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The Ellis Reynolds Shipp Papers, 1875-1955

A Register of the Collection at the Utah State Historical Society

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Utah State Historical Society Salt Lake City, Utah

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Summary Description

Repository: Utah State Historical Society

Call number: Mss B 4

Creator: Shipp, Ellis Reynolds, 1847-1939.

Title: Ellis Reynolds Shipp Papers, 1875-1955

Quantity: 6 reels
5.5 lin. ft. (11 boxes)

Note: Available on microfilm. (MIC 717-722)

Abstract: Female physician, polygamous wife.
Autobiography, diaries, poetry, correspondence.

Topics:

Medicine – Utah.
Women authors.
Women physicians.

Persons:

Shipp, Milford Bard, 1836-1918.

Form or Genre:

Diaries.

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Background**Biographical Note**

Ellis Reynolds was born January 20, 1847 in Davis County, Iowa, the eldest child of William Fletcher and Anna Hawley Reynolds. Shortly thereafter, the family joined the Mormon church and, in 1852, emigrated to Utah where they were among the first settlers of Battle Creek, now Pleasant Grove, in Utah County. Ellis was fourteen when her mother died, leaving her as housekeeper and mother to the younger children. Within a year, her father remarried, a development which was apparently difficult for Ellis who spent much of the next few years with her grandparents, William J. and Ellis E. Hawley who lived in American Fork.

She was guided from early childhood by a strong and continuing desire for education, an urge perhaps felt, but not often acted on, by women of her generation.

Early in my womanhood I marked out for myself a plan for study which served me well as the years passed on. I could not well concentrate on the lessons in books during the very busy daylight hours, so I decided on the early morning hours for my studies. Therefore I began my studies at four o'clock and put in three solid hours before the household began to stir. (The Early Autobiography and Diary of Ellis Reynolds Shipp, M.D., ed. Ellis Shipp Musser, 1962, p. 64.)

In 1865 when she was eighteen, Ellis caught the attention of Brigham Young, then on one of his periodic tours of the territory. He offered her the opportunity to go to Salt Lake City with him; live in his official residence, the Lion House; and "be as one of [his] own children." Ellis accepted the offer and lived and studied in the Lion House for about eight months.

According to her autobiography, Ellis had been interested in Milford Bard Shipp for several years prior to her residence in Salt Lake City. Bard Shipp had already been married and divorced twice, so his attentions to Ellis were met with

suspicion by those close to her, including Brigham Young. In spite of these objections, Ellis Reynolds married Milford Bard Shipp in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City on May 5, 1866. From this marriage came ten children, only five of whom grew to be adults: Milford Bard, Jr. who became a doctor, Richard Asbury, a practicing lawyer, Olea S. Hill, born while her mother was attending medical school. Ellis Shipp Musser attended Columbia, became a teacher, and married Joseph W. Musser, an activist in an offshoot of the LDS Church which advocated plural marriage. She also was the instrument in gathering together correspondence, manuscripts, and other materials on her mother for eventual donation to the Historical Society. Nellie Shipp McKinney was the baby of the family, born in 1889.

In 1871 Bard took, in the custom of the day, another wife, his third. Ellis commented on this development in her diary:

On the 23rd of October, Milford married another wife, Elizabeth Hilstead. I do not allow myself to become low spirited. I have trusted in my Heavenly Father and He has blessed me. I know there is but one way to be happy in polygamy and that is to keep burning in our hearts the Spirit of God. (Diary, p. 84.)

Eventually Bard would have a total of four wives simultaneously. "Celestial marriage" may have been difficult for Ellis, judging from the amount of time she spent exhorting herself to be happy and perfect. In 1872, she wrote,

O what an error I have committed! Despite all my resolution to be cheerful and uncomplaining I this night spoke to Milford of the ills and hardships of life. I said I thought there were many of our trials that were unnecessary when by a word or look of encouragement we could be made happy. I even accused him of being partial, of not being general in his conversations, etc., etc.,... (Diary, p. 93)

In the fall of 1875, Margaret Curtis Shipp left Salt Lake for Philadelphia where she planned to study at the Woman's Medical College. She became so homesick that she returned home after four weeks. As a result, Ellis was given permission to go back to Philadelphia in her sister-wife's place. She left Salt Lake City in November, 1875 expecting to be gone from her family and home for two-and-a-half years. On her arrival at the Medical College, she immersed herself in course work and rapidly caught up with her class, "I have spent considerable time dissecting. The horrifying dread that so oppressed me in the beginning is wearing off. All disagreeable sensations are lost in wonder and admiration. . . ." (Diary, p. 192.)

