Steele, Marion H. (Marion Harlan), 1904-1985.

Marion H. Steele papers
1906–1999
(bulk dates 1923–1985)

Abstract: The papers of Marion H. Steele, former managing editor of the *Journal of Home Economics* and University of Delaware graduate.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 439
Creator: Steele, Marion H. (Marion Harlan), 1904-1985.
Title: Marion H. Steele papers
Inclusive Dates: 1906–1999
Bulk Dates: 1923–1985
Extent: 2 linear feet (2 boxes)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 439, Marion H. Steele papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Boxes 1-2: Shelved in SPEC MSS record center cartons; F29: Shelved in SPEC Media video cassettes (VHS)
Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/
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Biographical Note

Marion Harlan Steele (1904–1985) was one of the pioneers of the American home economics movement, which began at the turn of the twentieth century. Ellen H. Richards founded the American Home Economics Association (AHEA) in 1909. Steele championed Richards’ philosophy about family, nutrition, and ecology, but especially devoted her efforts to the International Scholarship Program of AHEA (which became the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences—AAFCS—in 1994).

Steele was born on June 23, 1904, and spent her childhood in Elsmere, Delaware. After she graduated from high school, she worked for a local ophthalmologist. Then she attended the University of Delaware’s Women’s College. After graduating in 1928 with a B.S. in English, Steele became active in the Alumnae Association, and was its president in 1933. Furthermore, she served on the executive committee for the celebration of the University’s Centenary, which was held in May 1934.

In 1928 Steele started a career as secretary to Helen W. Atwater, the editor of AHEA’s Journal of Home Economics. After a number of promotions she became managing editor in 1946. Steele held that position until she retired in 1969.

Upon her retirement, colleagues and students made a contribution in Steele’s name to AHEA’s International Scholarship Fund. A book of tributary letters from international students was organized and presented to her. In addition, AHEA’s 1969 Assembly of Delegates passed a resolution of appreciation for her commitment to its organization and the International Scholarship Fund.

During her forty-one years of service to AHEA, Steele developed friendships with professionals, students, and teachers nationally and internationally. Many of those people became well-known for their contributions to the evolution of home economics into its current form of family and consumer economics.

While on the staff at AHEA’s headquarters, Steele resided in Washington, D.C., and every Friday afternoon she returned to her family home in Delaware to spend the weekend. She had two brothers, Leroy Steele and Joseph Rodman Steele. After she retired she moved back home to 112 N. du Pont Road, Elsmere, Delaware. She died on September 23, 1985.

Her alma mater honors her memory and work with an annual symposium sponsored by the College of Human Services, Education and Public Policy (CHEP) at the University of Delaware. Additionally, the symposium is hosted by the Delaware Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (DAFCS), the University’s Human Resources Alumni Association, Delaware State University, and Steele’s family. This May event is an opportunity for students to present research papers in a professional forum.

Sources:

Biographical information derived from the collection and the University of Delaware Archives. The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) generously shared materials and videos tapes from their archives.
Scope and Content Note

The Marion H. Steele papers, spanning the years 1906–1999, contain correspondence, newspaper clippings, publications, ephemera, employment documents, photographs, programs, postcards, professional files, journals, obituaries, bibliography, greeting cards, and video tapes. The collection is small—2 linear feet—yet the material gives a clear view of her life as a devoted professional on the staff of the American Home Economics Association (AHEA). The papers also show her connection to the University of Delaware’s Women’s College, and her involvement with the Alumnae Association in the 1930s.

The papers are arranged in three series: I. University of Delaware, II. AHEA, and III. Miscellany, following Steele’s life from college to her post-retirement days. The first series documents her work with and association to the University of Delaware.

The second series, itself divided into three sub-series, includes information relating to Steele’s professional life at AHEA. The first sub-series – AHEA – contains materials related to Steele’s various roles at AHEA over time, culminating in her editorship of the Journal of Home Economics from 1946–1969. The second sub-series documents her work with AHEA’s International Scholarship Fund. The third and final sub-series is devoted solely to material about the life and work of Helen W. Atwater, Marion Steele’s one-time boss and colleague at the Journal of Home Economics and an important figure in the home economics field in her own right.

The third series contains personal and professional miscellany: news clippings, notes, photographs, and other materials saved by Steele over time that cover topics such as home economics and the Second World War.

Series I. contains publications from Steele’s undergraduate days at the University as well as documents and expenses associated with the Women’s College Alumnae Association; a reunion list from 1932 for classes 1918–1931; and, a notebook filled with correspondence and notes about the University’s Centenary in 1934—Steele served on the executive committee for its planning (Box 1, F2–F4).

The bulk of the collection concerns AHEA, where Steele worked from 1928–1969 (Boxes 1-2, F10-F44). Much of the correspondence is evidence of her relationships with students, professors, and professionals in her job at AHEA. There is substantial material pertaining to the International Scholarship Fund run by AHEA (Box 2, F30-38), which was overseen by Marion Steele from 1947 until her retirement in 1969.

