

Collection #  
M 0274  
OMB 0018  
F 0357-0358

## BOOTH TARKINGTON COLLECTION, CA. 1850-1979

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: Manuscript Materials: 2 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize box, 2 reels microfilm  
Visual Materials: 1 box of photographs, 1 box of OVA size photographs, 1 box of OVA size graphics, 2 OVB size photographs, 2 OVC graphics, 1 cased image, 4 albums, 1 graphics folder, 1 negative, 203 slides

COLLECTION DATES: 1894–1979

PROVENANCE: Primary donor was Margaret Booth Jameson, Indianapolis, June 1981. Numerous additions continue to be made.

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Susanah Jameson Papers (OMB 0024); Slawson-Tarkington Papers (M 0370); Susanah Tarkington Papers (M 0411); Meredith Nicholson (M 0021); George Horace Lorimer (SC 2512).

ACCESSION NUMBER: 0000.0095, 1977.0704, 1981.0603, 1988.0590, 1990.0299, 1991.0614, 1992.0008, 1992.0009, 1992.0444, 1992.0626, 1994.0896, 1994.1001, 1997.0015, 1998.0197, 2005.0187, 2006.0380, 2009.0123, 2010.0082, 2013.0237, 2015.0040

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Booth Tarkington (1869–1946), native of Indianapolis, student at Purdue and Princeton universities (Princeton Class of 1893), was perhaps Indiana's most famous author, both as playwright and as novelist. His best-known works were written in the first decades of the twentieth century: *The Gentleman from Indiana* (1899), *Penrod* (1910), *Seventeen* (1917), *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918), and *Alice Adams* (1921). The last two won Pulitzer Prizes. In his work he showed an appreciation of the development of his native city, and an amiable understanding of the real and imagined problems of young people. He was an early member of The Dramatic Club, founded in 1889, and often wrote plays and directed and acted in its productions.

Tarkington was married twice. His first marriage, in 1902 to Laurel Louise Fletcher, ended in divorce in 1911, and his daughter by that marriage, Laurel, died young. In 1912 he married Susanah Kiefer Robinson of Dayton, who survived him by twenty years. In the absence of children of his own, he saw a good deal of Donald, John, and Booth Jameson, the sons of his sister Hauté (Mrs. Ovid Butler Jameson), and of their children. Donald and Margaret Jameson had three children, Patty, Fenton, and Margaret (Mig); John and Florence Jameson had three children, Susanah, John, and Florence; Booth and Josephine Jameson had no children.

Tarkington grew up in Indianapolis at 1100 North Pennsylvania, the home of his parents John and Elizabeth Tarkington. Mrs. Tarkington called her home "Barley Bright." In 1972 Barley Bright was destroyed due to the construction of an interstate highway through the neighborhood where Barely Bright stood. During his later years, he and his wife Susanah spent about half of each year at their home in Indianapolis at 4270 North Meridian Street, and the other half at Seawood, the home they developed at Kennebunkport, Maine. Permanent members of the household were Mrs. Tarkington's sister, Louise Kiefer; Tarkington's secretary, Betty Trotter; and the French poodle Figaro. The establishment at Kennebunkport included, besides the house, a boat, and "The Floats," a boathouse to which Tarkington went every afternoon for coffee and conversation. Stanley Thirkell for many years served as captain of the boat, and did other maintenance jobs around the house. Kenneth Roberts was a close neighbor and friend.

Tarkington was very successful financially as an author, and developed into a connoisseur both of antique furniture and of paintings, particularly of English portraits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was a knowledgeable trustee of the John Herron Art Museum in Indianapolis, and combined his knowledge of art with his literary talents in the book *Some Old Portraits* in 1939. He carried on an extensive correspondence with his favorite art dealers, the Silberman brothers in New York, and used them as the basis for his stories about *Rumbin Galleries*.

Especially in his later years, Tarkington became very conservative in politics, violently opposed to FDR and the New Deal. These views showed up in many of his letters,

particularly those written to his old friend Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch, and in items written about the Willkie campaign in 1940.

Sources:

*Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994  
(General Collection F534.I55 E4 1994).

Woodress, James. *Booth Tarkington: Gentleman from Indiana*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1954 (General Collection PS2973 .W6 1955).

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection, consists mainly of letters written by Tarkington and is divided between personal/family and business correspondence. It is arranged alphabetically by correspondent, and chronologically within correspondent. The collection was obtained from several sources, both by gift and by purchase, from 1947 to the present.

