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CHEATHAM, KITTY
(1865-1946)
PAPERS
1892-1946

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INTRODUCTION

This finding aid focuses on the papers of Catherine Smiley “Kitty” Cheatham (1865-1946), American singer, author and lecturer. The papers span the period 1892 through 1946, although the majority of the collection concentrates on the 1920s and 1930s. The Kitty Cheatham Papers consist of .5 cubic feet of material, in addition to four oversized boxes and photographic negative boxes. The collection contains biographical sketches, clippings, correspondence, printed material, sheet music, writings, photographs, lantern slides, photographic glass negatives, and several miscellaneous items.

Cheatham was born in Nashville in 1865, the daughter of Colonel Richard Boone and Frances Anna (Bugg) Cheatham. She began her education in private schools, but afterwards attended public schools in Nashville. She began her musical career at the age of 14, when she performed at the First Presbyterian Church in Nashville. Soon afterwards, she studied music in New York, Paris, and Berlin. Her first professional recital was in London, where she met and became friends with several of the younger members of Queen Victoria’s family. She performed for the royal family on many occasions thereafter.

It was only a few years after she left Nashville that her name was known throughout Europe and the United States. She was especially famous for her renditions of the familiar songs of childhood. Her repertoire soon included more than one thousand songs in nine languages, but she placed special emphasis on the works of American composers. She was one of the first artists to make known the African American spiritual to European audiences. She was a pioneer in the arrangement of original orchestral programs, including Walter Prichard Eaton’s adaptation of Hoffman’s fairy tales, which was later used successfully in Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker Suite.” She was hailed as the “creator of a new art,” and was invited to give recitals in Munich, Dresden, and other large cities of Europe. In the United States, she was a pioneer in the creation of children’s concerts for the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, and other concert orchestras.

As a speaker, collector, and translator, Cheatham adapted hundreds of radio programs. In the early 20th century she developed a series of “illustrated lectures” based on her personal experiences in Russia, France, England, Germany, Scandinavia, and Iceland. At the invitation of the Icelandic Parliament, she delivered an address at the Millennial Celebrations on June 28, 1930. She was an honorary vice president of the International Women’s Congress and was a delegate to the congress held at Budapest in 1937.

Her writings included: *Kitty Cheatham- Her Book*, and *A Nursery Garland, Woven by Kitty Cheatham*, both illustrated by the English artist Graham Robertson, who had studied under Sir Edward Burne-Jones and James Whistler. She was also author of several articles on musical subjects. Her death occurred in New York City on January 6, 1946, and she is interred at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Nashville Tennessee.

David D. Plater, of Thibodaux, Louisiana, donated the Kitty Cheatham Papers to the Tennessee State Library and Archives in 2000 and 2003. There are no restrictions on the use of the material. Single photocopies of unpublished materials in the Kitty Cheatham Papers may be made for individual or scholarly research.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Kitty Cheatham Papers, containing approximately .5 cubic feet, four oversized boxes, and photographic negative boxes, span the period 1892 through 1946, although the bulk of the collection falls between 1920 and 1930. The collection contains biographical sketches, clippings, correspondence, genealogical records, legal records, printed material, programs, sketches and drawings, sheet music, speeches, writings, photographs, lantern slides, and photographic glass negatives.

The small collection offers little detailed biographical information concerning the career of Miss Cheatham. The correspondence is probably the most important part of the collection, although it is primarily of the “friendship” or “thank you” variety. There are several letters from correspondents in the musical, theatrical, and political world such as Lynn Fontaine, William Elliot Griffis, Lord Halifax, Herbert Hoover, Cordell Hull, Rockwell Kent, and Deems Taylor.

The bulk of the collection consists of her sheet music and lantern slides. The sheet music is interesting in that it represents the type of music that Kitty Cheatham used in her performances. Much of the sheet music bears her notations and rearrangements. The lantern slides appeared in her “illustrated lectures,” and although she spoke on many subjects, only those of Iceland and various patriotic subjects remain. Although there are gaps, Cheatham’s numbering order for the programs has been retained. The lantern slides are stored in the vault (VII-D-6).