AAFCS (AHEA) provided two videotapes to include in the collection that have been placed in the media section of Special Collections. The first recording is titled Marion H. Steele Remembered. The video presents the reminiscences of many of Steele’s colleagues, co-workers, friends, and relatives. Some of those interviewed recall stories about Steele’s childhood in Wilmington, Delaware, while others discuss her long-time devotion to AHEA. Most of the interviewee’s remarks illustrate a common theme – praise for Steele’s professional character and her devotion to being a mentor and friend to so many, particularly those students she aided from the International Scholarship Fund. The second film, A Living Tribute to Marion H. Steele, is a shortened version of Marion H. Steele Remembered.

Finally, a collection of over fifty black and white World War II-era photographs is housed within the Miscellany section (Box 2, F46). Many of these photographs attempt to illustrate how home economics
issues (food production and selection, clothing purchasing, cooking practices, and so on) could help America win the war. In this subject-matter, therefore, the photographs tie in nicely to the work done by Marion Steele and AHEA writ large. Nearly each photograph is stamped with a caption, the photographer, and, in most cases, the organization that created and distributed the photo. Many of the photographs are credited to the USDA's Bureau of Home Economics with the photographer of “Forsythe.” Others hail from the British War Ministry, the (Canadian) Director of Public Information, and the U.S. Navy. A few print advertisements are also present in this photograph collection.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Steele, Marion H. (Marion Harlan), 1904-1985.

Atwater, Helen W.

Corporate Names


Topical Terms

Home Economics--United States--20th century--Sources.

World War, 1939-1945--Economic Aspects--United States--Sources.

Form/Genre Terms

Correspondence.

Clippings (information artifacts)

Black-and-white photographs.

Programs.

Minute books.

Bibliographies.

Journals (periodicals)

Obituaries.

Videotapes.

Occupation

Editors.
Arrangement

I. University of Delaware, 1923–1999
II. American Home Economics Association (AHEA), 1914–1985
   II.1. AHEA, 1929–1985
   II.3. Helen Atwater, 1906–1964
III. Miscellany, 1909–1980s
Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. University of Delaware, 1923–1999

Bulletin of the University of Delaware, Women's College, 1926–1927 [Box 1 F1]

Publications, University of Delaware, 1923–1931 [Box 1 F2]

Publications, University of Delaware, 1957–1960s [Box 1 F3]

Alumnae Association, Women's College, University of Delaware (I), 1930s [Box 1 F4]

Alumnae Association, Women's College, University of Delaware (II), 1930s [Box 1 F5]

Centenary, University of Delaware (I), 1934 [Box 1 F6]

Centenary, University of Delaware (II), 1934 [Box 1 F7]

The Review, University of Delaware, 1934 [Box 1 F8]

Two copies of the student newspaper, dated January 19 and April 25, with articles about the centenary

Marion H. Steele Symposium, 1999 [Box 1 F9]

Series II. American Home Economics Association (AHEA), 1914–1985

Subseries II.1 AHEA, 1929–1985

Resume and Job Information, 1939–1967 [Box 1 F10]

American Home Economics Association (AHEA), 1942–1968 [Box 1 F11]

AHEA Saga, 1946–1947 [Box 1 F12]

Reprints of a 12-part Journal of Home Economics historical article series by AHEA business manager Keturah E. Baldwin

Bibliographies, 1938–1939 [Box 1 F13]

Contains an extensive bibliography on home economics subjects; put together by Steele

Home Economists, 1929 [Box 1 F14]

Contains a publication about prominent men and women of the home economics movement in the United States

National Magazine of Home Economics Student Clubs, 1936–1942 [Box 1 F15]
Seven year run of AHEA-published student magazine

American Dietetics Association Booklets, 1936–1940 [Box 1 F16]
Contains review copies of two small booklets (1936 and 1940)

Journal of Home Economics, 1947–1953 [Box 1 F17]
Contains seven journals (April 1947, March 1950, June 1952, and January–April 1953) and two promotional booklets for note-taking

AHEA 50th Anniversary, 1959 [Box 1 F18]
Contains three 50th anniversary editions of the Journal and material relating to anniversary-related celebrations

Home Economics New Directions, 1959 [Box 1 F19]
Publication of the Committee on Philosophy and Objectives of Home Economics of the AHEA

New Building, 1968–1969 [Box 1 F20]
Material pertaining to the planning and construction of a new headquarters for the AHEA at 2010 Massachusetts Ave. NW. in Washington, D.C.

Home Economics Conference Materials, 1964–1968 [Box 1 F21]

AAUW Journal, 1965 [Box 1 F22]
Contains an article (p. 10–12) that mentions Ellen H. Richards (1842–1911) founder of the AHEA and a pioneer in home economics education

National Dairy Council Booklet, 1966 [Box 1 F23]
Booklet entitled "What did you have for breakfast this morning?"


