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William Carlos Williams Letters

1946-1986 (*Bulk:* 1946-1963)

1 box (0.25 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 367

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An obstetrician from Rutherford, N.J., William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) was a key figure in modernist poetry in the United States. Innovative and experimental in his poetry, Williams was a member of the avant garde poetically and politically, writing in a simple though never simplistic style that was unencumbered by the formalism and literary allusion of peers such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

This collection consists of a small group of eleven letters and postcards written by Williams during the years 1946-1962, the majority of which were sent to Marie Leone, a nurse at the Passaic General Hospital in Passaic, New Jersey. In these letters

Williams thanks Marie and her coworkers for the cards, good wishes, and gifts they sent to cheer him up. The letters are friendly and humorous even though they are, for the most part, written from William's hospital bed during one of the frequent illnesses he suffered from in the later years of his life.

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Poetry

Background on William Carlos Williams

The son of an English father and a Puerto Rican mother, William Carlos Williams was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1883, where he later spent more than forty years serving the city as an obstetrician and the chief of pediatrics at Passaic General Hospital. Although he had a long and successful career as a physician, Williams is best known as a key figure in American poetry, closely associated with modernism and imagism. He devoted his life to developing a distinctly American verse by using colloquial American English, pushing against the "speech of the English country people, which would have something artificial about it."

With the publication of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1922, Williams distinguished himself from his contemporaries by developing his own distinctive brand of modernism, simpler, on the surface, than the complex and highly allusive mainstream of Eliot or Ezra Pound. From the 1950s onward, however, Williams' aesthetic became increasingly influential within academic circles. He served as a mentor to many young poets and was influential in several literary movements, including the Beat movement, the San Francisco Renaissance, the Black Mountain school, and the New York school.

After surviving a heart attack in 1948, Williams was beset with heart troubles and strokes for years. Despite failing health, he continued to travel and lecture until he passed away in his sleep in March 1963.

Scope of collection

This collection contains eleven letters and postcards written by William Carlos Williams and his wife Florence H. Williams, most of which were sent to Marie Leone, a nurse at the Passaic General Hospital. Also included are a small set of Christmas cards sent by the Williams's son, a photograph of William and Kathleen Hoagland, and a small collection of newspaper clippings.

Inventory

Christmas Cards

1986 Dec

Box 1: 1

Correspondence: Williams, Florence H. to Leone, Marie

1948 Mar 4

Box 1: 2

Correspondence: Williams, Florence H. to Leone, Marie

1952 Oct 20

Box 1: 3

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Armstrong, Louise

1951-1955

Box 1: 4

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Leone, Marie

1946 Dec

Box 1: 5

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Leone, Marie

1948 Mar 3

Box 1: 6

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Leone, Marie

1948 Mar 9

Box 1: 7

Contains a copy of the poem, "Song of the Queen Bee," by E.B. White

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Leone, Marie

1957-1959

Box 1: 8

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Leone, Marie

1960 Mar

Box 1: 9

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to Leone, Marie

undated

Box 1: 10

Correspondence: Williams, William Carlos to O'Brien William

1962 Apr

Box 1: 11

Photo: Williams, William Carlos and Hoagland, Kathleen

1949 Jul

Box 1: 12

Time Magazine Clippings

1963

Box 1: 13

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Paul Mariani, 1993.

Processing Information

Processed by Joanna Nevins, Apr 2018.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Poets, American

Williams, Florence H. (Florence Herman), -1976

Williams, William Carlos, 1883-1963

Contributors

William Carlos Williams, 1883-1963 **[main entry]**

Genres and formats

Letters (Correspondence)

Photographs

Postcards

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Poetry



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