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Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Stephen Longstreet Papers

YCAL MSS 262



by Sandra Markham

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P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 262

CREATOR: Longstreet, Stephen, 1907-2002

TITLE: Stephen Longstreet papers

DATES: 1925-1990

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 8.35 linear feet (6 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Stephen Longstreet Collection consists of four types of material: a heavily illustrated typescript of an undated and unpublished book project; 130 drawings in various formats and media; seven collages; and a small group of ephemeral items. The focus of the collection is Longstreet's observation of jazz culture, particularly as it engaged African Americans. He lived in cities on all three American coasts, as well as major cities in Europe, where he recorded scenes and people in local clubs, bars, and music and dance halls.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.longstreet>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.longstreet>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Stephen Longstreet, 1965-1992. The portraits of Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound were transferred from the Yale University Library's Arts of the Book Collection in 2005.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Stephen Longstreet Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Stephen Longstreet Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Stephen Longstreet (1907-2002)

The artist, novelist, and screenwriter Stephen Longstreet was born in New York City on April 18, 1907, and raised in New Brunswick, NJ. His birth name was Chauncey Weiner, a surname shortened from the family name Weiner-Longstrasse; as a youth he changed his first name to Henry and in the early 1940s became known as Stephen Longstreet. He began his career as a graphic artist in New York by publishing cartoons and vignettes in periodicals such as the *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Colliers*, then went on to write radio, television, and film scripts. Longstreet wrote, ghostwrote, compiled, and edited nearly 140 books between 1936 and 1999, which were published under the name Stephen Longstreet, as well as his pseudonyms Thomas Burton, Paul Haggard, David Ormsbee, Henri Weiner, Stephen Weiner-Longstreet, and Philip Wiener. Many of his early drawings appeared with the signature "Henri." Longstreet married Ethel Godoff (1909-1999) in Brooklyn in 1935; they had two children. He died in Los Angeles on February 20, 2002.

Longstreet wrote both novels and non-fiction works. Most of the latter were not reviewed kindly, with reviewers questioning his accuracy of content and reliability of sources. Perhaps his most notable hoax was *Nell Kimball: Her Life as an American Madam, by herself*, edited and with an introduction by Stephen Longstreet (1970). He claimed to have received a manuscript memoir from Kimball (1854-1934), a well-traveled prostitute and New Orleans madam, tried in vain to find a publisher for it in the 1930s, and then held on to her manuscript when she died. After citing it as primary source material for his own books *Sportin' House: a History of New Orleans Sinners and the Birth of Jazz* (1965) and *The Wilder Shore: a Gala Social History of San Francisco's Sinners and Spenders, 1849-1906* (1968), Longstreet sold the manuscript to Macmillan Publishing. Kimball's autobiography received positive notices in newspapers and mass-market periodicals, but academics found too many close parallels in narrative and language to the works of Herbert Asbury (1889-1963), and shortly, both the text and the madam were found to be Longstreet's fabrications. *The Wilder Shore* itself was then revealed to have been paraphrased from Asbury's book *The Barbary Coast* (1933).

Scope and Contents

The Stephen Longstreet Papers consists of four types of material with which he described and illustrated his experiences during the Harlem Renaissance and the Jazz Age: a heavily illustrated typescript of an unpublished book project, 130 drawings in various formats and media, seven collages, and a small group of ephemeral items.

Arrangement

The Stephen Longstreet Papers is organized into five series: Series I, "From 'The Lost Generation' to 'The Grapes of Wrath,'" (1990, undated); Series II, Additional Papers (1948-1976); Series III, Harlem Sketch Books (1925-1939, undated); Series IV, Drawings (1925-1975, undated); and Series V, Stage Backdrop Collages (1952-1955, undated).

Collection Contents

Series I: "From 'The Lost Generation' to 'The Grapes of Wrath'", 1990, undated

6 Folders

Series I. holds 183 pages of drawings and essays by Stephen Longstreet. Described by the author as "A Graphic Work in Progress" and "a personal recall that attempts to reappraise one man's cut of pie of his world [*sic*], close up," it is a series of short writings from memory, embellished with a few historical facts, and laced with quotes from other writers and celebrities. The compositions are illustrated with his impressionistic sketches. Longstreet's aim, he stated in his introduction, was to provide a more realistic telling of the 1920s and 1930s in response to the "myths and legends" put forth by other authors in the 1940s; he said that his friend William Faulkner had encouraged him to write "a truer version of those times." The manuscript was organized by Longstreet into three sections: "Introduction" (pages 1-8); "The Lost Generation" (pages 9-65, covering the 1920s); and "Years of Wrath: the Great Depression" (pages 66-96, covering the 1930s). He ends with the specter of World War II. The text itself is undated, but it was enclosed in a paper wrapper made by the author and dated May 16, 1990. It does not appear to have ever been published.