Much of the family correspondence is with Tarkington's nephew Donald Jameson and his wife and daughters. Included in this section is a letter from Tarkington's daughter Laurel to her stepmother, and a poem found in Tarkington's desk at the time of Laurel's death. Also included are Photostats of letters, filled with sketches, sent by Tarkington to his young nephews in 1903. There are items regarding the Wendell Willkie presidential campaign of 1940 and letters to Margaret Jameson, 1943–45. In addition, there are carbon copies of "Notes for Nieces," written in 1940.

There also are letters to and about family retainer Stanley Thirkell, 1918-1942. (F 0357-0358 gives copies of the bulk of Tarkington's Silberman correspondence, of which the originals are at Princeton University).

Because of Tarkington's failing eyesight most of his correspondence in his later years is written in pencil on large yellow sheets which were apparently easier for him to see. Many of these letters are to the Jameson's, 1935–45 and are stored with the oversized manuscripts. Included are letters to Donald and Margaret's daughter Patty and her husband and newborn son and letters to Patty's sister Mig, 1940–45, giving some avuncular advice during Mig's first marriage and divorce.

General correspondence primarily deals with Tarkington's literary matters. Included is a 1913 letter to Paul Eldredge about Penrod as a representative boy. A 1915 letter to H. G. Jacobs of the Brooklyn Eagle goes into some detail about the background of *The Turmoil*. A 1944 letter to Abraham Feldman gives Tarkington's memories of David Graham Phillips (whom Feldman tactlessly describes to Tarkington as Indiana's greatest novelist). There is also a John T. McCutcheon cartoon showing Tarkington on the bench at an imaginary baseball game.

Several of the letters relate to Tarkington's interest in art, both as a collector and as a museum board member. These include a letter to Mrs. Benjamin D. Hitz, correspondence with Earle J. Bernheimer, and letters to Mr. Silberman an art dealer from whom Tarkington bought many of the paintings he collected, and on whom he modeled his stories about *Rumbin's Gallery*. A letter to Garvin Brown relates an incident during his early years of acting for the Dramatic Club.

A letter to Indianapolis Symphony conductor Fabien Sevitzyky refers to a joint project to make an opera out of Kipling's *Just So Stories* (!). There are several letters to and about Stanley Thirkell that deal with Thirkell's problems with the draft in WWI and with wartime

restrictions in 1941–42. Politics recur in the Thirkell letters, as well as in the transcripts of letters to Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch, which largely take the form of Tarkington's criticisms of the New Deal as a way to josh McCulloch, who was a loyal Democrat. Considerable research has not located the originals of these transcripts.

Other materials include a 1907 contract with *McClure's Magazine* as well as short writings by Tarkington, including two early published stories and a eulogy of his dog Peter (1942). There also are articles about Tarkington's writings, especially his plays and a 32 page handwritten film script (pages 1 and 9 are missing) with numerous revisions, c.1920. Other magazine articles include "When Is It Dirt?" which was published in *Collier's* in 1927, and copies of an autobiographical series, "As I Seem to Me," published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1941.

The collection also contains two notebooks from Tarkington's youth: "The Charles Dickens Birthday Book (1882), with Tarkington family birthdays written in, and "The Tablet of Friendship" (1880), with a childish entry by Tarkington.

The visual component of the collection consists of photographs of Booth Tarkington, formal studio portraits, and casual pictures with family, friends, and pets. There are portraits of his wife Susanah, daughter Laurel, his parents, sister, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews, and others. There are pictures of the family while in Kennebunkport, Maine, and the Tarkington residences in Indianapolis, and Kennebunkport, both interiors and exteriors. The photo albums focus on Tarkington's family on his mother's side, Susanah, and his homes. There are also some commercially produced printed items that reflect his professional work as a writer, and 203 slides that were created by the Indiana Historical Society for an exhibit on Tarkington in 1979.

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Laurel Tarkington	Box 1, Folder 3
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BT to Donald Jameson, 1920–44	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 2
BT to Family re: Willkie Campaign, 1940	Box 1, Folder 5
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1943	Box 1, Folder 6
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1944	Box 1, Folder 7
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1945	Box 1, Folder 8
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1920–38	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 3
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1939	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 4
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1940	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 5
BT to Margaret Jameson, 1941–42	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 6
“Notes to Nieces,,” 1940	Box 1, Folder 9
BT to Patty Jameson and Others, 1942–45	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 7
BT to Mig Jameson, 1940–45	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 8

BT to Booth and Josephine Jameson, 1935–40	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 14
BT to Hauté Tarkington Jameson, 1936	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 15
Susanah Tarkington to Josephine Jameson, 1945, 1965, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 10

