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## Bays, Bertie Cole (1899-1972), Collection

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#46 Bays, Bertie Cole (1899-1972), Collection  
66 folders

## INTRODUCTION

A collection of records relating to Bertie Cole Bays that includes correspondence, poetry manuscripts, newspaper clippings, programs, and miscellaneous materials.

## DONOR INFORMATION

The collection materials were collected by Gene DeGruson. Bertie Cole Bays' son, Joshua William Bays, Jr., donated a portrait that he painted of his mother to Special Collections on October 14, 1979.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Bertie Fay Cole was born September 24, 1899 in Bonne Terre, Missouri to Earl and Margaret Cole. She married Reverend J. W. Bays, a Baptist minister in 1919, and gave birth to two boys, Robert E. in 1921 and Joshua W. in 1922. They lived in Fort Scott, Kansas while serving the First Baptist Church from 1937-1942. When Rev. Bays retired from the ministry in 1960 they returned to live in Fort Scott from Hugoton, Kansas. However, retirement was short-lived as Rev. Bays received the call to serve as minister for the Cherry Grove Baptist Church south of Fort Scott. Mrs. Bays continued to serve in her role as "preacher's wife" until her death April 15, 1972.

Bertie Cole Bays was an avid writer and poet during her lifetime. She wrote more than 200 poems and many were printed in regional and national publications. A number of her humorous writings focused on her role as a minister's wife. She was named Poet Laureate in 1939. During the celebration of the Kansas Centennial in 1961, Bays collaborated with Arleen Purcell, a Fort Scott elementary school music instructor, to create a musical stage production entitled, "Footprints on the Frontier." The pageant consisted of nearly 500 students as performers with several adults serving as narrators and included original compositions and lyrics, American folk songs, and frontier ballads.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Bertie Cole Bays Collection contains correspondence, manuscripts, newspaper clippings, programs, and miscellaneous materials that document her personal and professional life, family, and activities as poet and wife of Pastor J.W. Bays.

The collection is arranged into eleven series: **Biographical; Poetry; Typescript Books of Poetry; Published Poetry; Short Stories; Essays; Plays; Longer Prose; Performance/Talks; Projects with Arleen Purcell;** and the **Bays Collection at Pittsburg State Special Collections.**

The **Biographical** series is comprised of various items related to Bays' personal life, including photographs, correspondence including Christmas cards, a diary for 1956, newspaper clippings of events in her life, and obituary.

The **Poetry** series consists of notebooks and typescript drafts of poetry primarily. It includes some manuscript drafts of poems.

The **Typescript Books of Poetry** series includes two typescript poetry books: Knee-deep in Thunder, and Swinging on a Moonbeam.

The **Published Poetry** series consists of loose clippings of published poems, a scrapbook of clippings of published poems, and in-situ published poems.

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Bays, Bertie Cole (1899-1972) Collection ca. 1940-1980

The **Short Stories** series consists of manuscript and typescript short stories arranged alphabetically.

The **Essays** series consists of typescript essays, several of a religious nature.

The **Plays** series includes three plays, of which “The Lonely Elephant” is the most substantial.

The **Longer Prose** series consists of several drafts of an unpublished book.

The **Performance/Talks** series includes a corrected introduction and greeting for the Centennial of the National Education Association and a narrated short play, “The Wondrous Story.”

The **Projects with Arleen Purcell** series is mostly comprised of materials related to the production of the play “Footprints on the Frontier” written for the Kansas Centennial.

The **Bays Collection at Pittsburg State University, Special Collections** series consists of items related to the establishment of the collection at PSU by Gene DeGruson, and items, including correspondence, related to the Dedication Program held Oct. 14, 1979.