The work consists primarily of xerographic copies of Longstreet's drawings and typed pages of text; some of the images having been enhanced with black felt-tip marker, and a few of the pages are the original typescripts. The text pages, each of which contains a discrete story, essay, or vignette, were attached with white paper tape to a facing-page illustration. This had the effect of creating ninety-two gatherings which he arranged and numbered in pencil. Not all of the drawing-text sets are present: pages 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 26, 29-32, 41, 43, 47-48, and 52 are lacking, and there are several additional pages that were later inserted (i.e. page 7 and 7A). Because there is no linear narrative to the work, and each text page is independent from the other, it is not possible to tell what content was held on the missing parts.

Longstreet's introduction is somewhat autobiographical and gives a brief résumé of his early employment with New York periodicals and some of his experiences in Hollywood. The second and third sections have lively and sometimes humorous descriptions of people, events, and situations in locations including Paris, New York (with specific writings on the Chinatown and Lower East Side immigrant communities), Washington, Chicago, Spain, England, and Japan. In addition to his stories, Longstreet created both visual and written portraits of notable personalities such as Collette, Faulkner, Gandhi, Garbo, Joyce, Maugham, Orwell, Stravinsky, Stein, and Toklas. His topical net is cast wide enough to include an image of a Harvard-Yale football game.

Arranged by page number as assigned by author.

b. 1, f. 1	Cover wrapper	1990 May 16
b. 1, f. 2	Introduction	undated
b. 1, f. 3-4	The Lost Generation [1920s]	undated
b. 1, f. 5-6	Years of Wrath [1930s]	undated

Series II: Additional Papers, 1948-1976*3 Folders*

Series II, Additional Papers (1948-1976), holds twelve ephemeral items sent to the Yale by Longstreet: one playbill, seven exhibition and lecture invitations, one hand-colored photocopy, a pair of plate proofs from his book *Knaurs Jazzlexikon* (Munich, 1957), and a two-color poster for an exhibition of Longstreet's drawings (tekeningen) in Breda, Netherlands, in 1976.

b. 1, f. 7	Ephemera	1948-1965
b. 6, f. 32	Proofs of plates from <i>Knaurs Jazzlexikon</i>	1957
b. 6, f. 33	Poster from exhibition in Breda, Netherlands	1976

Series III: Harlem Sketch Books, 1925-1939, undated*2 Folders*

Series III contains fifty loose drawings that arrived at the library in two envelopes labeled by Longstreet as "1st sketch book" and "2d + 3d sketch books." On each he added "remains of Harlem sketch books – covers destroyed by insects + storage." The drawings were made on 8½ by 11 inch sheets of paper. Longstreet's concept of "sketch book" is not that of the classic sketchbook used by artists: here the papers are of varying types and hues, and most likely were never bound together. (They may have once been gathered in portfolios, and it would have been those covers that were destroyed.) The drawings in this series closely resemble in size, paper stock, and theme, a group in Series IV, Box 4, but Longstreet had mounted those works on larger-size supports for presentation.

Though Longstreet called them "Harlem sketch books," the images are non-specific as to place, although many could have been made in or of Harlem. As is the case throughout the collection, the dates given by Longstreet may not be accurate. One example is the two drawings now in the second and third sketch books folder, "Country club – polite jazz" and "Gala with mild jazz music," both dated 1939, which he later photocopied and mounted together as one image (now in Series IV) titled "Country club dance, Tuxedo Park NY" and dated September 1929. Because his images and themes are fairly universal, Longstreet was apparently able to repurpose them with ease: the drawing "Uptown," in the same Harlem sketch book, has a label taped to the verso which indicates that it was used as an illustration in *The Wilder Shore*, his 1968 book about San Francisco that describes the city between the years 1849 and 1906.

Organized into two subseries: Sketch book one; and Sketch books two and three.

