

Wilbur Dick Nesbit (1871-1927) Papers, 1896-1948
Series No. LIII
Boxes 1 - 10

Biography

Wilbur Dick Nesbit was a mid-western poet, newspaper columnist, humorist, toast master and **advertising** pioneer.

The son of John Harvey (d. 1923) and Isabel (Fichthorne) Nesbit (d. 1921), he was born in Xenia, Ohio, September 16, 1871. He attended the public schools of Cedarville, Ohio, until 1888, then worked as a printer's devil before moving to Anderson, Indiana, and the Herald in 1889. After a stint as city editor of the Muncie News, he began his advertising career with an Indianapolis clothing firm, then held various jobs on the Indianapolis Journal.

From 1899 to 1902 he was a feature writer, using the pseudonym, "Josh Wink," for the Baltimore American. By 1903 he had moved to Chicago where he wrote the "A Line o' Type or Two" column and a Sunday page for the Chicago Tribune. He later wrote the "Innocent Bystander" column of the Chicago Evening Post. He contributed a page a week to a syndicate and his "Sermons in Song" poems appeared in many periodicals. He published over thirty books, mainly poetry, 1903-1929, including The Trail to Boyland (Indianapolis, 1904), The Land of Make-Believe and Other Christmas Poems (New York, 1907), A Friend or Two (Chicago, [1910]), Value of a Smile (Chicago, 1913), I Sat in Lodge with You (Chicago, 1916) and The Paths of Long Ago (Chicago, 1926). He edited a book of toasts, The Loving Cup (Chicago, 1909, [7th ed.]), collaborated with the cartoonist C. A. Briggs in two books, and in 1927 published After Dinner Speeches and How to Make Them (Chicago). He composed innumerable mottoes and greeting card verses and song lyrics, including those for the successful

musical comedy, "The Girl of My Dreams." He eulogized James Whitcomb Riley, whose homely and nostalgic style he emulated in his own verse. He was perhaps best known for his poem, "My Flag and Your Flag" which was published in 1917.

His literary work paralleled a career in advertising in Chicago, first with the Mahin Company in 1910, and later (c. 1916) with the Wm. H. Rankin Company as vice-president and copy staff supervisor. He wrote not only copy, but enthuasuastic articles about advertising as a profession such as "The Human Appeal in Advertising". He also wrote First Principles in Advertising (New York, 1922). During World War I, he was midwest publicity director of the 3rd Liberty Loans campaign.

Nesbit took an active role in many clubs, civic and fraternal organizations, and was much in demand as a toast master and after-dinner speaker. He belonged to the Chicago Press Club, the Ohio Society, the Little Room, the Chicago Athletic Association (he edited the CAA's The Cherry Circle), the Arts Club, the Midday Club, the Cliff Dwellers, the Forty Club (a Bohemian dinner club of which he was president for 1908-1927), the Indiana Society, the University Club of Evanston, the Glenview Club, the Masons, and the Columbia (Indiana). For the Indiana Society, a congenial Chicago affiliation of prominent men of Hoosier birth and background, he compiled biographies of members in his book, Whose Hoosier (Indianapolis, 1912) wrote and acted in the society's programs, served as its "chief justice", and as president in 1923. As a member of the society, he was associated with George Ade, the writer and actor, and John T. McCutcheon, political cartoonist of the Chicago

Tribune. He was a 33^o Mason and wrote poems and articles with Masonic themes.

Nesbit married Mary Lee (Mamie) Jenkins, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Jenkins of Shelbyville, Indiana, in 1899. Their first son, Richard, was born in 1901, in Baltimore, and their two other sons, Robert and Wilbur, in Evanston, where they lived first at 723 Colfax Street before building in 1914 a Tallmadge and Watson house at 2501 Sheridan Road. This house has since been moved twice and is now 2749 Euclid Park Place. Nesbit died suddenly on August 20, 1927. Mrs. Nesbit continued to live in Evanston until 1947. She died in East Orange, New Jersey, on December 8, 1953, at age 78.

Description of the Papers

The Wilbur Dick Nesbit Papers, comprising ten boxes and an oversize folder, are arranged in four categories: biographical material, correspondence, literary works, oversize material and photographs.

The biographical material includes several "curricula vitae", clippings, obituaries, and various publications in which Nesbit's name appeared.

The correspondence is divided into seven subcategories: personal, house, clubs and organizations, advertising, investments, business and publishers'.

