

## Finding Aid to the Matthew Forney Steele Photograph Collection

### Steele, Matthew F., 1861-1953

Matthew F. Steele Photograph Collection, 1861-1953

76 photographic prints

Collection number: Photo 2103

Folio 92.1

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[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Folder List](#)

### OVERVIEW

**Links:** Finding aid to the [Matthew F. Steele manuscript collection](#)

View images on [Digital Horizons](#)

**Access:** The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

**Provenance:** Donated by Douglas Clare Purcell, 1987 (Acc. 2100)

**Property rights:** The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

**Copyrights:** Copyrights to this collection remain with the creators or is in the public domain.

**Citation:** Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (item number)

### BIOGRAPHY

Matthew Forney Steele was born in Huntsville, Alabama on June 19, 1861. As one of four children of Matthew W. and Catharine Steele, he grew up in the post-Civil War South on a plantation near Huntsville. Steele's mother taught him at home until he was fourteen, after which he attended a private school in Huntsville. During his school years he read about the lives of great southern military men, including generals Robert E. Lee, Joe Johnston, and Stonewall Jackson.

The emulation of these great generals prompted him to secure an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. He entered the Academy on July 1, 1879, shortly after his eighteenth birthday, and on June 13, 1883 he graduated as a second lieutenant and was assigned to the Eighth Cavalry at Fort Clark, Texas.

The following years were spent serving at various frontier forts including Fort Clark, Fort Davies, and Del Rio, Texas from 1883 to 1888. In 1885 he was involved in the campaign against the Cheyenne Indians. He was stationed at Fort Yates, Dakota Territory from 1888 to 1891 and was a member of the Cavalry unit sent to relieve the besieged Indian police who attempted to arrest Sitting Bull. He was involved in the subsequent campaigns against the Sioux in 1890 and 1891. In 1891 he was promoted to first lieutenant and transferred to Fort Keogh, Montana, then to Fort Meyer, Virginia from 1891 to 1894 and to Fort Meade, South Dakota from 1894 to 1898. In the Spanish-American War he served as an aid to General Wheeler in the Santiago Campaign, including the Battle of San Juan Hill. Promoted to Captain in 1899 he served as adjutant of the Sixth Cavalry until 1899. He served in the Philippine Campaign from 1899 to 1900 as a major in the Thirtieth Volunteers and as commander of Troop K. Sixth Cavalry from 1901 to 1903.

He served as an instructor at the U.S. Army Command and Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and at the War College, Washington, D.C. from 1903 until 1909. During this period he authored a collection of books on the American Civil War entitled *The American Campaigns*. Also during his tenure there he authored the article "The 'Color Line' in the Army" published in the *North American Review*. In this article he advocated the end of "the legal restriction that compels the assignment of colored recruits to one of four regiments." This fascinating article demonstrated his advanced views much ahead of his time.

He returned to the Philippines in 1909 as commander of Squadron Second Cavalry stationed at Jolo and was involved in the campaign against the Moros from 1911 to 1912. He retired from active duty in 1912 and was called back to active service from 1917 to 1919 as commandant of the North Dakota Agricultural College ROTC (now North Dakota State University).

Mr. Steele married Stella Folsom in Fargo October 5, 1887, the daughter of John B. and Lavisa C. (Forsythe) Folsom. After Stella's father died on August 6, 1912, Steele retired from the army and moved to Fargo to take over his father-in-law's real estate, loan, and insurance business. He was very active in the local community as a member of the Fargo Chamber of Commerce, Fargo Commons Club, Fargo Rotary, and the Fargo Country Club. Stella died on November 15, 1945. The Steeles had no children. Matthew F. Steele died on February 25, 1953 and was buried at Riverside Cemetery in Fargo.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Matthew F. Steele Photograph Collection** spans his entire life from the 1860s to 1953; including family portraits, vacation snapshots from his trips to San Francisco and Yosemite National Park, plus amateur photos from his committal in 1953. The collection consists of seventy-six images, to include gelatin silver and albumen prints. These photographs were accessioned as part of the Steele papers that have been organized as Manuscript Collection 128. The collection was organized into three series: Diary Photographs, Trips, and Matthew F. Steele.

The **Diary Photograph Series** contains three files. They are all images that were taken from the M.F. Steele diaries, part of Mss 128. The images do not directly correspond to the page or date of the diary entry that they were found, but do correspond with the time period of the diary in which they were located. Most photographs within these files contain images of Matthew Steele with his wife and friends while living in Alabama. There are also images of what may be his niece and nephew. Some research may be required to identify everyone in these photographs.

The **Trip Series** contains two files. They are images taken from M.F. Steele's travels to Yosemite National Park and San Francisco in 1901. The quality of several images is poor and the photography is amateur. They contain images of the San Francisco city hall and other buildings, including some maritime images from that trip. The Yosemite file contains several images of the wilderness around Yosemite; including M.F. Steele on his horse, and images with him, his wife Stella, and friends.

The **Matthew Steele Series** contains four files. Most photographs in these files contain images of M.F. Steele. They span the years 1948-1953. File 7 contains a collection of good quality Matthew Steele images from 1948 when he visited forts he had visited or was assigned to during the Indian Wars. There is also an image of him at the site of the Battle of the Little Bighorn and images at the battlefield graves of a few of his army comrades. This series also contains an image from his 90<sup>st</sup> birthday in Fargo, family Christmas photographs from 1952, as well as his funeral. The final file contains a photograph of the home of John B. Folsom, M. D. Steele's father-in-law located at 423 13<sup>th</sup> Street (University Drive S.), Fargo, N.D.

## FOLDER LIST

| Folder     | Contents (No. of images)                     |
|------------|--|
| 1          | Finding aid, and Biographical material       |
|            | <b>Diary Photography Series</b>              |
| 2          | Diary Photographs 1925-1929 (6)              |
| 3          | Diary Photographs 1930-1935 (9)              |
| 4          | Diary Photographs 1936-1940 (6)              |
|            | <b>Trip Series</b>                           |
| 5          | Yosemite (16)                                |
| 6          | San Francisco (9)                            |
|            | <b>Matthew Steele Series</b>                 |
| 7          | 1948 and 90 <sup>st</sup> Birthday, 1951 (9) |
| 8          | Christmas 1952 (9)                           |
| 9          | Committal 1953 (11)                          |
| 10         | Family Portraits (3)                         |
| 11         | Folsom House (1)                             |
| Folio 92.1 | Matthew Steele (1)                           |