While in school, Ellis supported herself by selling dressmaking patterns ("models") and teaching women to sew. However, her standard of living was at a bare subsistence level most of the time and about halfway through the course, Ellis was forced to return home for a time to regain her health. On her return to

Philadelphia, she successfully graduated although she had given birth to her daughter Olea not long before. Just as Ellis was completing her course, Margaret C. Shipp, whose place at the college Ellis had taken three years before, returned to Philadelphia to finish, graduating in 1883. Later, she would divorce Bard Shipp and marry B. H. Roberts, prominent in the LDS church hierarchy. Ellis also instructed Mary, another of Bard's wives, in obstetrics. She became a busy midwife in Salt Lake City for many years.

The *Woman's Exponent* for May 15, 1878 contained an advertisement announcing Dr. Ellis Shipp's intention to begin practice with "special attention given to Obstetrics, diseases of women and minor surgery. Free scholarships." The last phrase in the announcement indicates the beginning of a school to train nurses and midwives. This school, which would run continuously until 1938, consisted, in the beginning, of two terms of six months each with five lessons per week. A certificate of graduation was presented to each student who successfully passed examinations supervised by the Salt Lake City Board of Health. Later the school became a traveling affair, with Dr. Shipp staying about three months in one location. Thus her correspondence shows groups of letters from Rigby, Idaho and Roosevelt, Utah as well as settlements in Colorado and other western localities. About 1902 she visited the Mormon colonies in Mexico where she lectured in "every hamlet ward from Ciudad Diaz to the tops of the mountains with all its treacherous roads...." (Memories, Ellis Shipp Musser).

In 1888 Milford Bard Shipp who had, somewhere along the way, also acquired a medical degree, started *The Salt Lake Sanitarian*, a "Monthly Journal of Medicine and Surgery." Drs. Ellis and Maggie Shipp were editors and frequent contributors. Near the beginning of the magazine's run appears the following rationale for its creation.

It is with no little apprehension that we launch the *Sanitarian* upon an untired sea. The domain of medical journalism with us has not, hitherto, been invaded. To publish a Journal of Health, such as we contemplate, has received our careful deliberation—and we have often asked ourselves the question, can we present anything to the public that will be of interest and profit. (*Salt Lake Sanitarian*, April, 1888, p. 14)

Evidently they felt they could. The journal lasted three years. Ellis Shipp was a contributor the first two years, but no articles by her are listed in the third volume—for reasons which remain unclear.

Dr. Ellis Shipp had a healthy respect for herself and her accomplishments. In an undated letter to her daughter Ellis, she says:

I believe if I keep my office here I will never be without some

practice—at least sufficient to make our living & it is much easier than housework & work in the garden—& I am fully convinced that I should not do drudgery, & that when we go home we must have good competent help for it doesn't pay us to not be professional.

At the same time she accepted the traditional women's role of her generation, and those following.

Some women want to be men. Some say, "Oh, if I had only been a boy." I never felt that way. I was always glad that I was a girl, a woman, a wife, a mother. This is our mission, the greatest work that we can perform in this life is to be true wives and faithful mothers. Greater joy could not be had. Nothing could ever compare with the joy we have in our offspring. (Talk given to Daughters of Utah Pioneers, June, 1932)

Her love for children was strong and enduring, but there is a thread of guilt running through her correspondence to them, possibly tied to the fact that she was not more constantly with them—a problem touched on by her son-in-law, Joseph W. Musser, in a poem written as tribute to her in 1932:

So she toiled thru the nights as well as the day,
Fixing livers and lungs—driving trouble away;
Leaving her own progeny pouting and sore,
Yet always supplied with goodies galore.

Dr. Ellis Reynolds Shipp was another of the accomplished women of her generation. Besides those achievements already noted, she was also on the staff of the Deseret Hospital; a member of the general board of the LDS Relief Church Society; a delegate to the National Council of Women; president of the Utah's Women's Press Club; a member of Utah's Hall of Fame; and poet. She practiced medicine for more than sixty years and the Daughters of Utah Pioneers museum in Salt Lake City has a room entirely devoted to her and her accomplishments.

Biographical Chronology

- 1847 Born January 20 in Davis County, Iowa to William Fletcher and Anna Hawley Reynolds
- 1852 Migrated to Utah with her family, settling in Pleasant Grove, Utah County
- 1865 Taken by Brigham Young to live in the Lion House in Salt Lake City and attend school
- 1866 Married Milford Bard Shipp (1836-1918) on 5 May, Salt Lake City
- 1875 Left Utah to attend the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania
- 1878 Graduated from the Woman's Medical College as a physician
- 1879 Founded her School of Obstetrics and Nursing (to

- 1938) *The Salt Lake Sanitarian*, monthly journal devoted to medicine and general health, founded by Milford Bard Shipp, with Ellis R. and Maggie C. Shipp on editorial staff (to 1890)
- 1910 Published *Life Lines*, a volume of poetry
- 1935 Honored by Woman's Medical College as its oldest living graduate
- 1938 Elected to Utah's Hall of Fame
- 1939 Died January 31, in Salt Lake City

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Scope and Content

The Ellis Reynolds Shipp papers came to the Historical Society in two installments (1967 and 1973) as a gift of the children of Joseph White and Ellis Shipp Musser. Besides the Shipp material, a quantity of Musser family material was also donated. The Shipp papers are completely open to researchers.