The personal correspondence is almost entirely family, the most interesting being that to Mrs. Nesbit from her husband shortly after their marriage.

The house correspondence is almost entirely between Nesbit and Tallmadge and Watson concerning the building of Nesbit's new house on

Sheridan Road in Evanston. The magazine, "The Western Architect," has photographs of the finished structure.

The correspondence relating to clubs and organizations includes programs, poetry, and pamphlets. Material concerning Nesbit's various affiliations is arranged alphabetically by club or organization. The Forty Club and The Indiana Society have the most material.

The advertising correspondence includes copy, both printed and in draft.

The investment correspondence is limited, but includes several letters about "Girl of My Dreams" for which Nesbit wrote the lyrics.

The business correspondence mainly deals with literary rights, permission to publish, and speaking engagements. Because the filing system used by Nesbit changed, some personal and advertising business is included for the years, 1923-1927.

The correspondence with publishers is mainly comprised of a large amount of material concerning the Volland Company, including type-scripts of verses and mottoes for which Volland paid Nesbit royalties. The Buzza Company and Volland Company conducted an acrimonious correspondence with Nesbit, 1923-1925, regarding which of the two companies held an exclusive contract for his work.

The literary works are preceded by a list of his published poems, 1900-1917, made by Nesbit. His poems are in typescript, alphabetized by title, A-Y. Greeting card verses, jokes, prose pieces, drafts and correspondence relating to his After Dinner Speeches are among the literary works.

The oversize material includes a few song lyrics, poems written

in memoriam, James Whitcomb Riley, a plot survey and house plans and a copy of The Western Architect, Dec., 1915, illustrating the work of Tallmadge and Watson. Finally there are many photographs of Nesbit and his family, both identified and unidentified.

Provenance: Unknown. Found in underground storage.

Restrictions: None.

Processor: Ellen V. Howe, December, 1981

Separation record: Duplicates have been discarded and a booklet on George Ade transferred to Special Collections.

Wilbur Dick Nesbit (1871-1927) Papers,
1896 - 1948

Container List

Box 1 Biographical papers

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| F. 1 | 1871-1927 | Biographical material - Wilbur Dick Nesbit and Mary Lee Jenkins Nesbit |
| F. 2 | 1913-1927 | Clippings about W. D. Nesbit |
| F. 3 | 1927-1928 | Clippings about W. D. Nesbit's death. Also appreciations. |
| F. 4 | [1916]-1927 | Clippings of poetry and ad copy by W. D. Nesbit |
| F. 5 | | Clippings, "Miscellaneous," of articles, poems by W. D. Nesbit |
| F. 6 | 1898 | Program - Mamie Jenkins |
| F. 7 | 1903-1927 | Programs with W. D. Nesbit |
| F. 8 | 1918-1927 | Programs, pamphlets retained by W. D. Nesbit |

Box 2 Personal Correspondence

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|-------|-------------|--|
| F. 1 | 1896-1899 | Mary Lee (Mamie) Jenkins |
| F. 2 | 1898-1899 | Wilbur Dick Nesbit to Mary Lee Jenkins |
| F. 3 | 1899-[1918] | Wilbur Dick Nesbit to Mary Lee Nesbit |
| F. 4 | 1899-1903 | John Robert Jenkins, M.D. to Wilbur Dick and Mary Lee Nesbit |
| F. 5 | [1901]-1909 | Mrs. John Robert Jenkins to Wilbur Dick and Mary Lee Nesbit |
| F. 6 | 1900-1922 | Wilbur Dick Nesbit. Incoming, family. |
| F. 7 | 1900-1927 | Wilbur Dick Nesbit. Incoming, also W.D. Nesbit copies. |
| F. 8 | 1899-1947 | Mary Lee Nesbit. Incoming, family. |
| F. 9 | 1909-1927 | Mary Lee Nesbit. Incoming, general. |
| F. 10 | 1928-1948 | Mary Lee Nesbit, Incoming, general. |
| F. 11 | [1910-1923] | Unidentified. |

