

**Collection #
BV 4970**

**BABY'S KINGDOM
BABY BOOK, 1895–1905**

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Processed by

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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 bound volume

COLLECTION
DATES: 1895–1905

PROVENANCE: Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, 2010

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE
FORMATS:

RELATED
HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION
NUMBER: 2010.0192

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Lee and Shepard Publishers first printed Annie F. Cox's *Baby's Kingdom* in 1891 with the full title of *Baby's Kingdom: Wherein May Be Chronicled as Memories for Grown-Up Days the Mother's Story of the Progress of the Baby*. The volume, bound in blue and white cloth, was one of the earliest mass-market baby books, retailing at the considerable sum of \$3.75. This particular copy was printed in 1895, showing that the book had enjoyed enough success to merit multiple printings.

This copy tracks the development of Elizabeth Gillette Henry (1897–unknown), daughter of Margaret Roberts Henry (1872–1900) and William Elmer Henry (1857–1936). William Elmer Henry was Indiana's State Librarian from 1897–1906. After Margaret's death from stomach cancer, he married Sylvia Allen in 1903. In 1906, the family moved to Seattle, where William worked as a librarian for the University of Washington. Elizabeth Henry attended the University of Washington and was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta. Like her father, she became a librarian, and worked for the Seattle Public Library System. She is not known to have married nor had children.

Sources:

Indiana Birth, Marriage, and Death Records

Kellogg, Carolyn, "The Hidden History of Baby Books," *Los Angeles Times Online* 11 June 2010.

The Publisher's Weekly 973–4 (27 September 1890), 482.

Washington State Death Records.

Washington University Yearbook, 1918.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The phenomenon of baby books—in which parents could record their babies' birthdays, weights, developmental markers, and so on—was a new one at the turn of the twentieth century, since it wasn't until then that a baby could be reasonably counted on to survive infancy. *Baby's Kingdom* exemplifies the Gilded Age idea of children as precious, innocent creatures, and is similar in many ways to baby books created later in the twentieth century. Pages for recording a child's weight, first steps, and vocabulary are interspersed with pages featuring quotes about children from Shakespeare, Longfellow, the Bible, song lyrics, and anonymous sentimental poets. There is a page for a lock of hair, which the Henrys seem not to have used, and one for a photograph, which they did.

In addition to basic measurements, dates, and vocabulary notes, Margaret Henry adds a two-page passage near the end of the book detailing her daughter's growth and personality. She is especially pleased with Elizabeth's happiness, kindness, self-control, and memory skills. She also mentions that her daughter has only been sick once, and only for a day. The next page, though, written in William Henry's hand, is titled "Elizabeth's Serious Illness," and describes the effects of a bout of pneumonia and then typhoid when she was nearly three years old. Though she went with her mother to Arizona to speed her recovery, it was still many months before she "had fairly regained her original strength." The account evidences how, although children could usually be counted on to survive infancy, they were still vulnerable to illnesses that children in the twenty-first century are not.

The following page, which gives an account of Margaret Henry's death from stomach cancer in late 1900, exemplifies some turn-of-the-century attitudes towards illness and death. Though the cancer was discovered before her death neither doctors nor her husband told her what it was she suffered from. William writes that Elizabeth seemed to understand what had happened and "never cried for her Mamma nor asked for her return," behavior that was thought admirable for a child at the time, but which probably would have been considered unusual 100 years later.

The final few pages feature short anecdotes about Elizabeth through the age of eight. Two of these are written in a third hand, most likely that of her stepmother Sylvia Henry.

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Baby's Kingdom Baby Book with Information for
Elizabeth Gillette Henry

CONTAINER

BV 4970

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, BV 4970).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.