Dr. Shipp's papers contain a great deal of correspondence, all original holographs. It has been arranged according to writer, then chronologically. The biggest division is, of course, that of Ellis Shipp herself. There are smaller groups of letters written by her children, husband, and his other wives. Sarah Ellis Hawley Pearson was an aunt of Dr. Shipp's who wrote witty and wise letters, many of which are included here. In 1937 she wrote to Ellis:

I have & have had for the last week such an absorbing guest to entertain I haven't been sure I could get even this little scrawl off to you. The gentleman has a high-sounding Spanish title but is familiarly appreciatively known among his American intimates as just The Flu....

Dr. Shipp's style, on the other hand, could at times run to the flowery.

My Beloved & truly Dear Aunt,

Your precious comforting letter has just reached me & I am ready to hold you in my arms & bless you for your dear sweet and uplifting words of your precious letter that seems to carry sadness afar and drape it with your sacred heavenly comforting words which never fail to banish depression & at the same time bring to all souls the Peace of our Father's holy spirit His heavenly sympathy and never failing comfort & uplift that comes to all who love & trust Him. (ERS to Sarah Ellis Hawley Pearson, n.d.)

Correspondence for Dr. Shipp is particularly heavy during the 1904-08 period, probably as a result of her work as a traveling teacher of nursing skills. It is heavy again during 1932-34 as

Dr. Shipp grew older and unable to travel to visit her scattered family. A great many of the letters are directed to her daughter Ellis Shipp Musser, reflecting the source of the material. There is, in the collection, a quantity of material on Mrs. Musser also--correspondence to her, certificates, a few examples of her writing, and so forth.

Another major part of the collection is the poetry of Dr. Shipp. She wrote verses continually for most of her life and published a volume of her poetry in 1910, titled *Life Lines*. She also wrote a poem for Christmas each year as a Christmas card. Besides poetry and correspondence, the collection includes a great deal of biographical material on the Shipp and Hawleys. There are also examples of diaries kept by Dr. Shipp, as well as several editions of her autobiography which was compiled and published by Ellis Shipp Musser in 1962.

Subjects covered, at varying depths, by the Shipp papers include early medical practice, genealogy and family history, polygamy, and life in nineteenth and early twentieth century Utah.

Series Descriptions

[Diary and Autobiographical Treatments--Ellis Reynolds Shipp](#)

[Biographical material, Shipp Family](#)

[Correspondence](#)

[Poetry \(Notebooks\), Ellis R. Shipp](#)

[Poems](#)

[Notes](#)

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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation:

Ellis Reynolds Shipp Papers, 1875-1955, Utah State Historical Society.

Provenance:

Acquisition Information:

Gift from children of Joseph White and Ellis Shipp Musser, 1967 and 1973.

Restrictions on Use

<http://history.utah.gov/FindAids/B00004/B0004.XML>

5/9/2006

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Processing Information:

Collection processed by Ann Hinckley, 1977

Finding aid compiled by Ann Hinckley, 1977

Finding aid edited by Jay M. Haymond

Collection cataloged by Richard Saunders, 1988 (RLIN ID: UTSX 88-A33)

Finding aid encoded for the World Wide Web by Craig Ringenberg, 1999.

Related collections

Donated with the Musser Family Collection, [Mss B 96](#), which is housed separately.

Separations

Photographs have been removed to Mss C 4.

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Container list

Box	Folder	Contents
Diary and Autobiographical Treatments-- Ellis Reynolds Shipp		
<i>Diary</i>		
1	1	1871-1898
1	2	1885
1	3	1935
1	4	Fragments, 1912
1	5	Miscellaneous entries, ca. 1870s [copies]
<i>Autobiographical Treatments</i>		
1	6	"Sketch of My Early Life" (Talk given to Daughters of Utah Pioneers, June 1932)
1	7	Autobiography #1 (1935), to Ellis Musser Kirkham

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|---|----|--|
| 1 | 8 | Autobiography #2 (1935), to Ellis Musser Kirkham |
| 1 | 9 | Autobiographical notes (copied by Olea Shipp Hill, ca. 1930) |
| 1 | 10 | Autobiographical notes [fragments] |
| 1 | 11 | Autobiography and diary, edited by Ellis Shipp Musser, 1961 [typescript] |
| 1 | 12 | Autobiography of Ellis Reynolds Shipp, M.D. with foreword by Ellis Shipp Musser, 1961 [two typescript copies with notes] |