Sketch book one

b. 1, f. 8	Band manager/Old jazz composer	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Bessie Smith	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Blues shouter, New Orleans	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Blues singer	1935
b. 1, f. 8	"Bunk" Johnson, quick sketch	undated
b. 1, f. 8	"Bunk" Johnson tries a stick	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Club date	1926
b. 1, f. 8	Cool sax	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Death of a jazzman/Goodbye	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Dedicated	1929
b. 1, f. 8	The devil makes music	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Duet	1936
b. 1, f. 8	Flapper	1927
b. 1, f. 8	A gig	1932
b. 1, f. 8	Gin/The drinker	undated
b. 1, f. 8	A good woman is hard to keep/A good woman is hard to get	1930

Sketch book one (continued)

b. 1, f. 8	Harlem jam session	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Jam session	undated
b. 1, f. 8	"Latin"	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Night club, only the bottle is real	1927
b. 1, f. 8	Recording star	undated
b. 1, f. 8	St. Louis woman	undated
b. 1, f. 8	The shouter	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Shuffling along/Speakeasy music	1926
b. 1, f. 8	Singer	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Solo	1929
b. 1, f. 8	String genius	undated
b. 1, f. 8	Toy horn	undated
Sketch books two and three		
b. 1, f. 9	At liberty	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Black Harlem/How long my Lord, how long?	1929
b. 1, f. 9	Combo /Longhair jam	1927
b. 1, f. 9	Cotton Club piano bar	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Country club – polite jazz	1939
b. 1, f. 9	88 keys, Dice [?] Club Harlem	1926
b. 1, f. 9	Gala with mild jazz music	1939
b. 1, f. 9	Harlem [street scene]	1935
b. 1, f. 9	Harlem [dancers]	1936
b. 1, f. 9	Harlem boy/The city boy	1930
b. 1, f. 9	Harlem fast dance/Dance team	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Horn man	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Jail house	1925
b. 1, f. 9	Lonely blues	1926
b. 1, f. 9	Louie Armstrong	1935
b. 1, f. 9	New Orleans	1926
b. 1, f. 9	Slap bass	undated

Sketch books two and three (continued)

b. 1, f. 9	Solo	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Uptown	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Wish I could shimmy like my sister Kate	1933
b. 1, f. 9	The Wolverines	undated
b. 1, f. 9	Young woman blues	1928

Series IV: Drawings, 1925-1975, undated

6.26 linear feet (4 boxes)

Series IV holds eighty artworks. Because of the variety of sizes of paper Longstreet used, the drawings were grouped and housed in four sizes of boxes, a factor which slightly influenced the subseries arrangement. Within each subseries, the drawings are filed alphabetically by title. As in Series III, Longstreet sometimes captioned his works on both their front and back, so both titles appear in the box and folder list.

The drawings in Series IV continue the imagery and themes mentioned previously, and primarily portray band members and soloists, vocalists, dancers, and café society in various places related to jazz music. Added here, though, are a set of portraits of specific celebrities that Longstreet encountered during his lifetime; perhaps the most unusual faces, in the context of the collection, are those of Pablo Picasso, Ezra Pound, Elvis Presley, and Gertrude Stein. Longstreet's media are the same as in the earlier series, with two exceptions: a Cubist-style collage titled "Jazz at Monterey (Calif)," and his "Whites in Harlem, fashionable set," which was overpainted with acrylic (it is, as well, one of the few works with second drawing on the verso). The series holds several of Longstreet's strikingly spare and linear black ink images of jazz types, such as "The Bop boys," and "Shimmy." His note on "Work song" says that it was once owned by the legendary jazzman King Oliver (1885-1938). "Detroit Breadline '32" is a xerographic print, and the image appears again on page 4A in his Series I project.

Longstreet made notes on the verso of some of the drawings in the series. One example is in the Chicago subseries; on the verso of "Al Capone roadhouse Chicago" he wrote, "Jazz owes a great deal to Al Capone. He controled [*sic*] a great deal of Chicago's cafes, clubs and the country side road houses. In need of bands he had hired a great many of the jazzmen up from the south looking for gigs. The white boys heard this new music and brought jazz over to white bands forming and taking on much of the styles of the black ways of playing."

At the end of the series are three images unrelated to music: two are courtroom scenes and one is a street scene in London.

