

**Collection #
M 0274
OMB 0018
F 0357-0358**

**BOOTH TARKINGTON
COLLECTION, CA. 1850-1979**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	Manuscript Materials: 2 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize box, 2 reels microfilm Visual Materials: 1 box of photographs, 1 box of OVA size photographs, 1 box of OVA size graphics, 2 OVB size photographs, 2 OVC graphics, 1 cased image, 4 albums, 1 graphics folder, 1 negative, 203 slides
COLLECTION DATES:	1894–1979
PROVENANCE:	Primary donor was Margaret Booth Jameson, Indianapolis, June 1981. Numerous additions continue to be made.
RESTRICTIONS:	None
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ALTERNATE FORMATS:	
RELATED HOLDINGS:	Susanah Jameson Papers (OMB 0024); Slawson-Tarkington Papers (M 0370); Susanah Tarkington Papers (M 0411); Meredith Nicholson (M 0021); George Horace Lorimer (SC 2512).
ACCESSION NUMBER:	0000.0095, 1977.0704, 1981.0603, 1988.0590, 1990.0299, 1991.0614, 1992.0008, 1992.0009, 1992.0444, 1992.0626, 1994.0896, 1994.1001, 1997.0015, 1998.0197, 2005.0187, 2006.0380, 2009.0123, 2010.0082, 2013.0237, 2015.0040, 2017.0407
NOTES:	

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Booth Tarkington (1869–1946), native of Indianapolis, student at Purdue and Princeton universities (Princeton Class of 1893), was perhaps Indiana's most famous author, both as playwright and as novelist. His best-known works were written in the first decades of the twentieth century: *The Gentleman from Indiana* (1899), *Penrod* (1910), *Seventeen* (1917), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918), and *Alice Adams* (1921). The last two won Pulitzer Prizes. In his work he showed an appreciation of the development of his native city, and an amiable understanding of the real and imagined problems of young people. He was an early member of The Dramatic Club, founded in 1889, and often wrote plays and directed and acted in its productions.

Tarkington was married twice. His first marriage, in 1902 to Laurel Louise Fletcher, ended in divorce in 1911, and his daughter by that marriage, Laurel, died young. In 1912 he married Susanah Kiefer Robinson of Dayton, who survived him by twenty years. In the absence of children of his own, he saw a good deal of Donald, John, and Booth Jameson, the sons of his sister Hauté (Mrs. Ovid Butler Jameson), and of their children. Donald and Margaret Jameson had three children, Patty, Fenton, and Margaret (Mig); John and Florence Jameson had three children, Susanah, John, and Florence; Booth and Josephine Jameson had no children.

Tarkington grew up in Indianapolis at 1100 North Pennsylvania, the home of his parents John and Elizabeth Tarkington. Mrs. Tarkington called her home "Barley Bright." In 1972 Barley Bright was destroyed due to the construction of an interstate highway through the neighborhood where Barely Bright stood. During his later years, he and his wife Susanah spent about half of each year at their home in Indianapolis at 4270 North Meridian Street, and the other half at Seawood, the home they developed at Kennebunkport, Maine. Permanent members of the household were Mrs. Tarkington's sister, Louise Kiefer; Tarkington's secretary, Betty Trotter; and the French poodle Figaro. The establishment at Kennebunkport included, besides the house, a boat, and "The Floats," a boathouse to which Tarkington went every afternoon for coffee and conversation. Stanley Thirkell for many years served as captain of the boat, and did other maintenance jobs around the house. Kenneth Roberts was a close neighbor and friend.

Tarkington was very successful financially as an author, and developed into a connoisseur both of antique furniture and of paintings, particularly of English portraits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was a knowledgeable trustee of the John Herron Art Museum in Indianapolis, and combined his knowledge of art with his literary talents in the book *Some Old Portraits* in 1939. He carried on an extensive correspondence with his favorite art dealers, the Silberman brothers in New York, and used them as the basis for his stories about *Rumbin Galleries*.

Especially in his later years, Tarkington became very conservative in politics, violently opposed to FDR and the New Deal. These views showed up in many of his letters, particularly those written to his old friend Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch, and in items written about the Willkie campaign in 1940.

Sources:

Encyclopedia of Indianapolis. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994
(General Collection F534.I55 E4 1994).

Woodress, James. *Booth Tarkington: Gentleman from Indiana*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1954 (General Collection PS2973 .W6 1955).

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection, consists mainly of letters written by Tarkington and is divided between personal/family and business correspondence. It is arranged alphabetically by correspondent, and chronologically within correspondent. The collection was obtained from several sources, both by gift and by purchase, from 1947 to the present.

Much of the family correspondence is with Tarkington's nephew Donald Jameson and his wife and daughters. Included in this section is a letter from Tarkington's daughter Laurel to her stepmother, and a poem found in Tarkington's desk at the time of Laurel's death. Also included are Photostats of letters, filled with sketches, sent by Tarkington to his young nephews in 1903. There are items regarding the Wendell Willkie presidential campaign of 1940 and letters to Margaret Jameson, 1943–45. In addition, there are carbon copies of "Notes for Nieces," written in 1940.

There also are letters to and about family retainer Stanley Thirkell, 1918-1942. (F 0357-0358 gives copies of the bulk of Tarkington's Silberman correspondence, of which the originals are at Princeton University).

Because of Tarkington's failing eyesight most of his correspondence in his later years is written in pencil on large yellow sheets which were apparently easier for him to see. Many of these letters are to the Jameson's, 1935–45 and are stored with the oversized manuscripts. Included are letters to Donald and Margaret's daughter Patty and her husband and newborn son and letters to Patty's sister Mig, 1940–45, giving some avuncular advice during Mig's first marriage and divorce.