Due to the small size of the collection, the importance of it as a major research aid is negligible. The sheet music and lantern slides may prove the most interesting as an insight into popular culture in the United States in late 19th and early 20th centuries.

CONTAINER LIST

BOX 1

1. Biographical Sketches-- "Kitty Cheatham," n.d.
2. Clippings-- "Operatic Stars," 1928
3. Correspondence-- Bagby, Morris, 1941
4. Correspondence-- Bode, Marie, 1913
5. Correspondence-- Busch, Fritz, 1943
6. Correspondence-- Cheatham, Kitty, 1923-1934
7. Correspondence-- Davis, Charles G., 1924
8. Correspondence-- Dickens, Marie, 1931
9. Correspondence-- Fontaine, Lynn, 1940
10. Correspondence-- Griffis, William Elliot, 1926
11. Correspondence-- Halifax, Lord, 1942 (Edward Wood)
12. Correspondence-- Hoover, Herbert, 1931
13. Correspondence-- Hull, Cordell, 1937
14. Correspondence-- Johnson, Annie R.H., 1936
15. Correspondence-- Kent, Rockwell, 1940
16. Correspondence-- Nelson, Jessie M., 1945
17. Correspondence-- Taylor, Deems, 1941
18. Correspondence-- Unknown
19. Genealogical Records-- "The Royal Lineage of Katherine Smiley Cheatham," undated
20. Legal Records-- Passport, Cheatham, Kitty, 1913
21. Printed Material-- Booklet, *Famous Paintings of the American Revolution*
22. Printed Material-- Booklet, *Kitty Cheatham- Her Book*
23. Printed Material-- Booklet, *Letter to M* by Kitty Cheatham
24. Printed Material-- Booklet, *Out of the North*
25. Printed Material-- Booklet, *Stone Mountain (Georgia) Unveiling*
26. Printed Material-- Booklet, *The Washington Window*
- 26a. Printed Material-- Bulletin, The Philharmonic-Symphony League, 1941
27. Printed Material-- Short Story, *Where Love is, Christ is* by Leo Tolstoy
28. Programs-- Shakespeare Recital (Wellesley College), 1916
29. Sketches-- Drawings, *An Invitation from New Bedford*, n.d.
30. Sketches-- Drawings, Kitty Cheatham
31. Sketches-- Drawings, *Kitty Cheatham-Her Book*
32. Sketches-- Drawings, *With Kitty Cheatham's Greetings*, 1912
33. Speeches-- "The Origin of the Name America," by Kitty Cheatham
34. Writings-- poems, misc.
35. Writings-- "The Story of Salem Witchcraft," by Henrietta D. Kimball, 1892
36. Writings-- "The Touraine and Washington," by William Elliot Griffis, 1922

PHOTOGRAPHS

(Photographs are located at the end of Box 1)

1. Photographs-- "Daniel Boone, Cherokee Park, Louisville, Kentucky"
2. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
3. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
4. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
5. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
6. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
7. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
8. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
9. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
10. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
11. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
12. Photographs-- "Boxwood," Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tennessee, 1914
13. Photographs-- "Catherine Smiley (Mrs. Robert) Bugg, Mother of Frances (Mrs. Richard) Cheatham
14. Photographs-- Frances Bugg Cheatham
15. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham as a child
16. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham
17. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham, 1911
18. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham
19. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham
20. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham (located in oversized box)
21. Photographs-- Kitty Cheatham and her brother, Foster Cheatham
22. Photographs-- "Glyns Dyke, Home of Sir William Gilbert"
23. Photographs-- "Pilgrim's Progress Staged"

