

Ellen Browning Scripps Endowment

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UPI founder E.W. Scripps and his sister, journalist and philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps were principal players in the effort to found a marine biological station in San Diego from the very beginning. E.W. Scripps met Berkeley zoologist William Ritter in the spring of 1903, and gave him \$500 to support the effort and the even more valuable advice that he call upon Ellen Browning Scripps. Both Scrippses were present on September 26, 1903 when the San Diego Marine Biological Association was established to secure "the foundation and endowment of a scientific institution to be known as the San Diego Marine Biological Institution." Miss Scripps pledged \$1,500 a year for three years to get the institution started. Their long range plans were much bigger. E.W. Scripps reminded Ritter some years later,

"You know that it was our general idea from the beginning that this station could be properly and permanently founded with a capital of \$250,000."¹

Ritter had always hoped that the station would become part of the University of California, and he kept President Benjamin Wheeler and the Regents informed of his visits to San Diego. The University president and regents were supportive and interested, but cautious. Governor Pardee, who as governor headed the Board of Regents, wrote Ritter that the university could not afford to endow a marine station,

"If the University could do it, no one would be more pleased than I. But I cannot help remembering that we have not money enough, and can't get it, to do all the things for the University that we ought to do."²

Ritter understood Pardee's attitude, but E.W. Scripps was an experienced businessman, used to capitalizing new enterprises, and quite aware of the value of assets and the need to protect them. Ellen Browning Scripps wished to make a large contribution, and now it was E.W. Scripps who advised caution. E.W. Scripps wrote UC President Wheeler,

"In counseling with my sister in the matter of her proposed gift, I have felt reluctance in advising her to take a course which might result in her being put to some personal inconvenience and feeling an embarrassing amount of responsibility.

For this reason I advised my sister not to promise too much either as to the amount or as to the time of giving it. I suggested the idea to her of fulfilling her promise by means of a bequest..."³

President Wheeler and Regent McKinley went to La Jolla soon after they received E.W. Scripps' letter to call on Miss Scripps and discuss and endowment for the Marine Biological Institution.

On September 1, 1906, Ellen Scripps gave \$50,000 for the station. It was understood that the funds would be held by the regents but controlled by the Association in San Diego. On February 25, 1909, Miss Scripps added codicils to her will bequeathing \$250,000 to the Regents as an endowment for the marine biological institution with the condition that it become part of the university. In 1911 a marine station official told President Wheeler that Ellen Scripps and E.W. Scripps "regard the present Association as insufficiently safeguarded to receive or control any additional endowment." Not surprisingly, the station became a part of the University of California the following year.

Ellen Scripps and E.W. Scripps continued to make generous contributions to the marine station, which became known as the Scripps Institution for Biological Research of the University of California. Miss Scripps added another codicil to her will in 1924 bequeathing an additional \$150,000 to the endowment fund. E.W. Scripps donated \$5000 almost every year until his death in 1926. Ellen Scripps gave \$9000 annually for operating funds. She gave \$160,000 for the construction of a pier, buildings, and other campus improvements from 1912 to 1915. In 1929 she gave \$40,000 anonymously for the construction of Ritter Hall, a new laboratory. The Ellen Browning Scripps Endowment consisting of \$400,000 and was distributed by the Regents in December 1938, six years after Miss Scripps' death. As she planned, the endowment grew--

1: E.W. Scripps to William E. Ritter, February 25, 1909, SIO Archives, Biographical Files, Box 5, f.487.

2: George C. Pardee to William E. Ritter, March 23, 1904. SIO Archives, W.E. Ritter Papers (MC 4), Box 1, f6.

3: E.W. Scripps to Benjamin Ide Wheeler, January 9, 1906. SIO Archives, Biographical Files, Box 5, f Ellen Browning Scripps Endowment