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### Wright, Harold Bell (1872-1944) Collection, 1897-2002

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#76 Harold Bell Wright (1872-1944) Collection, 1897-2002  
.8 linear feet

## **INTRODUCTION**

Harold Bell Wright was a well-known author in the 1920's and 30's. He wrote one autobiography and 18 novels, five of which were on the New York's Bestsellers List, and was America's first millionaire author. In this collection there are correspondence, biographical material, bibliographies, essays, play scripts, clippings, and photographs.

## **DONOR INFORMATION**

The materials for this collection were gathered by former Special Collections curator Gene DeGruson over a 30 year period.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Harold Bell Wright was born in Rome, New York on May 4, 1872. He lived most of his childhood in poverty due to his alcoholic father. His mother was a woman of morals and taught them to her children by reading from the Bible and several classic works including Shakespeare and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. After his mother died when he was 11, and his father had abandoned him and his siblings, Wright moved between different relatives and strangers. He held steady employment painting houses for a few years before he attended classes at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio to be ordained as a minister.

Following two years of completed coursework, Wright began his first ministry at the Christian Church in Pierce City, Missouri. He stayed there for two years before moving to Pittsburg, Kansas where he became the minister of the First Christian Church and remained in Pittsburg for five years. While living in Pittsburg he was wed to Frances Long and, together, they had three children. They divorced in December 1917. It was also during this time that he wrote *That Printer of Udell's*. Due to bad health he left Pittsburg and moved to the Ozarks where he wrote his second novel *The Shepherd of the Hills*, his first book to sell one million copies and establish Wright as a best-selling author. He then left the ministry and became a full-time author so he could better spread his message through his novels.

In 1912 he moved to Tucson, Arizona and lived there mostly for over 20 years. He would still move around to gather information on the manuscript he was writing at the time. Later, Wright bought a ranch, often called 'Quiet Hills Farm', near Escondido, California and lived there until he died of bronchial pneumonia on May 24, 1944. He was buried in the Cathedral Mausoleum in San Diego, California.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The materials in the Harold Bell Wright collection are incomplete; however, they do give a good overview of his legacy and life as a minister and author. The materials are arranged into nine series: **Biographical/Bibliographical, Correspondence, Clippings, Newspaper References, Writings About Harold Bell Wright, Harold Bell Wright Writings, Harold Bell Wright Society, That Printer of Udell's, and Photographs.**

The **Biographical/Bibliographical** series contains documents and clippings. There is a signed marriage certificate along with several short biographies about him; some were written while he was alive and the others were clippings of his obituary. There is also an application

for the 'Sons of the American Revolution' as well as bibliographies of his novels, poems, short stories, and articles.

The **Correspondence** series includes only one letter written by Wright. The other letters are written to relatives of Wright or talk about him as the main topic of interest. Among the correspondence is a letter from Ronald Reagan to Wright's daughter-in-law.

The **Clippings** series includes articles printed during and after his death. This series is organized chronologically and contains articles from 1902-90, with non-dated articles at the back of the series. The early clippings contain blurbs on changes Wright made in Pittsburg and how he published his first book, That Printers of Udell's; an article about his divorce; book reviews, and writing styles. The news clippings written after his death discuss his overall life, legacy and the impact he made on the places he lived. A few articles explain what is happening to the old churches he used to preach at and who owns his old houses. Several articles explain how he used his teachings to influence his books.

The **Newspaper References** series contains two bibliographies. There are two copies of a bibliography of what Wright accomplished when he was minister of the First Christian Church in Pittsburg, Kansas. There are also hand written notes and an envelope of scraps to be spliced into the bibliography. There are also several hand-written pages of notes that appear to be a rough draft of the bibliography. There are also three copies of a bibliography of what Wright did in Arcadia during his life and the effects that are still there today.

The **Writings About Harold Bell Wright** series contains essays, newsletters, and clippings. A few of the essays in this series are: 'Harold Bell Wright: Citizen of Tucson' by Thomas C. Langdon; 'Brother Hal: The Preaching Career of Harold Bell Wright' by Charles T. Jones; 'Harold Bell Wright: From Tramp Preacher to Million Dollar Author' by Marion W. Liles; 'The Re-Creation of Harold Bell Wright: A Study in Literary History' by Joseph Cebert Baillargeon. There are two newsletters in this series: The Lawrence County Historical Society and The White River Valley Historical Society Quarterly. The clippings are about the youngest Wright son returning to the Ozarks and the creation of the Shepherd of the Hills Tower.

The **Harold Bell Wright Writings** series contains a few of his writings. The first writing is a short story called 'How Jack Hamilton Painted a Portrait'; it was printed in The Girard Press in 1901 and recopied onto a separate paper. The second writing is from 'Inspiration Book' compiled by Mary K. Wallace in 1910.