## FOLDER LIST

### Biographical Series

- f. 1 Photographs (11 envelopes)
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and unknown soldier, “Volk Studio, Parsons, Kansas, Nov. 14, 1944”
  - 2 compound photographs, including 2 reproductions of photograph “a”, and 2 individual portraits of Bertie Cole Bays, ca. 1944
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and her husband, J.W. (Joshua Willingham) Bays, dated in pencil, “Parsons 1948”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and her husband, J.W. (Joshua Willingham) Bays, “Kent Cunningham, photographer, Parsons Sun,” dated in pencil “1952”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays with “new first grandson Billy, Palmdale, Calif., February 1955”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays, dated in pencil “Hugoton 1956”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and her husband, J.W. (Joshua Willingham) Bays, dated “1960 Hugoton.” Inscribed in pencil “Wedding Anniversary”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays, Kodak date “June 1962 R.” Dated in pencil “Ft. Scott, 1971”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and her husband, J.W. (Joshua Willingham) Bays, Kodak date “June 66R.” Inscribed in pencil, “Cherry Grove”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and her husband, J.W. (Joshua Willingham) Bays, Kodak date “Nov. 69R.” Inscribed in pencil, “Ft. Scott”
  - Portrait of Bertie Cole Bays and her husband, J.W. (Joshua Willingham) Bays, dated in pencil “Ft. Scott, 1970”
- f. 2 “Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Bays, ‘This is Your Life’” - Script for slideshow, dated in pencil “1960”
- f. 3 Clippings, etc. - Bertie’s life (10 items)
  - Baptist Leader (December 1947) Advertisement for “Some Preachers Do!”
  - Parsons Sun, Kansas (1951)
  - “Life Can Be Beautiful But-No Smooth Sailing For Pastor’s Wife”
  - Parsons Sun ([1954]) F.Y.I. by Jim Davis. Announcement of poem publication “Portrait”, in Kansas Magazine, 1954

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**Biographical Series** continued

Unidentified paper ("May 18, 1965" handwritten) "Bays-Holmes Operetta Set at KSC Auditorium Thursday"

Fort Scott Tribune, Kansas (May 19, 1965) Photograph of Bertie Bays conferring on the script and musical score for "The Lonely Elephant" with Markwood Holmes and Grace Turney (2 copies)

"Horace Mann School of Kansas State College Presents the Lonely Elephant: a Children's Play by Bertie Cole Bays, with music by Markwood Holmes" program Unidentified paper (9-13-69 date handwritten) "Rev. and Mrs. Bays Celebrate 50<sup>th</sup> year"

Fort Scott Tribune, Kansas (Oct. 30, 1970) "Rev. Bays Ends 60 Years in Ministry" Program of the Cherry Grove Baptist Church, Garland, Kansas, for "Closing Service of the Pastor J.W. Bays" (November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970)

Unidentified paper, undated "Thoughts for Lent—What Religion Means to Me" by Bertie Cole Bays

## f. 4 Correspondence

*Bays, Bertie Cole*

*Arlene Purcell*, 1957, 1962

*Edith Thogmartin*, 1960, 1964

*Elfie Thomas*, 1962

*Bronk, Mitchell*

*Bays, Bertie*, 1935

*Cleland, Laurence W.*

*Bays, J. W.*, 1960

f. 5 Christmas cards, 1940-1972 (55 cards)

f. 6 Diary 1956 (100 p.) - includes a few clippings, objects, etc.

f. 7 Notes for Programs, Church Lessons

f. 8 Clippings, etc. - Bertie Cole Bays obituary

**Poetry Series**

f. 9 Study sheets for poet workshops

f. 10 Original Manuscripts, 1937-1938 Vol. I

f. 11 Original Manuscripts, 1935-1936 Vol. II, "Knee-Deep in Thunder" June, 1935

f. 12 Original Manuscripts, 1935-1936 Vol. III, "Knee-Deep in Thunder" 1935

f. 13 Original Manuscripts, 1937-1943 Vol. IV

f. 14 Worship Thoughts and Other Wise, 1963

f. 15 Notebook A

Poems arranged in order of Notebook A

f. 16 A-1 through A-25

f. 17 A-26 through A-50

f. 18 A-51 through A-65

f. 19 A-67 through A-98

f. 20 A-100 through A-132

f. 21 Notebook B

Poems arranged in order of Notebook B

f. 22 B-1 through B-25

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**Poetry Series** continued

- f. 23 B-26 through B-45
- f. 24 B-46 through B-60
- f. 25 B-61 through B-79
- f. 26 B-81 through B-99
- f. 27 B-100 through B-115
- f. 28 Notebook C  
Poems arranged in order of Notebook C
- f. 29 C-2 through C-24
- f. 30 C-26 through C-50
- f. 31 C-51 through C-75
- f. 32 C-76 through C-95
- f. 33 C-96 through C-113
- f. 34 Notebook D/E (77 leaves)  
Poems arranged in order of Notebook D/E
- f. 35 D-1 through D-25
- f. 36 D-26 through D-50
- f. 37 D-51 through E-70
- f. 38 E-71 through E-77
- f. 39 Poems that appear in the manuscripts but are not repeated in the notebooks
- f. 40 Typescript poems that appear in *Worship Thoughts and Other Wise*
- f. 41 Miscellaneous poems that do not appear in the notebooks
- f. 42 Typescript poems with multiple poems in blue folder

