at Wagner College holds three letters between Elizabeth M. S. Fite and Edward and Anna Catherine Markham from 1907.

Copyright Status

Materials from the Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company are governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.) and other applicable international copyright laws.

Access and Restrictions

The Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company is open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Music Division prior to visiting in order to determine whether the desired materials will be available at that time.

Certain restrictions on using or copying materials may apply.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1868 February 5	Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson born to Charles and Virginia Lelia Mitchell Stephenson in Helena, Montana
1870	Lived in Missouri
1880	Lived in Dallas, Texas
1880s	Moved to Tennessee
1886 September 18	Married Dr. Campbell Coldwell Fite (1855-1907)
1887	Child Frank Evans Fite born (d. 1968)
1890s	Moved to New York for husband to pursue business interests, including founding the Malt-Diastase Company Studied art with William M. Chase and F. Luis Mora
1892	Child Jacob Northcote Fite born
circa 1900	Began trying to establish the American National Opera Company, an organization devoted to presenting English language opera productions featuring American singers and composers Joined several organizations, including the Art Workers' Club for Women, the New York Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Dixie Club of New York Studied genealogy and wrote <i>Biographical and Genealogical Records of William Stephenson and His Descendants</i>
circa 1900-1913	Served as editor of the music and art sections of <i>The Circle and Success</i> magazine
1907	Published <i>The Biographical and Genealogical Records of The Fite Families in the United States</i> , New York: The Greenwich Printing Company
1910s	Moved to San Diego, California
1928 June 29	Died in San Joaquin, California

Bibliography

- "1870-1880, 1920 United States Census," s.v. "Elizabeth M. Stephenson," Ancestry.com.
- "1900 United States Census," s.v. "Elizabeth Fite," Ancestry.com.
- "California, Death Index, 1905-1939," s.v. "Elizabeth M. Fite," Ancestry.com.
- "Paul R. Kirk Family Tree," s.v. "Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson," Ancestry.com.
- "North America, Family Histories, 1500-2000, s.v. Elizabeth M. Stephenson," Ancestry.com.
- "U.S. and International Marriage Records, 1560-1900," s.v. "Elizabeth M. Stephenson," Ancestry.com.

Scope and Content Note

Materials in the Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company span from 1864 to 1951, with the bulk dating from 1871 to 1921. The collection documents Elizabeth M. S. Fite's efforts in the early 1900s to establish an opera company that would perform stage works in English and promote the careers of American singers and composers. Fite's goal was to provide a vehicle that would "uplift...the entire American people and thus develop the national taste for the best operatic music." Despite support from other notable music figures,

including particular enthusiasm and involvement from Reginald De Koven, the American National Opera Company never materialized.

The [Correspondence](#) documents encouragement for the nascent project as well as rejections of Fite's plan. In addition to items specific to the American National Opera Company, the collection contains correspondence addressed to Fite in her role at *The Circle and Success* magazine. Correspondents include David Bispham, Arthur Farwell, Riccardo Martin, Charles H. Meltzer, and Marguerita Sylva. A small group of correspondence concerning the opera company is addressed to Reginald De Koven and correspondents include George Whitefield Chadwick, Fite, and Arthur Foote. Additionally, there are letters and documents regarding Fite's family members as well as items addressed to other individuals whose connection to her is not clear. Several letters of literary rejection are present, which may be related to her work with the magazine.

Items directly related to the American National Opera Company in the [Other Documents](#) series include cards signed by individuals who indicated their willingness to become governors of the organization such as Arthur Foote, Victor Herbert and William J. McCoy. Remaining materials include a group of autographs cut from letters or albums, several clippings, a typed article written by Fite, and photographs of musicians active around the turn of the twentieth century.

Organization of the Correspondence of Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson Fite and the American National Opera Company

The collection is arranged in two series:

- [Correspondence, 1864-1951](#)
- [Other Documents, 1912-1921](#)

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

Bispham, David, 1857-1921--Correspondence.
Chadwick, G. W. (George Whitefield), 1854-1931--Correspondence.
De Koven, Reginald, 1859-1920--Correspondence.
Farwell, Arthur, 1872-1952--Correspondence.
Fite, E. M. S. (Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson), 1868-1928--Correspondence.
Fite, E. M. S. (Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson), 1868-1928.
Foote, Arthur, 1853-1937--Correspondence.
Herbert, Victor, 1859-1924--Correspondence.
Martin, Riccardo, 1874-1952--Correspondence.
McCoy, William Johnston, 1848-1926--Correspondence.
Meltzer, Charles Henry, 1853-1936--Correspondence.
Sylva, Marguerite, 1875-1957--Correspondence.