Organized into six subseries: New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Portraits, Miscellaneous Jazz Subjects, and General Subjects; arranged alphabetically by title thereunder.

New Orleans		
b. 2, f. 10	Bourbon St.	1926
b. 2, f. 10	Bourbon St., New Orleans	1933
b. 2, f. 10	Delta	1927
b. 2, f. 10	Lonely Girl Blues, New Orleans	1927
b. 2, f. 10	Mardi Gras party, New Orleans	1927
b. 2, f. 11	New Orleans bar band/A fast finish	1928
b. 2, f. 11	Original Dixieland man/When the Saints Go Marching In	1925
b. 2, f. 11	Spam band, New Orleans street group	1925
b. 2, f. 11	They're comin in the window, New Orleans	undated
Chicago		
b. 3, f. 12	Al Capone roadhouse Chicago	1926

Chicago (continued)

b. 3, f. 12	Chicago school/Chicago school white jazz	1927
b. 3, f. 12	Circus jazz/Barnum & Bailey Circus in Chicago	1927
b. 3, f. 12	Private party, Chicago/Late company	undated
b. 3, f. 12	Reflections, Chicago	1930
b. 3, f. 12	Rent party – Chicago	1932
b. 3, f. 12	Tailgate/Circus music/Carnival horn	193

New York

b. 3, f. 13	Ballroom	1929
b. 3, f. 13	Band singer/at café society uptown	1945
b. 3, f. 13	Brass solo, Harlem	1925
b. 3, f. 13	Depression, Harlem, a good girl gone	1932
b. 3, f. 13	Harlem/Blues singer	1927
b. 3, f. 13	Harlem burial/Death of a jazzman	1945
b. 3, f. 14	Harlem horn man	1935
b. 3, f. 14	Harlem/Teenage music lover	1927
b. 3, f. 14	Harlem trio	undated
b. 3, f. 14	Honky tonk singer/Harlem	1933
b. 3, f. 14	Hot trio	1929/1942
b. 3, f. 15	Kid band, Harlem	1925
b. 3, f. 15	Reefer man on the guage [?], Harlem	1933
b. 3, f. 15	Savoy ballroom	1929
b. 3, f. 15	Times Square, NYC, Duke Ellington men	1935
b. 3, f. 15	Trio, Village Vanguard	1937
b. 3, f. 15	Whites in Harlem, fashionable set	1928

Portraits

b. 3, f. 16	Louie Armstrong	1929
b. 3, f. 16	Josephine Baker	1952
b. 3, f. 16	Josephine Baker [three drawings mounted as one]	1927
b. 3, f. 16	W.C. Fields during the filming of "My Little Chickadee"	1940
b. 3, f. 17	Dizzy [Gillespie]/At Bop City New York	1949

Portraits (continued)

b. 3, f. 17	Al Jolson acting a small scene in "The Jolson Story"	1946
b. 3, f. 17	[Pablo] Picasso from life on interview	1955
b. 3, f. 17	Ezra Pound	1927
b. 3, f. 17	Elvis [Presley] - the last drawing - a year before he died	1976
b. 3, f. 17	Gertrude Stein	1929
b. 3, f. 17	Hollywood Bowl (Pola Negri, Louella Parsons, Paul Lucas)	1935
Miscellaneous jazz subjects		
b. 3, f. 18	Jazz at Monterey (Calif)	1963
b. 4, f. 19	At the Lighthouse [Hermosa Beach, CA?]	undated
b. 4, f. 19	Banjo	1925
b. 4, f. 19	Beginner brown/Early starter	1939
b. 4, f. 19	Black and white	1940
b. 4, f. 19	Death of a jazz man	1925
b. 4, f. 19	Doghouse	1938
b. 4, f. 19	End of a jazz man	1925
b. 4, f. 20	Jam/A Jam	1927
b. 4, f. 20	Late at night/Blue boy	1929
b. 4, f. 20	Long hair	1940
b. 4, f. 20	Married life	1929
b. 4, f. 20	Negro church play/"Rise Up Lazarus" a Spiritual	1925
b. 4, f. 20	Powerhouse	1940
b. 4, f. 20	A reed man	1927
b. 4, f. 21	The riff	1925
b. 4, f. 21	San Francisco - the pad	1955
b. 4, f. 21	Singer	1933
b. 4, f. 21	Skin artist	undated
b. 4, f. 21	Work song	1927
b. 4, f. 21	Young woman blues	1927
b. 5, f. 22	After the session/The combo	1938
b. 5, f. 22	Black and white/The black and the white	1945