Box Folder Contents

Biographical material, Shipp Family

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|---|----|---|
| 2 | 1 | Draft, Autobiography and diary of Ellis R. Shipp, M.D. |
| 2 | 2 | Musser, Ellis Shipp, notes for publication of the autobiography of Ellis R. Shipp, ca. 1960 |
| 2 | 3 | Miscellaneous notes on Ellis R. Shipp and Ellis S. Musser |
| 2 | 4 | Biographical notes on Ellis R. Shipp by Olea Shipp Hill and Nellie Shipp McKinney |
| 2 | 5 | Miscellaneous notes on Ellis R. Shipp |
| 2 | 6 | Funeral services (transcript) of Ellis R. Shipp, 5 February 1939 |
| 2 | 7 | Shipp, Milford Bard, biographical notes |
| 2 | 8 | Nursing in Utah |
| 2 | 9 | Pearson, Sarah Ellis Hawley <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Sketch of Our Beloved and Honored Pioneers of the Hawley Family, n.d. 2. Notes from the Diary of Asa Smith Hawley, n.d. 3. Hawley family notes |
| 2 | 10 | Shipp, Ellis R., Memories of Anna Hawley Reynolds |
| 2 | 11 | Genealogical notes |

Box Folder Contents

Correspondence

Family Correspondence

Shipp, Ellis R.

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 3 | 1 | 1867-1903 |
| 3 | 2 | 1904 |
| 3 | 3 | 1905 |
| 3 | 4 | 1906 |

3	5	1907
3	6	1908-1920
3	7	1921-1929
3	8	1930-1933
4	1	1934-1939
4	2	Undated and fragments
		<i>Shipp, Milford Bard</i>
4	3	1866-1870
4	4	1871-1908
4	5	Undated
4	6	1889-1918
4	7	1894-1936
4	8	Undated

Miscellaneous by name

5	1	Hill, Olea Shipp, 1888-1940
5	2	Hill, Olea Shipp, 1941-1954
5	3	Hill, Olea Shipp, n.d.
5	4	Musser, Ellis Shipp, 1886-1959
5	5	McKinney, Nellie Shipp, 1904-1958
5	6	McKinney, Nellie Shipp, n.d.
5	7	Pearson, Sarah Ellis Hawley, 1910-1945
5	8	Pearson, Sarah Ellis Hawley, n.d.
5	9	Reynolds, Augusta, 1905-1906
5	10	Reynolds, Augusta, 1907
5	11	Reynolds, Augusta, 1908-1959
5	12	Reynolds, Augusta, n.d.
6	1	Shipp, Margaret Curtis Shipp, Elizabeth Hilstead 1868-1935
6	2	Shipp, Milford Bard III, 1913-1937

General Correspondence

6	3	1883-1907
6	4	1908-1930
6	5	1931-1935
6	6	1936-1958
6	7	Undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
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Poetry (Notebooks), Ellis R. Shipp

6	1-7	Poetry by Ellis R. Shipp
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Poems		
7	1	1864-1882
7	2	1886-1901
7	3	1902-1933
7	4	1916-1922
7	5	1920-1936
7	6	ca. 1921
7	7	1936
8	1	1866-1900
8	2	1901-1936
8	3	Collected, n.d.
8	4	Typescripts, n.d.
8	5-7	Undated
9	1-3	Undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
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Notes		
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9	4	Women in medicine (manuscript)
9	4	Miscellaneous manuscripts
9	5	Three Pals
9	5	Untitled, on the World's Columbian Exposition, ca. 1893
9	6	Miscellaneous notes and fragments
9	7	Account book, Shipp, Ellis R., 1890-1906
9	8	Account and address book, ca. 1911
9	9	Account book and student list, n.d.
9	10	Accounts and student list, n.d.
9	11	Miscellaneous account pages, n.d.
9	12	Bank books, Shipp, Ellis R., and Musser, Ellis Shipp
9	13	Legal documents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
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Memorabilia		
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10	1	Miscellaneous newspaper clippings
10	2	Scrapbook, ca. 1880's
10	3	Patriarchal blessings
10	4	Notebook, ca. 1904
10	5	Miscellaneous notebooks, n.d.

10	6	Address books, n.d.	
10	7	Receipts	
10	8	Christmas cards (designed by Ellis R. Shipp), 1898-1937	
10	9	Memorabilia	
10	10	Miscellaneous photographs	
	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
	Oversize items		
11	1	Miscellaneous materials	
		1. Autobiography, Ellis R. Shipp, ca. 1931	
		2. Letter, Milford Bard Shipp to Ellis R. Shipp, 23 November 1875 (on a roll)	
		3. Diplomas (4)	
		4. Chart, Theology: Life of Christ--Nature: Circle of the Year	