OVERSIZED BOXES

BOX 2

Sheet Music, miscellaneous

BOX 3

Sheet Music, miscellaneous

BOX 4

Sheet Music, miscellaneous

BOX 5

Sketches, drawings, miscellaneous

LANTERN SLIDES

Box 1 Slide Presentation I

1. Mary Baker Eddy
2. The National Anthem: Our America
3. "Our America"
5. "America, America, Our Love of Thee"
6. "America, America, Thy Seer-graved Seal"
7. "America, America, On Pressing Van"
8. "America, America, In Thee is Found"
9. "America, America, Faith Shadowed Land"
10. "America, America, Our God of Love"
13. "Specimen of Syriac Text"
14. "Samaritan Scroll of the Law"
15. "New York Bible Society Stand at Ellis Island"
16. "Reading the Chained Bible"
17. "Bible in the Lodging House"
19. "A Nursery Garland by Kitty Cheatham"
20. Woman and two children, unidentified
21. Woman, unidentified
22. Kitty Cheatham
23. "Kitty Cheatham- Her Book"
24. Building, unidentified
25. Woman, unidentified
26. Woman, unidentified
27. "Greetings and a Message to the Dear Children"
28. Girl at piano, unidentified
29. Girl at garden gate, unidentified
30. Little girl with lamb (Reenactment of "Mary had a Little Lamb"?)
31. Old woman, unidentified
32. "Mary's Little Lamb"
33. Letter from Mary E. Tyler, author of "Mary had a Little Lamb" (copy)
34. Schoolhouse in woods, unidentified
35. Schoolhouse, unidentified
36. Schoolhouse, interior, unidentified

Box 2

37. School children with lamb (Reenactment of "Mary had a Little Lamb"?)
38. Jesus as the good shepherd
40. "Jesus Entry into Jerusalem"
45. Iceland? unidentified
46. Woman and young boy (pioneers), unidentified
47. Monument, unidentified
48. Reenactment at Salem, Massachusetts. Pilgrim descendents

49. Landing of the Pilgrims
50. "In the Name of God, Amen! Mayflower Universal Bible Sunday, November 28, 1900"
51. Troika (Russian sleigh)
52. Man in Uniform (Navy?) being Congratulated by two men. (Richard Byrd?)
53. Richard Byrd Expedition
54. Admiral Byrd Expedition
55. Admiral Byrd Expedition
56. Francis Hopkinson
57. "Hopkinson's Song: My Days have been so Wondrous Free"
58. "E Pluribus Unum (seal)
59. "Novus Ordo Secloram"
60. "Innsigli Nyu Jorvikun Borgar," (seal)
61. "I will Uphold Thee," American Flag
62. "Great Seal of the State of New York"
63. Statue, Unity between English speaking countries by Malvina Hoffman
64. Sacagawea?
65. "Chief White Horse Eagle, born 1822, 105 year old"
66. Native Americans in Ritual Dance
67. Native Americans Preparing Food
68. Native Americans Gathering Grain (drawing)
72. Man, unidentified
73. George Frideric Handel

Box 3

74. Colonial boy in front of shop, unidentified
75. Queen Victoria
77. Man, unidentified
80. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
81. Johann Sebastian Bach
84. Martin Luther
85. Village on a lake, unidentified
86. Minister, unidentified
87. Daniel Boone
- 87B. Thomas Jefferson
88. James Monroe
89. Benjamin Franklin
90. James Robertson
91. Man, unidentified
92. Man, unidentified
93. Thomas Jefferson
94. "Pinkie" by Thomas Gainsborough
96. Building, unidentified

101. Earl of Chatham (statue)
102. Pilgrim women at Plymouth Rock
103. William Shakespeare (statue)
104. Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee
105. Quotes from Abraham Lincoln and Mary Baker Eddy
106. Abraham Lincoln reading by firelight
107. Abraham Lincoln as a young man
108. Abraham Lincoln
109. Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC
110. "Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865," bas relief
111. Children at statue of Abraham Lincoln
112. "Washington is the Mightiest Name," quote from Abraham Lincoln
113. Colonial house, unidentified
114. Frontiersman, unidentified
115. Frontiersman, unidentified
117. Man, unidentified
118. General Washington and Betsy Ross

Box 4 Slide Presentation II

1. Iceland, River
2. Mielafoss, Iceland
3. Heckea (volcano), Iceland
4. Jon Sigurdsson
5. Jon Sigurdsson, 1811-1879, (statue)
6. Iceland, unidentified
7. "Einar Sousson, Saberred Twins" (statue)
8. Man, unidentified
9. "The Wave," (statue)
10. "First Hymn of Praise," (painting)
11. "Toward the Light" (painting)
12. Rock climbing, Iceland
13. Iceland, houses
14. Snow, Iceland
15. Iceland, scenery, unidentified
16. Icelandic ponies
17. Fortress? Iceland
18. King and Queen of Denmark (King Christian X)
19. Reykjavik, Iceland, Library
20. Man delivering speech, unidentified
21. "Laugarnar vid Reykjavik"
22. Man, unidentified
23. Iceland, scenery, unidentified
24. Iceland, scenery, unidentified