General correspondence primarily deals with Tarkington's literary matters. Included is a 1913 letter to Paul Eldredge about Penrod as a representative boy. A 1915 letter to H. G. Jacobs of the Brooklyn Eagle goes into some detail about the background of *The Turmoil*. A 1944 letter to Abraham Feldman gives Tarkington's memories of David Graham Phillips (whom Feldman tactlessly describes to Tarkington as Indiana's greatest novelist). There is also a John T. McCutcheon cartoon showing Tarkington on the bench at an imaginary baseball game.

Several of the letters relate to Tarkington's interest in art, both as a collector and as a museum board member. These include a letter to Mrs. Benjamin D. Hitz, correspondence with Earle J. Bernheimer, and letters to Mr. Silberman an art dealer from whom Tarkington bought many of the paintings he collected, and on whom he modeled his stories about *Rumbin's Gallery*. A letter to Garvin Brown relates an incident during his early years of acting for the Dramatic Club.

A letter to Indianapolis Symphony conductor Fabien Sevitzyky refers to a joint project to make an opera out of Kipling's *Just So Stories* (!). There are several letters to and about Stanley Thirkell that deal with Thirkell's problems with the draft in WWI and with wartime restrictions in 1941–42. Politics recur in the Thirkell letters, as well as in the transcripts of letters to Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch, which largely take the form of Tarkington's criticisms

of the New Deal as a way to josh McCulloch, who was a loyal Democrat. Considerable research has not located the originals of these transcripts.

Other materials include a 1907 contract with *McClure's Magazine* as well as short writings by Tarkington, including two early published stories and a eulogy of his dog Peter (1942). There also are articles about Tarkington's writings, especially his plays and a 32 page handwritten film script (pages 1 and 9 are missing) with numerous revisions, c.1920. Other magazine articles include "When Is It Dirt?" which was published in *Collier's* in 1927, and copies of an autobiographical series, "As I Seem to Me," published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1941.

The collection also contains two notebooks from Tarkington's youth: "The Charles Dickens Birthday Book (1882), with Tarkington family birthdays written in, and "The Tablet of Friendship" (1880), with a childish entry by Tarkington.

The visual component of the collection consists of photographs of Booth Tarkington, formal studio portraits, and casual pictures with family, friends, and pets. There are portraits of his wife Susanah, daughter Laurel, his parents, sister, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews, and others. There are pictures of the family while in Kennebunkport, Maine, and the Tarkington residences in Indianapolis, and Kennebunkport, both interiors and exteriors. The photo albums focus on Tarkington's family on his mother's side, Susanah, and his homes. There are also some commercially produced printed items that reflect his professional work as a writer, and 203 slides that were created by the Indiana Historical Society for an exhibit on Tarkington in 1979.

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Ovid Jameson to BT, 1909

Laurel Tarkington

BT Letters to Nephews, 1903

BT to Donald Jameson, 1920–44

BT to Family re: Willkie Campaign, 1940

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1943

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1944

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1945

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1920–38

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1939

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1940

BT to Margaret Jameson, 1941–42

“Notes to Nieces,,” 1940

BT to Patty Jameson and Others, 1942–45

BT to Mig Jameson, 1940–45

BT to Booth and Josephine Jameson, 1935–40

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Box 1, Folder 2

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Box 1, Folder 14

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BT to Fabien Sevitzyk, 1944	Box 1, Folder 30
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BT to and about Stanley Thirkell, 1918–42	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 10
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BT to Dr. Charles D. Hart, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 37
BT to Arthur Grover, 24 March 1924	Box 1, Folder 38
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“As I Seem to Me” <i>Saturday Evening Post</i> , 1941	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 13
On Death of Dog Peter [1942]	Box 2, Folder 4
“Let’s look before we leap” 1945	Box 2, Folder 5
“Reliance on water” (carbon), n.d.	Box 2, Folder 6
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“Booth Tarkington in Indianapolis, about 28 years of age,” n.d.

“Dinner to Booth Tarkington by the Lotos Club New York, November 25th, 1916, Menu” autographed by Booth Tarkington

Original etching of Booth Tarkington by artist Richard Hood signed by Tarkington and Hood “To Dr. Rosenfeldt”

BT portraits, formal and casual, includes copy photograph of *New York Times* “Twelve Greatest Living Americans”

CONTAINER

Photographs:
Box 1, Folder 1

OVB Photographs:
Folder 1

OVB Photographs:
Folder 2

OVC Graphics:
Folder 1

OVC Graphics:
Folder 2

Photographs:
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BT at “Seawood” in sunroom, n.d.	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 2
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<p>Susanah Tarkington, Lucy Taggart, The One-Armed Magician, Tom Taggart, [at] French Lick April 1941</p>	<p>OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 9</p>
<p>“Booth Family” Album: portraits of BT’s relatives on his mother’s side with genealogical and biographical information provided by a Tarkington cousin</p>	<p>Album Storage: PAB</p>
<p>Bebee Booth daguerreotype, ca. 1850 [BT’s grandfather on his mother’s side]</p>	<p>Cased Images: Item 1</p>
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<p>"Booth Tarkington His dog Figaro. 1935" [silhouette]</p>	<p>Graphics: Folder 1</p>
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<p>203 Slides produced by I.H.S. for Booth Tarkington Exhibit in 1979, [Slides 1–132 used for slide show, slides 133–203 duplicates]</p>	<p>Slide Storage: Slide Bins: 1–9</p>