

Dorothy K. White Papers

MS – 31

Wright State University
Department of Special Collections and Archives

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Introduction

The Dorothy K. White Papers were accessioned into the Archives and Special Collections at Wright State University by a deed of gift agreement. The papers were donated to Wright State University Archives and Special collections by Mrs. N. Holmes Clare in September 1976. They are located on the second level of the main library building.

Citations Format: Archives and Special Collections,
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Linear feet of shelf space occupied: .5

Literary rights in the unpublished property in the Dorothy K. White Papers have been dedicated to the public. The papers are open to the research public without restriction. The Archives and Special Collections reserve the right to copy material in this collection.

Biography

Dorothy Kepler White was born in Johnsville, Ohio (now New Lebanon) on April 27, 1882. Her earliest photographs are from the 1890's and there is a striking one of her at age sixteen.

Early in her life she took care of her sick brother's farm and three children and helped sell orders for his cycle shop, located next to the Wright Brothers' in Dayton. Dorothy lived at 214 South Jefferson Street in the 1890's. By 1907 she had moved to 339 Central at Grand Avenue.

She became a stage and silent screen actress in the early part of the twentieth century and lived in Hollywood in the 1920's. During her early years she appeared in such productions as "White Peacock" with Olga Petrova. She acted with George Cohen in "45 Minutes of Broadway" and appeared in the west coast musical comedy "All for you."

Dorothy White studied interpretive singing at the New England Conservatory of music in Boston under Clayton Gilbert. She also studied in Chicago under Frederick Root. Her travels took her to New York, Chicago, Boston, Cincinnati, and Dayton.

Her stage name was Dorothy Merrell. She was married in 1900 to Charles Wagner, and later divorced and remarried, this time to James Merrell. For awhile she lived at 1419 East Genesee Street in Syracuse, New York. Dorothy married her last husband in 1926. Rice Warren White was a United States Army Captain who died in 1935.

Dorothy was an active person involved in numerous projects, like soliciting funds for the municipal building. Dorothy participated in various organizations: Christ Episcopal Church, Pilot Club, Nomad Club, Woman's Club, and Liberty Loan Committee of the Patriotic Service League. During the post World War Two era she helped reunite families with returning servicemen.

Dorothy was hard of hearing and lost much of her sight in later years. This may have slowed her somewhat, but it did not deter her. She constantly contributed her time and efforts to charitable and civic causes, giving speeches and recitals and doing impersonations. Dorothy was a fashionably dressed person who made significant impacts on society and the Dayton community. She died in 1975.

Scope and Content

The Dorothy K. White Papers are a collection of personal papers, photographs, and newspaper articles on music, screen and stage, and society. These papers reflect Dorothy's active involvement in civic and community life and convey evidence of largely twentieth century social history, with sidelights on women's fashion of the time. The material is arranged alphabetically by subject material into seven file folders. The collection dates from 1882 to 1976.

The first file folder contains Dorothy K. White's biographical material and includes items such as articles on forebears, a medal, and stage material, such as "White Peacock," "45 Minutes of Broadway," and "All for you."

The second file folder contains an issue of *The Music News* publication which contains an article about Dorothy and one of her performances. Also included are two church programs, which highlight performances that were given by Dorothy K. White.

The third file folder contains news articles about events pertaining to Dorothy K. White.

The remaining file folders contain black and white photographs of Dorothy throughout her life and career.

CONTAINER LISTING

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	1	Biographical Material	1882-1976
	2	<i>The Music News</i> and church programs	1915-1945
	3	News Articles	1920-1967
	4	Photographs, (10 items)	1890's-1943
	5	Photographs, (10 items)	1890's-1943
	6	Photographs, (6 items)	1890's-1943
	7	Photographs, (10 items)	1947-1975