Box 4

25. Speaker's Stand, Iceland
26. Reykjavik, street scene
27. Church, unidentified, Iceland

Box 5

28. Reykjavik, harbor
29. Sheep, Iceland
30. Reykjavik? street scene
31. Celtic cross, Isle of Man
32. "Drengs" and James P.B. Hyndman: "A Little Icelandic Boy," 1930
33. Paul Solfsson
43. "Romid Til Min"
70. Icelandic village, unidentified
97. Reykjavik? street scene

Box 6 Slide Presentation III

1. Man, unidentified
3. "One God, One Law," (painting and inscription)
4. "America, America! God Gave Thee Birth"
5. Man, unidentified
18. "America, America, the God of Love"
19. "Schooner in Silhouette off Cape May, June 1933"
20. Man, unidentified
21. Little child (angel?)
22. Kitty Cheatham
29. "America, America. Our God of Love"
39. Jesus, the Good Shepherd
74. Man, unidentified
75. Beethoven
100. Two men (statue), unidentified
121. "Let Us Raise a Standard"
135. "One God, One Law," (painting and inscription)

Box 7 Slide Presentation IV

1. Icelandic child with Kitty Cheatham
2. "Thorfine Karlsefine"
3. Icelandic girl
4. Icelandic group with Kitty Cheatham
5. Miss Kitty Cheatham and Icelandic Girls
6. Kitty Cheatham in Icelandic costume
7. Old Mill, Newport
8. Viking (statue)

9. Iceland, geyser
10. Icelandic girl
12. "Dove of Peace" (painting)
13. Icelandic girl, unidentified
14. Icelandic woman, spinning
15. Icelandic woman, unidentified
41. "Leif Erickson: The Discoverer of America"
42. "Leif Erickson: The Discoverer of America," (drawing)
44. Viking ship, replica
69. Man, unidentified
76. Man, unidentified
78. Woman, unidentified
79. Woman playing piano
82. Man, unidentified
83. Man, unidentified
93. Girl, unidentified
99. Castle? Iceland, unidentified

Box 8 Slide Presentation V

15. "Washington's March to Trenton"
116. Washington's Inaugural Ball?
120. George Washington: "Let Us Raise a Standard"
122. General Order against Profane Cursing and Swearing with Portrait of General Washington
123. Washington praying at Valley Forge
124. Washington wearing Masonic apron
125. "To the Grand Lodge of the United States," Washington as Master of Alexandria Lodge
126. Washington's farewell to Martha Washington
127. "George Washington and Family at a Meal"
128. George Washington and his family
129. The signing of the Declaration of Independence
130. Revolutionary War scene, unidentified
131. General Washington viewing battle plans
132. Washington delivering a speech, unidentified
133. Washington's private carriage
134. Washington's treasure chest
136. "Brave Britain, Blest America"
137. "A Blind Person Reading the Raised Type"
138. Queen Victoria

Box 9 Photographic Glass Negatives

1. "Christmas Eve at Mount Vernon"
2. "The Day's Beginning: George Washington and Family"
3. "Early Home of George Washington"
4. Francis Hopkinson
5. Kitty Cheatham
6. "George Washington and Family"
7. "Great Seal of the State of New York"
8. Iceland, scenery, unidentified
9. Kitty Cheatham
10. Kitty Cheatham as a young girl
11. "Innsigli Nyu Jorvikur Borgar"
12. Mary E. Tyler Letter, 1880
13. "Mary's Little Lamb"
14. Old woman, unidentified
15. Pioneer woman and child
16. School children (reenactment of "Mary had a Little Lamb")
17. Schoolhouse, unidentified
18. Schoolhouse, unidentified
19. Schoolhouse in woods, unidentified
20. George and Martha Washington
21. "Washington as Master of Alexandria Lodge"
22. "Washington at Valley Forge"
23. George Washington in Masonic apron
24. "Washington is the Mightiest Name"