Mildred Horton, 1960 [Box 1 F25]
Materials pertaining to a dinner held in honor Mildred Horton (AHEA Executive Secretary, 1947–1960) upon her retirement

Obituaries, 1947–1970 [Box 1 F26]
Contains programs and news clippings about colleagues, friends, professors, and acquaintances. Two programs from memorial services held at the University of Delaware are included. These programs highlight the lives of Winifred Josephine Robinson (1867–1962) who was Dean of the Women's College
and Francis Hagar Squire (1902–1956) who was Dean of the College of Arts and Science. There is also a news clipping about Edith A. McDougle who taught in the Mathematics Department at the University of Delaware for thirty–two years. In 1918 McDougle was one of the first graduates of the Women's College of Delaware.

Tribute to Marion Steele, 1969 [Box 1 F27]

Contains a 1969 issue of the Journal of Home Economics that pays tribute to Marion Steele upon her retirement

Steele's Notebook of Quotations, undated [Box 1 F28]

Videotapes, circa 1985 [Box 1 F29] (Removed to: SPEC Media video cassettes (VHS))

Contents: Two VHS tapes; tape one, titled Marion H. Steele Remembered, runs approximately seventy–five minutes; tape two, which is a shorter version of the first tape, is titled A Living Tribute to Marion H. Steele and runs approximately fifteen minutes. Note: These videotapes have been removed from the collection and are housed within the Special Collections media section. A removal sheet for these items may be found in this folder. Description: The tapes are interviews with colleagues, co-workers, friends, and family. They provide significant information about Steele's professional commitment to AHEA and personal allegiance to her family and friends in Elsmere, Delaware. Most of the individuals expressed a common notion that Steele's work with the International Scholarship Fund was a sizable contribution to the field of home economics. Her boundless energy formed lasting bonds with foreign students. Evelyn C. Miller, who represented the Delaware Home Economics Association, conducted the interviews.


Journal Articles, 1947–1969 [Box 2 F31]

Contains reprints from the Journal of Home Economics about scholarship students

International Issue, 1965 [Box 2 F32]

Journal of Home Economics International Issue

Letters from Students (I), 1967–1978 [Box 2 F33]

Contains correspondence from colleagues, students, and friends; most of it was received after her retirement in 1969

Letters from Students (II), 1942–1980 [Box 2 F34]
Series II. Subseries II.2.

Contains correspondence from colleagues, students, and friends; most of it was received after her retirement in 1970

Letters from Students (III), 1941–1979 [Box 2 F35]

Contains correspondence from colleagues, students, and friends; most of it was received after her retirement in 1971

Letters from Students (IV), 1948–1982 [Box 2 F36]

Contains correspondence from colleagues, students, and friends; most of it was received after her retirement in 1972

Letters from Students (V), 1964–1980 [Box 2 F37]

Contains correspondence from colleagues, students, and friends; most of it was received after her retirement in 1973

Notes, International Scholarship Fund Meetings, 1947–1969 [Box 2 F38]

Contains twenty-four notebooks

Subseries II.3. Helen Atwater, 1914–1964

This sub-series contains materials related to the life of Helen W. Atwater, Marion Steele's colleague and predecessor at the Journal of Home Economics. In 1928 Marion Steele became the secretary to Helen Atwater who held the editorship of the Journal from 1923 until her retirement in 1941. She passed away on June 26, 1947.

Biographical Material, 1923–1964 [Box 2 F39]

Includes 1947 Journal tribute, photographs of Atwater, biographies, awards, certificates, and employment material

Correspondence, 1923–1939 [Box 2 F40]

Publications, 1914–1941 [Box 2 F41]

Includes various drafts of Atwater's written works, including "Domestic Science and Drudgery" (1914), "America's Gifts to the Old World" (1915), and "Family Living in Farm Homes" (1924)

"Good Consumers in Wartime", undated [Box 2 F42]

Contains a book manuscript written by Helen Atwater following her retirement from the AHEA; also includes preservation photocopies of the envelope in which Marion Steele received the manuscript

"Thrift as a Weapon: Consumers in Wartime", undated [Box 2 F43]
Alternate version of book manuscript found in F42

Dr. Wilbur O. Atwater, 1906–1930 [Box 2 F44]

Materials relating to Atwater's father, Dr. Wilbur O. Atwater, a well-published and honored agricultural chemist

**Series III. Miscellany**

News Clippings, 1933–1944 [Box 2 F45]

News clippings saved by Marion Steele. Most pertain to international events leading up to and including World War II

Photographs, circa 1941–1945 [Box 2 F46]

Collection of more than fifty high-quality, black and white World War II-era photographs. Most of the photographs illustrate how home economics issues (food production and selection, clothing purchasing, cooking practices, and so on) could help America win the war. The majority of these photographs were produced by the USDA's Bureau of Home Economics. Other photographs originate from the British War Ministry, the (Canadian) Director of Public Information, and the U.S. Navy.

Personal Miscellany, undated [Box 2 F47]

Miscellaneous, Home Economics Materials, undated [Box 2 F48]

*Journal of Home Economics*, 1909–1911 [Box 2 F49]

Includes June 1909 and October 1911 issues of the *Journal*