Subjects

Musicians--United States--Correspondence.
Opera companies--United States.
Opera--United States--19th century.
Opera--United States--20th century.

Form/Genre

Autographs (Manuscripts)
Business correspondence.
Clippings (Information artifacts)
Personal correspondence.
Photographs.

Description of Series

Container

BOX 1

Series

Correspondence, 1864-1951

This series contains correspondence that encourages Elizabeth M. S. Fite's nascent American National Opera Company as well as rejects it. In addition to items specific to the project, there is also correspondence addressed to her in her editorial role at *The Circle and Success* magazine. A small amount of material concerning the opera company is addressed to Reginald De Koven and correspondents include George Whitefield Chadwick, Fite, and Arthur Foote. Additionally, there are letters and documents regarding Fite's family members as well as letters addressed to other individuals whose connection to her is not clear. Several letters of literary rejection are present, which may be related to Fite's work with the magazine.

Arranged in three file units and alphabetically therein.

BOX 1

Other Documents, 1912-1921 and undated

Items directly related to the American National Opera Company in this series include a planning document and cards signed by individuals who indicated their willingness to become governors of the organization such as Arthur Foote, Victor Herbert, and William J. McCoy. Remaining materials include nineteen autographs cut from letters or albums, several clippings, a typed article written by Elizabeth M. S. Fite, and photographs of musicians active around the turn of the twentieth century.

Arranged alphabetically.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Correspondence, 1864-1951 <p>This series contains correspondence that encourages Elizabeth M. S. Fite's nascent American National Opera Company as well as rejects it. In addition to items specific to the project, there is also correspondence addressed to her in her editorial role at <i>The Circle and Success</i> magazine. A small amount of material concerning the opera company is addressed to Reginald De Koven and correspondents include George Whitefield Chadwick, Fite, and Arthur Foote. Additionally, there are letters and documents regarding Fite's family members as well as letters addressed to other individuals whose connection to her is not clear. Several letters of literary rejection are present, which may be related to Fite's work with the magazine.</p> <p>Arranged in three file units and alphabetically therein.</p> <p>Addressed to Reginald De Koven</p> <p>Chadwick, George Whitefield, 1908</p> <p>Foote, Arthur, 1909</p> <p>Shelly, Henry, 1909</p> <p>Unidentified correspondents, 1909</p> <p>Addressed to Elizabeth M. S. Fite</p> <p>Aldrich, Mariska, 1909</p> <p>Baron, Alice, 1909</p> <p><i>Includes:</i> Photograph postcard</p> <p>Barr, Amelia, 1900</p> <p>Bergh, Arthur, undated</p> <p>Bispham, David, 1907-1908 and undated</p> <p>Blake, Lillie, 1907</p> <p>Blenner, Carle, 1908</p> <p>Boul, David, undated</p> <p>Bullen, Lenora Nixon, 1907</p> <p>Brush, George de Forest, 1890 and undated</p> <p>Callie, 1887</p> <p>Carl, William, 1909</p> <p>Confederate Museum Literary Society, 1913</p> <p>Converse, Frederick Shepherd, 1908</p> <p>de Cisneros, Eleonora, 1909</p> <p>De Koven, Reginald, 1907 and undated</p> <p>Dodge, William de Leftwich, 1908</p> <p>Earle, Mary, 1902</p> <p>Farwell, Arthur, 1908 and undated</p> <p>Fenollosa, Ernest, 1907</p> <p>Foote, Arthur, undated</p> <p>Fornia, Rita, undated</p> <p>Garrison, Theodosia, undated</p> <p>Gottschalk, Louis F., 1908</p>