The **Harold Bell Wright Society** includes newsletters, a pamphlet, and play scripts. The main publication from the HBW Society is a quarterly journal entitled 'Harold Bell Wright Gazette' and is sent out as a newsletter. The newsletters that are in this collection date from August of 1992-September of 2001. There is a separate newsletter from the 'Gazette' that marks the beginning of sending the newsletters by email. The pamphlet is for Mutton Hollow, which used to house the HBW museum, now located in Branson, Missouri. There are two 'The Winning of Barbara Worth' scripts; the first is from 1912 and the second is from 1915.

The **That Printer of Udell's** series consists of scripts, casting audition sheets, programs, and song list for the 1976 musical, 'That Printer of Udell's'. There are four scripts in this series: the first script is the oldest and most likely the original adaption from the novel; the second script is an edited version of the first; the third script is an updated version of the play with edits; the fourth version is the actual script that Gene DeGruson adapted and used for the musical. There are also alphabetized cast audition sheets; three clippings with the final cast list; a review

of the musical; two copies of the program; and a list of characters with a synopsis of the season and music for each scene.

The **Photographs** series consists of photos of Harold Bell Wright and his family. There is also a postcard and photo of Uncle Ike, a man who Wright met when he was in the Ozarks; and two book coverings: one for That Printer of Udell's and The Winning of Barbara Worth.

## FOLDER LIST

### **Biographical and Bibliographical Series**

f. 1 Biographical and Bibliographical material. Undated materials are at the back. (1900-83)

### **Correspondence Series**

f. 1 Correspondence; the first letter is the only one by Wright (1944-98)

### **Clippings Series**

f. 3 Clippings from 1902-34

f. 4 Clippings from 1944 -90

### **Newspaper References Series**

f. 5 'Newspaper References to Harold bell Wright in the Pittsburg Daily Headlight' compiled by Gene Degruson (1976); (Hand written notes are written on almost every page.)

f. 6 'Newspaper References to Harold bell Wright in the Pittsburg Daily Headlight' compiled by Gene Degruson (1976) (Hand written notes/Rough draft at back.)

f. 7 Harold Bell Wright in Arcadia (3 copies)

### **Writings About Harold Bell Wright Series**

f. 8 'The "Seer" and "Seen" Themes in Gatsby and Some of Their Parallels in Eliot and Wright' by Dale B. J. Randall (1964)

'Harold Bell Wright: Citizen of Tucson' by Thomas C. Langdon (1975)

Clipping of Regan recalling Wright book (Library Journal 1981)

f. 9 'Civilization as Emasculation: The Threatening Role of Women in the Frontier Fiction of Harold Bell Wright and Zane Grey' by Fritz H. Oehlschlaeger (1981)

f. 10 'Harold Bell Wright: The Man Who Went Away' by Joyce K. Moyers (1981)

f. 11 'Brother Hal: The Preaching Career of Harold Bell Wright' by Charles T. Jones (1984)

f. 12 The Lawrence County Historical Society Journal (1988)

The White River Valley Historical Society Quarterly (1989)

f. 13 'A Wright Returns to Mutton Hollow' by Kathleen Van Buskirk (1985)

'Harold Bell Wright: From Tramp Preacher to Million Dollar Author' by Marion W. Liles (1986) 2 copies)

f. 14 Harold Bell Wright and the First Christian Church of Pittsburg

Bound copy of the first volume of The Re-Creation of Harold Bell Wright: A Study in Literary History by Joseph Cebert Baillargeon. It is too large to fit in a folder, so it sits behind

Folder 14.

**Writings by Harold Bell Wright Series**

- f. 15 'How Jack Hamilton Painted a Portrait' by Wright (1901) (2 copies)  
'Inspiration Book' compiled by Mary K. Wallace (1910) (Incomplete-only one page of the book is included.)

**Harold Bell Wright Society Series**

- f. 16 Harold Bell Wright Gazette (1992-6)
- f. 17 Harold Bell Wright Gazette (1997-2001)  
Harold Bell Wright Newsletter (2002)
- f. 18 The Winning of Barbara Worth Act 1 (1912)
- f. 19 The Winning of Barbara Worth Act 2 (1912)
- f. 20 The Winning of Barbara Worth Act 1 (1915)
- f. 21 The Winning of Barbara Worth Act 2 (1915)

**That Printer of Udell's Series**

- f. 22 First Script Act 1
- f. 23 First Script Act 2
- f. 24 Second Script Act 1
- f. 25 Second Script Act 2
- f. 26 Third Script Act 1 (1975)
- f. 27 Third Script Act 2 (1975)
- f. 28 Fourth Script Act 1 (1975)
- f. 29 Fourth Script Act 2 (1975)
- f. 30 Cast Audition Sheets: Last Name 'B'
- f. 31 Cast Audition Sheets: Last Names 'C-H'
- f. 32 Cast Audition Sheets: Last Names 'K-P'
- f. 33 Cast Audition Sheets: Last Names 'R-S'
- f. 34 Cast Audition Sheets: Last Names 'T-Y'
- f. 35 Three clippings about the musical (1975-6), programs (1976) (2 copies), and a list of characters with a synopsis of the season and music for each scene.

**Photographs Series**

- f. 36 Photos of Wright and family; postcard; Uncle Ike; and book covers. (It is in an estimated chronological order.)