Box 3 House Correspondence

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|-------|-----------------|---|---|
| F. 1 | 1913 | House construction. Specifications, Tallmadge and Watson. Incoming, W.D. Nesbit copies. | submitted by George W. Maher. Correspondence. |
| F. 2 | 1914, Jan-June | House construction. Tallmadge and Watson. | |
| F. 3 | 1914, July-Dec. | House construction. Tallmadge and Watson. | |
| F. 3a | 1915 | House construction. Tallmadge and Watson, also contractors. | |
| F. 4 | 1916 | House construction. Tallmadge and Watson, also contractors. | |
| F. 5 | 1917-1923 | House construction. Tallmadge and Watson, also contractors. | |
| F. 6 | 1913-1918 | House construction. Receipts. | |
| F. 7 | 1914-1920 | House decorating. Hasselgren Studios. | |
| F. 8 | 1914-1917 | Household furnishings. | |
| F. 9 | 1912-1921 | Household expenses. | |
| F. 10 | 1914-1920 | House loan. | |
| F. 11 | 1914-1924 | Insurance. | |
| F. 12 | 1914-1922 | Rent, taxes, summer rentals. | |
| F. 13 | 1917-1920 | Title, and boundary dispute. | |
| | See Box 13 | "The Western Architect," Dec., 1915, Vol. XXII, No. 6 (Tallmadge & Watson) | |

Box 4 Club and Organizations. Correspondence, pamphlets, programs, poetry.

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| F. 1 | 1924 | "American Sentinels." Correspondence. |
| F. 2 | 1926 | "Bugs" - Chicago Athletic Association. Program. |
| F. 3 | n.d. | Chicago Athletic Association. Appreciation of member. |
| F. 4 | 1890-1928 | "The Forty Club." Historical "memoranda," verses. |
| F. 5 | 1914-1927 | "The Forty Club." Correspondence. |
| F. 6 | 1916-1927 | "The Forty Club." Clippings of C.A.A.'s "Cherry Circle," etc. |
| F. 7 | 1907-1927 | "The Indiana Society of Chicago" - Programs |
| F. 8 | 1917-1927 | "The Indiana Society of Chicago" - Correspondence, lists, skit, clippings. |
| F. 9 | 1923 | "J.E.W.S." Correspondence, membership. |
| F. 10 | 1923-24 | "Masonry." Correspondence, pamphlets. |
| F. 11 | 1915-16 | "Pen Men of Purple Circle" Correspondence. |
| F. 12 | 1893-1927 | Club cards and books. |

Box 5 Advertising Correspondence and Copy, and Investment Correspondence.

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| F. 1 | [1910]-1919 | Advertising copy, including verses, "Human Appeal in Advertising" correspondence. Mahin Advertising Company and Wm. H. Rankin Company. |
| F. 2 | 1914-1927 | Advertising printed "matter," letter. |
| F. 3 | n.d. | Advertising Record Corporation. W.D. Nesbit verses. |
| F. 4 | 1923 | "Advertising Fortnightly." Correspondence, copy. |
| F. 5 | 1927 | Central National Bank of Battle Creek, Mich. Booklet, correspondence. |
| F. 6 | 1927 | The Fair Store. Copy. |
| F. 7 | 1913 | Goodrich Company. Copy, booklet, memos . |
| F. 8 | 1919-1923 | Haynes Automobile Company. Correspondence. |
| F. 9 | 1920-1921 | Kellogg Toasted Corn Flakes Co. Correspondence. |
| F. 10 | 1918 | Third Liberty Loan. Copy, correspondence. |
| F. 11 | n.d. | "Soap" - Articles. |
| F. 12 | 1919-1922 | Investments. Simons, Day & Co. |
| F. 13 | 1911-1920 | Investments. "Girl of My Dreams" Joseph Gaites, producer. Correspondence, invoices. |
| F. 14 | 1921-1922 | Investments. National Pictorial Soap Sales. Correspondence. |
| F. 15 | 1917-1926 | Investments. Oil companies. Correspondence. |
| F. 16 | 1926 | Investments. Dr. A. R. Johnstone (1) |

Box 6 Business correspondence - Literary rights, permission to publish, speaking engagements, and personal business.

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| F. 1 | 1900-1912 | Letters, incoming. |
| F. 2 | 1913 | Mrs. L. F. Pease. Letters, carbon replies. |
| F. 3 | 1914 | Letters, carbon replies. |
| F. 4 | 1915 | Letters, carbon replies. |
| F. 5 | 1916 | Letters, carbon replies. |
| F. 6 | 1917 Jan -
May | Letters, carbon replies, esp. ré "My Flag, etc." |
| F. 7 | 1917 June-
Dec. | Letters, carbon replies, esp. ré "My Flag, etc." |
| F. 8 | 1918 | Letters, carbon replies. |

Box 6 cont.