**Typescript Books of Poetry Series**

- f. 43 Knee-Deep in Thunder
- f. 44 Swinging on a Moonbeam

**Published Poetry Series**

- f. 45 Loose clippings of published poetry
  - 1930, March 2. The Grail. "Fragments From Life: What Am I to You?; Old Mother March; Who Can Judge?; I Can Never be too Gay"
  - 1932, June. World Call. "A Little Thing"
  - 1932, December. The Kansas Baptist. "Help Us, Our Father"
  - 1935, April 13. Young People. "The Crucifixion"
  - 1935, August 1. The Word and Way and Central Baptist. "Inasmuch ..."
  - 1936, June 17. The Christian Century. "Mendicant"
  - 1937, February 11. The Word and Way and Central Baptist. "They Wanted Christ in Our Town (Adapted)"
  - [1937] The Word and Way and Central Baptist. "Death Came Rattling the Doorknob"
  - 1968, August 22. The Watchman-Examiner. "The Power of Listening"
  - 1971, August 12. [Fort Scott Tribune]. "Voices" Includes brief clipping about the poem
- f. 46 Scrapbook of clippings of published poetry (with 3 p. inventory of poems included)
- f. 47 Published poems in situ  
Kansas Magazine (1957, 2 c.), wherein Bays published "Remembered Sea" (p. 97)

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**Published Poetry Series** continued

- f. 48 Published poems in-situ.  
Baptist Leader (v.16, no.9, Dec. 1954) wherein Bays published “Christmas Pattern”; “Mary, Little Mary”; “The Second Christmas”; “Assurance”; “Christmas Miracle”; Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh”; and “Martha-Mary.”  
Kansas Magazine (1958), wherein Bays published “The Elfin Child” and “You Seek Each Morning” (p. 32)  
The Grail (v.6, no.2, Oct. 1930) wherein Bays published “Harp of One String” and a prose piece “Stars and Sunflowers”  
Marais Des Cygnes Reciprocity Group, October 21, 1961 Meeting Program, wherein Bays published “The Clock”  
Marais Des Cygnes Reciprocity Group, October 12, 1968 Meeting Program, wherein Bays published “The Bells Speak to the Belles”

**Short Stories Series**

- f. 49 Bus to Bonne Terre  
 Christmas is Cockeyed  
 The Elephant Who Wanted to be a Lapdog
- f. 50 It Is So Beautiful  
 The Misses Scruggs and the U.F.O. (2 copies)  
 Pore Cyclone and the Buffalo Reunion
- f. 51 Ragged Robins  
 The Visit (3 copies, one with editor’s comments- Original title: You-All Come)  
 What Do You Do With a Dead Horse?  
 The Will

**Essays Series**

- f. 52. Just a Case of Flu (3 copies; c.1 has corrections)  
 Prairie Woman (Portrait of Rudy Looman) (2 copies)  
 A Search for Truth
- f. 53 This Lovely Fire  
 Time of Glory

**Plays Series**

- f. 54 The Lonely Elephant
- f. 55 Grandmother Takes a Hand: a Play in Three Acts for Scholarship-Refit Programs  
 Problems! Problems! One-Act Play

**Longer Prose Series**

- f. 56 Draft of “Knee-Deep in Thunder,” unpublished book that was renamed “Cry, Cry, Oh, Mourning Dove.”  
 Draft of the first chapter of “Cry, Cry, Oh, Mourning Dove”
- f. 57 Draft of “Cry, Cry, Oh, Mourning Dove”
- f. 58 Draft of “Cry, Cry, Oh, Mourning Dove”

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**Performance/Talks Series**

- f. 59 “Greetings and Introduction of Platform Guests” for Centennial of the National Education Association  
 “The Wondrous Story,” short play for which Bays was the narrator

**Projects with Arleen Purcell**

- f. 60 “Footprints on the Frontier”  
 1961 Play programs “In tribute to the Kansas Heritage celebrating the State Centennial” Eugene Ware Auditorium, Fort Scott, Kansas, Apr. 27, 28  
 2 designs 4 copies)  
 Production/cast program (4 copies)  
 1985 Play program “Historic Preservation Association of Bourbon County presents ...” August 14-17 (2 designs)  
 Production/cast program  
 Play review clipping from The Morning Sun, Pittsburg, Kansas (Aug. 10, 1985)  
 “Tomorrow Comes Too Soon”  
 Song score. Lyrics by Bays; music by Arleen Purcell

