

Collection #
M 1099

LOVINA STREIGHT RESEARCH FILES
1861–2003

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box, 2 folders black-and-white photographs, 3 folders color photographs, 1 bin slides

COLLECTION DATES: 1861–2003

PROVENANCE: Mary Jane Meeker (Mrs. Howard Meeker), Carmel

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: *Across Indiana*. Indianapolis: WFYI, ca. 2005. General Collection: F526.A26 2005; Roach, Alva C. *The Prisoner of War, and How Treated: Containing a History of Colonel Streight's Expedition...* Indianapolis: Railroad City Publishing House, 1865; Streight Family Collection. Visual Collection: P 0332

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2007.0130

NOTES: All historical photographs are recent prints and are not originals.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lovina Streight was born Lovina McCarthy in Steuben County, New York in 1830. In 1849 she married Abel Streight, then a contractor. In 1858 they moved to Cincinnati and then to Indianapolis a year later. When her husband was given charge of the 51st Indiana Volunteer Regiment during the Civil War, she and their young son John joined the regiment in its travels. During the war she spent much of her time nursing ill and wounded men, and is often called "The Mother of the 51st Regiment." In 1862 she and several other women were captured by Confederate soldiers, but she soon managed to escape with the aid of six pistols she had hidden beneath her petticoats (accounts of how she used the pistols vary). After the war the Streights built a grand home on East Washington Street. Even after her husband's 1892 death, Lovina Streight continued to host reunions of the 51st Regiment at her home, and in 1902 she marched along with the regiment at the dedication of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. John Streight, her only child, died in 1905 at about the age of fifty. Upon Lovina Streight's death in 1910, it was discovered that she had willed most of her estate towards the creation of a home for destitute elderly women. Several relatives challenged the will, saying that Streight had been of unsound mind when she had written it. A judge overturned the will, and the home never came into existence.

Brigadier General Abel Streight was born June 17, 1828 or 1829 in Steuben County, New York. He worked in a variety of trades, including carpentry and lumber milling. In 1849 he married Lovina McCarthy. Streight set up a successful publishing business in Indianapolis in 1859. In 1861 he joined the Union Army with the rank of colonel, and served as commanding officer of the 51st Indiana Volunteer Regiment. Col. Streight and the regiment were captured by General Nathan Bedford Forrest's forces in 1863 during an attempt to destroy Confederate railroad lines. Sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, Streight and more than 100 other prisoners escaped in February of 1864 via an underground tunnel they had dug. He retired from the army with the rank of brigadier general in 1865. In Indianapolis, the Streights gained further social prominence and frequently hosted large parties. Gen. Streight was politically active as well, unsuccessfully running for governor in 1880. He died from complications of Bright's Disease in 1892 and was buried in his front yard. Due to city laws, Lovina Streight had her husband's grave moved to Crown Hill Cemetery in 1902. Incorporating a bronze bust of the general, it is one of the cemetery's more elaborate monuments, and is situated across from Gov. Morton's grave.

Julia Cox was born in Indianapolis in 1847. She studied painting with her father Jacob Cox, considered to be the city's first painting teacher. Continuing her studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where she was enrolled for at least the year of 1876, she likely studied with Thomas Eakins. Cox became a portrait painter of note in Indianapolis, and in 1880 painted the portrait of Lovina Streight. Cox married Albert S. White and had two sons, Albert S. White, Jr. and Arthur C. White. She died in 1920.

Sources:

Bodenhamer, David J., and Robert G. Barrows, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Collection Materials

Indiana Death Records (via Ancestry.com)

Streight Family Collection. Visual Collection: P 0332

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection comprises research materials gathered by local historian Mary Jane Meeker regarding Lovina Streight and the Julia Cox portrait of Streight that was re-hung in the Indiana State House in 1988. It is divided into three topical series.

The first series consists of formal documents written by or to Mary Jane Meeker, such as article drafts and correspondence.

Series two incorporates documents and images related to Julia Cox and her portrait of Lovina Streight. This includes loose notes, press releases, clippings, conservation documents, and before-and-after images of the painting.

Series three is the largest, comprising documents and images related to Lovina Streight and her husband Abel Streight. This includes notes, source transcriptions, and clippings, as well as two facsimiles of original sources: Lovina Streight's will and a letter written by Colonel Abel Streight to Governor Oliver P. Morton while the colonel was imprisoned by the Confederacy during the Civil War. There are also images of Lovina Streight, the Streight home, and Abel Streight's grave in Crown Hill Cemetery.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Mary Jane Meeker Writings

CONTENTS

Typed Drafts by Mary Jane Meeker, n.d.

Research Correspondence, 1946–2003

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 2

Series 2: Julia Cox Portrait

CONTENTS

Loose Notes Regarding Julia Cox, n.d.

Clippings Regarding Painting, 1978–88

Painting Conservation Documents, 1987

Cox Portrait Before Conservation, ca. 1987

Cox Portrait After Conservation, ca. 1987–88

Press Releases Regarding Painting, ca. 1988

Misspelled Painting Label, 1989

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 3

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 5

Color Photographs
Folder 1

Color Photographs
Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1, Folder 7

Series 3: Lovina and Abel Streight

CONTENTS

Typed Notes and Transcriptions Regarding Lovina
and Abel Streight, n.d.

Grave of Abel Streight with Visitor, n.d.

Slides Depicting Lovina Streight, the Streight Home,
and Abel Streight's Grave, ca. 19th century–1910

Loose Notes Regarding Lovina and Abel Streight, n.d.

Clippings Regarding Lovina and Abel Streight, 1861–
1994

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 8

Color Photographs
Folder 3

Slides
Bin 1

Box 1, Folder 9

Box 1, Folder 10

Facsimiles of Letter from Colonel Streight to Governor Morton, 1863	Box 1, Folder 11
Lovina Streight, ca. 1900–10	Photographs Folder 1
51 st Regiment Reunion at the Streight Home, ca. 1900–10	Photographs Folder 2
Facsimile of the Will of Lovina Streight, 1903–10	Box 1, Folder 12
Notes and Clippings Regarding the Will of Lovina Streight, 1910–n.d.	Box 1, Folder 13

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M 1099).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.