F. 9	1919	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 10	1920	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 11	1921	Letters, carbon replies. Also certificate of incorporation of American Picture Associations, Inc.
F. 12	1922	Letters, carbon replies.

Box 7 Business correspondence - Literary rights, personal, business, advertising

F. 1	1923	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 2	1924	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 3	1925	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 4	1926	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 5	1927	Letters, carbon replies.
F. 6	n.d.	Letters, incoming.

Box 8 Publishers' correspondence. [or Correspondence with Publishers]

F. 1	1924-1925	Brehm Company. Letters, carbon replies, including mottoes.
F. 2	1923-May, 1924	Buzza Company. Letters, carbon replies, including mottoes.
F. 3	June, 1924-1925	Buzza Company. Letters, carbon replies, including mottoes.
F. 4	1920-1921	Gibson Art Company. Letters, carbon replies.
F. 5	1912-1916	Volland Company. Letters, carbon replies, mottoes.
F. 6	1917-1922	Volland Company. Letters, carbon replies, mottoes.
F. 7	1923	Volland Company. Letters, carbon replies, mottoes.
F. 8	1924	Volland Company. Letters, carbon replies, mottoes.
F. 9	1925	Volland Company. Letters, carbon replies, mottoes.
F. 10	1926-1927	Volland Company. Letters, carbon replies, also contract copy.

Box 9 Literary Works

F. 1		List of published poetry 1900-1917, books in Crerar Library [1917].
F. 2	n.d.	Poems, A, typescripts.
F. 3	n.d.	Poems, B-C, typescripts.
F. 4	n.d.	Poems, Christmas Verses, typescripts.
F. 5	n.d.	Poems, D-E, typescripts.
F. 6	n.d.	Poems, F-G, typescripts.
F. 7	n.d.	Poems, H, typescripts.
F. 8	n.d.	Poems, I, typescripts.
F. 9	n.d.	Poems, J-L, typescripts.
F. 10	n.d.	Poems, "Loving Cup" verses, typescripts.
F. 11	n.d.	Poems, "Masonry" verses, typescripts.
F. 12	n.d.	Poems, M-N, typescripts.
F. 13	n.d.	Poems, O, typescripts.
F. 14	n.d.	Poems, P-R, typescripts.
F. 15	n.d.	Poems, S, typescripts.
F. 16	n.d.	Poems, T, typescripts.
F. 17	n.d.	Poems, U-V, typescripts.

Box 9 cont.

- F. 18 n.d. Poems, W, typescripts.
 F. 19 n.d. Poems, Y, typescripts.
 F. 20 n.d. Poems, Fragments, typescripts.
 F. 21 1907 Poems, Fragments, typescripts.

Box 10 Literary Works

- F. 1 n.d. Greeting card verses, mottoes, typescripts.
 F. 2 n.d. Jokes. Typescripts.
 F. 3 n.d. "Prose." Short pieces. Typescripts. (See folder for list of titles.)
 F. 4 n.d. "Prose." Short pieces. Typescripts. (See folder for list of titles.)
 F. 5 n.d. Prose. "Speeches on Advertising" and religious pieces. Typescripts. (See folder for list of titles.)
 F. 6 1923-24 Prose. "Autobiography of Andy Gump." Drafts, incomplete typescripts, and correspondence about book and cigar with Sidney Smith.
 F. 7 1926 After Dinner Speeches and How to Make Them. Chicago, Reilly & Lee, Co., 1927. "Correspondence on speeches and stories for book." Typescripts.
 F. 8 (1926) After Dinner drafts, fragments.

L. Folder 1 Oversize material. Works, house and photographs.

- F. 1 1901-1922 Works. Song Lyrics. (4)
 F. 2 [1916] Works. Poems, in memoriam, James Whitcomb Riley.
 F. 3 1913-1914 House. Survey and plans.
 F. 4 1915 House. "The Western Architect," Vol. XXII, No. 6, Dec. 1915. "Illustrating the Work of Tallmadge and Watson."
 F. 5 n.d. Photographs. Engraved plates of W. D. Nesbit. (2)
 F. 6 n.d. Photographs. Wilbur Dick Nesbit, Mary Lee [Jenkins] Nesbit and Wm. H. Jenkins.
 F. 7 n.d. Photographs. Nesbit family. Unidentified.