**Bays Collection at Pittsburg State Special Collections Series**

- f. 61 Correspondence  
 1973, June 22: To Bill & Jackie [Bays] from Edith Thogmartin  
 1976, Feb. 7: “Letter list, Edith Thogmartin”  
 1976, Feb. 7: To Arlene [Purcell] from Bill [Bays]  
 1976, Feb. 7: Dear Friends, from Joshua W. Bays, Jr., letter announcing Bays Collection  
 1976, Feb. 11: To Jackie and Bill, [from Arleen Purcell]  
 1976, March 7: To Gene DeGruson from Joshua Bays  
 1976, April 10: To Gene DeGruson from Bill Bays  
 1977, Jan. 24: To [Gene] DeGruson from Mrs. Robert E. Bays  
 [1978, Dec. 5]: To unidentified, from Carrie Sims (includes 4 index cards sent to her by Bertie Bays in 1964)  
 1979, May 3: To Gene DeGruson to Dorothy Anthony (includes Bays poem “The Bells Speak to the Belles”)  
 1979, Aug. 3: To Arlene [Purcell] from Bill Bays  
 1979, Sept. 21: To Rev. Don Wells from Wayne A Shireman, regarding possible publication in Central Region Life of information about the Bays Collection program. In envelope to Edith Thogmartin from Fay Whitesitt, dated Oct. 11, 1979  
 1979, Oct. 10: To Mrs. Hammond from Chapter GC, P.E.O.  
 [19]80, Aug. 14: To Gene DeGruson from Joshua Bays  
 No date: To Arleen [Purcell] from “F”- Accompanied by copy of “Roses in the Snow” inscribed “For my beloved Arleen” and signed by Bertie Bays.
- f. 62 Invitation and Program  
 Invitation (4 copies, 1 copy marked up and signed “Mrs. Dikeman”)  
 Invitation to “the opening of The Bertie Cole Bays Collection, October 14, 1979, at Pittsburg State University Library”  
 Printed program - “Dedication of the Bertie Cole Bays Collection, Pittsburg State University Library, Oct. 14, 1979 (5 copies)

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**Bays Collection at Pittsburg State Special Collections Series continued**

- f. 63 Publicity for the October 14, 1979 Dedication
  - Publicity notes signed Arleen Purcell
  - The Baptist Messenger, v.20, no.17 (Oct. 1-15, 1979)
  - Chapter CA, P.E.O. 1979-1980 (2 copies)
  - First Presbyterian Church, Ft. Scott, Kansas (Sept. 30, 1979) (2 copies)
  - Tower Tidings First Presbyterian Church, Ft. Scott Kansas (v.25, no.5, Oct. 1979)
  - Tower Tidings First Presbyterian Church, Ft. Scott Kansas ([Nov. 1, 1979]) (2 copies)
- f. 64 Dedication Program photographs
  - Negative strip (5 photos) with print
  - Print of Bays Portrait presentation (2 copies)
  - Portrait of Arleen Purcell speaking (2 copies)
  - Additional photographs of dedication party
  - Negatives in envelope with negative print attached (31 photos)
- f. 65 Dedication program miscellaneous
  - Printed napkins "Bertie Cole Bays" (2)
  - Sign - "The Bertie Cole Bays Collection"
  - Kansas State College "Space Requisition Application" A. Purcell, c/o Gene DeGruson
- f. 66 Dedication program attendance
  - Handwritten notes of attendees
  - Guest book - "Bertie Cole Bays Dedication, Pittsburg State University Library, October 14, 1979"

Axe Library Special Collections holds a framed portrait that was presented at the Dedication Program, "Bertie Cole Bays: Poet, 1899-1972" (14 x 16 in.) by Joshua Bays.

Axe Library holds the following published works related to the Bertie Cole Bays collection:  
Roses in the Snow Self published. Undated. Kansas Collection 811.52 B345r (see also f.51 for second copy)

Cherries From an Apple Tree Wichita: Nellie M. Reffner. Undated. Kansas Collection 811.52 B345c

The Harp of One String Newton, Kan.: Kansan Printing Co., 1930. Kansas Collection 811.52 B345h

Some Preachers Do! Chicago: Judson Press, 1946. Kansas Collection 253 B345s 1946