Correspondence, 1864-1951

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Harben, William Nathaniel, 1898-1900 <i>Includes:</i> Photocopied clippings
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Harris, Mr. Charles Mitchell, Mrs. Charles Mitchell Harris, and June Harris, undated Calling card
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Hubbell, Henry Salem, 1905
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Huhn, Bruno, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Jeffery, Frank Moore, 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Jomelli, Jeanne, 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Jones, Francis C., 1902-1908
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Joseffy, Rafael, 1907
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Koopman, Augustus, 1906-1912
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Kroeger, Ernst R., 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Loveman, Robert, 1898-1899
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	MacFarlane, Will C, 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Martin, Riccardo, 1907-1910
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Meltzer, Charles Henry, 1907-1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Miller, Joseph, 1906
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Miller, Olim, 1907
BOX-FOLDER 1/3	Morgan, Tali Esen, 1908
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Nevin, George, 1909 and undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Nicholls, Rhoda Holmes, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Peple, Edward "Ned", 1919-1920 and undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Ranger, Henry Ward, 1907-1908
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Rothwell, Walter Henry, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Rubner, Cornelius, 1907-1908
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Russell, Charles Edward, 1912
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Schenck, Elliott, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Scott, E. M., 1899
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Slezak, Leo, 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Sylva, Marguerita, 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Tabb, John B., 1903
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Van Noppen, Leonard Charles, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Ware, Harriet, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Warren Lodge of Roxbury, Massachusetts, 1890
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Weed, Marion, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Wells, Carolyn, 1901-1902
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Williams, Martha McCulloch, 1909
BOX-FOLDER 1/4	Wise, John S., 1906
BOX-FOLDER 1/5	Unidentified, 1888, 1906-1907, 1921 and undated Addressed to others
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Anna from Ruth, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	<i>Broadway Magazine</i> editor from Clinton Scollard, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Brother Weeks from Giles H. Rich of the Warren Lodge No. 18 (Boston) of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, 1871 Condolences on the death of Richard E. Weeks
BOX-FOLDER 1/2	Fite, Elizabeth Mitchell Stephenson to one of her children, 1915
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Nixon, Mrs. from Ruth McEnery Stuart, undated

Correspondence, 1864-1951

Container	Contents
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Parttan, Anne from Clinton Scollard, 1903
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Peck, Mrs. Theodore M. from one of her children, 1913
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Towle, Annie Weeks, 1882, 1890-1892 Calling card; legal document; marriage certificate; receipt
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Towle, Davis from the secretary of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite in New York City, 1951
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	[Weeks, Mrs.] from D. C. Brigham, John Burgess, and Thad Craft (K. of P. Lodge No. 42 (Boston)), 1871 Condolences on the death of Richard E. Weeks
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Williams, Martha McCulloch from C. E. Russell, 1894
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Williams, Mrs. from Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford, 1893
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Unidentified from Ernest Coldwell, 1887
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Unidentified from Richard Nixon, 1887
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Unidentified from Adolph Steding, 1887
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Unidentified from Marion [Ames] Taggart, 1901
BOX-FOLDER 1/6	Unidentified, 1864, 1888-1896, 1904, and undated
BOX 1	Other Documents, 1912-1921 and undated Items directly related to the American National Opera Company in this series include a planning document and cards signed by individuals who indicated their willingness to become governors of the organization such as Arthur Foote, Victor Herbert, and William J. McCoy. Remaining materials include nineteen autographs cut from letters or albums, several clippings, a typed article written by Elizabeth M. S. Fite, and photographs of musicians active around the turn of the twentieth century. Arranged alphabetically.
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Acceptances of a governance position in the American National Opera Company, undated <i>Includes:</i> Arthur Foote, Victor Herbert and William J. McCoy
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	Article. "Katharine Goodson: The Artist and the Woman", undated By Elizabeth M. S. Fite
BOX-FOLDER 1/9	Autographs, undated <i>Includes:</i> Signatures of Clarence Eddy; Will MacFarlane; Harold Vincent Milligan, Homer Norris, Elliot Schenck, and Mariska Aldrich
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	Clippings, 1921 and undated Photographs, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Bispham, David
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	de Cisneros, Eleonora
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Fornia, Rita
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Jacoby, Josephine
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Lottero, Emanuele
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Stewart, Zaidee Townsend
BOX-FOLDER 1/7	Weed, Marion
BOX-FOLDER 1/10	Plan for the American National Opera Company, undated
BOX-FOLDER 1/8	Program. The American Society in London banquet, 1912