Miscellaneous jazz subjects (continued)

b. 5, f. 22	The Bop/The rest	undated
b. 5, f. 22	The Bop boys	1949
b. 5, f. 22	Country club dance, Tuxedo Park NY	1929
b. 5, f. 22	Detroit Breadline	1932
b. 5, f. 22	French horn	1929
b. 5, f. 22	Georgia chain gang	1933
b. 5, f. 23	Looking for a gig	1931
b. 5, f. 23	Noon at the Dôme, Paris	1926
b. 5, f. 23	Prison band – Georgia/Prison band	1938
b. 5, f. 23	The rootless, Ohio	1933
b. 5, f. 23	Shimmy/I wish I could shimmy like my sister Kate	1928
b. 5, f. 23	West Coast jazz (L.A.)/Improvising	1938
b. 5, f. 23	Untitled [man sleeping on table with horn and bottle]	undated
General subjects		
b. 5, f. 24	LA court/the real criminal is the public defender	1935/1965
b. 5, f. 24	Men of good will/Paris court [France]	1927
b. 5, f. 24	Rainy day, St. Paul's [London, England]	1929

Series V: Stage Backdrop Collages, 1952-1955*1.67 linear feet (1 box)*

Series V contains a set of seven collages that Longstreet donated to the library in 1992. In his accompanying letter he wrote, "In the 1950s Kenneth Rexroth and other avant [*sic*] garde figures were going up + down the West Coast reciting poetry to Jazz: Whitman, Dickinson, Eliot, Ginsberg, e.e. cummings, Millay and others. For these recitings I did a series of stage back drops, abstract versions of American poets and Jazz music." He added that these are "the original designs from which the stage back drops were painted," but on two of the collages he wrote "slide projection," suggesting that at least those two works had been photographed and projected behind the poets. The dates cited in the box and folder list are those written on the collages by the artist, though they are most likely assigned from memory and may not always be reliable. As an example, Longstreet dated his design for the recital of Ginsberg's "Howl" as 1953, although its live debut was in 1955 and its publication came 1956. In addition, the *Los Angeles Times* only documents Rexroth and Lawrence Lipton holding similar poetry and jazz events in the late fall of 1957.

The performers and works cited on the collages are: Val Burton, Kenneth Rexroth and chorus, reading selections from Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" to Joe Zawinul's "The Rise and Fall of the Third Stream;" unidentified readers presenting Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" to Bessie Smith's "I'd Rather be Dead and Buried" and T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" to the recording "Jazz at Massey Hall" (featuring Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Charles Mingus, and Max Roach); Lawrence Lipton and Group reading selections from Emily Dickinson to Benny Goodman's "The Japanese Sandman;" the Pasadena Actors Group reading selections from Langston Hughes to James P. Johnson's "Boogie Woogie Stride;" the Beverly [Hills?] Jazz Society reading William Butler Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium" to Dizzy Gillespie's "Anthropology;" and Lawrence Lipton, Val Burton and others reading the King James Version of "The Song of Songs" to King Oliver's "Frankie and Johnny."

Arranged in chronological order.

b. 6, f. 25	Joe Zawinul and Walt Whitman	1952
b. 6, f. 26	Bessie Smith and Allen Ginsberg	1953
b. 6, f. 27	"Jazz at Massey Hall" and T.S. Eliot	1953
b. 6, f. 28	Benny Goodman and Emily Dickinson	1954
b. 6, f. 29	James P. Johnson and Langston Hughes	1955
b. 6, f. 30	Dizzy Gillespie and William Butler Yeats	undated
b. 6, f. 31	King Oliver and the Bible	undated
b. 6, f. 32	Proofs of plates from <i>Knaurs Jazzlexikon</i> (in Series II)	1957
b. 6, f. 33	Poster from exhibition in Breda, Netherlands (in Series II)	1976

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Jazz in art
Jazz musicians
Jazz -- Pictorial works

Genres / Formats

Collages (visual works)
Drawings (visual works) -- 20th Century
Drawings -- United States -- 20th Century
Figures (representations)
Illustrations (layout features)
Portraits
Watercolors (paintings)

Names

Longstreet, Stephen, 1907-2002