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### Bridgman, Laura Dewey (1829-1889) Letters, 1879-1883

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#2 Bridgman, Laura Dewey (1829-1889) Letters, 1879-1883  
2 folders

### **INTRODUCTION**

Letters from Laura Bridgman, the first deaf-blind person to be successfully educated in the United States, to Abbie Forest. Included are six letters, typed transcripts of the letters, and a piece of lace knitted by Laura Bridgman.

### **DONOR INFORMATION**

The Laura Bridgman Letters were donated to the Leonard H. Axe Library by Greta Gudgen on March 2, 1983. Greta Gudgen received the letters from her grandmother, Abbie Forest, to whom the letters were addressed.

### **BIOLOGICAL SKETCH**

Laura Dewey Bridgman was born on December 21, 1829, in Etna, New Hampshire. She was normal at birth, but contracted scarlet fever at the age of two which destroyed her hearing and sight. A newspaper account about Laura in the spring of 1837 attracted the attention of Dr. Samuel Howe, director of the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts. Eager to attempt to teach a deaf-blind pupil, Dr. Howe brought Laura to the Institute in October 1837. The process was slow and tedious, but Laura eventually learned to read and to write using specially grooved paper. Dr. Howe's report of his successful experiment aroused worldwide interest and Laura became a notable wonder of her day. The British author, Charles Dickens, even devoted a chapter of his book, American Notes (1842) to a discussion of Laura's case. Laura's formal education ceased when she reached twenty years of age but she continued to live at the Perkins Institute for the rest of her life. She spent much of her time knitting, sewing, cleaning, and writing letters to friends. Laura Bridgman died on May 24, 1889.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The Laura Bridgman Letters consist of six letters, typed transcripts of the letters, and a piece of lace knitted by Laura Bridgman. The letters are from Laura Bridgman to her friend Abbie Forest of Thayer, Kansas, written between 1879 and 1883. The letters are primarily discussions about holidays, friends, illnesses, and the weather. One letter mentions correspondence between Laura Bridgman and Lucretia Garfield, the wife of President James Garfield. The letters are arranged chronologically.

Additional information about Laura Bridgman can be found in the Laura Bridgman Papers at the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts, and the Howe Family Papers in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

### **FOLDER LIST**

- f. 1 Correspondence, 1879-1883
- f. 2 Sample of lace knitted by Laura Bridgman

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