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BT to Lee Burns, 1927	Box 1, Folder 15
BT to Miss Chapin, 21 November 1925	Box 1, Folder 16
BT to “Miss Day,” 1915 and Paul Eldredge, 1913	Box 1, Folder 17
BT to Louise Emerson, 1920	Box 1, Folder 18
BT to Abraham Feldman, 1944–45	Box 1, Folder 19
BT to Allen Hendricks, 1942	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 9
BT to W. C. Folley, 24 March 1924	Box 1, Folder 20
BT to Elizabeth H. Hitz, 1939	Box 1, Folder 21
BT to H. G. Jacobs, 1915 and Alexander Kadison, 1943	Box 1, Folder 22
BT to Sylva Reis Jonas, 2 December 1922	Box 1, Folder 23
Susannah Tarking to Mrs. Jonas, 2 December [1922?]	Box 1, Folder 24



BT to Harry Lichtig, 6 July 1938	Box 1, Folder 25
BT to Mary Lloyd, 1923	Box 1, Folder 26
BT to Carleton McCulloch (transcripts), 1940	Box 1, Folder 27
BT to Carleton McCulloch (transcripts), 1941–Feb. 1944	Box 1, Folder 28
BT to Carleton McCulloch (transcripts), March 1944–Jan. 1946	Box 1, Folder 28
John T. McCutcheon Cartoon	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 12
BT to New Orleans <i>Picayune</i> , 3 July 1904	Box 1, Folder 29
BT to Fabien Sevitzky, 1944	Box 1, Folder 30
BT to Silberman, 1933–44 (copies and transcripts)	Box 1, Folder 31
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BT to Mark Sullivan, July 1925 and Aug. 1937	Box 1, Folder 33
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BT to and about Stanley Thirkell, 1918–42	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 10
Transcripts of Stanly Thirkell Letters 1918–42	Box 1, Folder 34
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BT to Corporal Ira J. Friedman, 4 letters, 1919–1923	Box 1, Folder 36
BT to Charles D. Hart, 1939	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 18

BT general letter supporting appeal to funds for infantile paralysis (polio), n.d.	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 19
BT to Dr. Charles D. Hart, n.d.	Box 1, Folder 37
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“What is Dirt?” (manuscript), 1927	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 1
“As I Seem to Me” <i>Saturday Evening Post</i> , 1941	OMB 0018 Box 1, Folder 13
On Death of Dog Peter [1942]	Box 2, Folder 4
“Let’s look before we leap” 1945	Box 2, Folder 5
“Reliance on water” (carbon), n.d.	Box 2, Folder 6
Booklet on schooner “Regina,” n.d.	Box 2, Folder 7
General Items, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 8
Princeton University Chronicles, 1957—on Tarkington’s plays	Box 2, Folder 9
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Leila Holmes on Tarkington’s Plays, n.d.	Box 2, Folder 11
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Program—50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Booth Tarkington Civic Theater, 1964	Box 2, Folder 13
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“Booth Tarkington in Indianapolis, about 28 years of age,” n.d.

“Dinner to Booth Tarkington by the Lotos Club New York, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1916, Menu” autographed by Booth Tarkington

Original etching of Booth Tarkington by artist Richard Hood signed by Tarkington and Hood “To Dr. Rosenfeldt”

CONTAINER

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

OVB Photographs:  
Folder 1

OVB Photographs:  
Folder 2

OVC Graphics:  
Folder 1

OVC Graphics:  
Folder 2

BT portraits, formal and casual, includes copy photograph of *New York Times* "Twelve Greatest Living Americans"

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

*New York Times* "Twelve Greatest Living Americans"

4x5 Acetate Negatives:  
1 negative

BT in several photographs at his desk and dictating to his secretary Betty Trotter

Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 3

BT in dark coat with fur collar, printed portrait by Ira O. Scharz, 1921

OVA Graphics:  
Box 1, Folder 1

"Makers of Modern American Fiction *Booth Tarkington...*" Autographed portrait on printed card

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Box 1, Folder 2

"Makers of Modern American Fiction *Booth Tarkington...*" printed portrait on printed card

OVA Graphics:  
Box 1, Folder 3

"Booth Tarkington Twice Winner of the Pulitzer Prize," printed portrait of Booth on card, n.d.

OVA Graphics:  
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Fenton Booth and BT playing checkers April, 1938 [newspaper clipping]

OVA Graphics:  
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BT in coat with hat and gloves with Wops, n.d.

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 1

BT at "Seawood" in sunroom, n.d.

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 2

BT signed portrait, 1940

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 3

John S. Tarkington, n.d.

OVA Photographs:  
Box 1, Folder 4

[Linda Tarkington at Barley Bright, seated]  
"Our Linda," 1913

OVA Photographs:  
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"Laurel," [1919]

OVA Photographs:  
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“Barley Bright” 8 interiors with note from album [mounted photographs removed from an album]	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 8

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Susanah Tarkington, Lucy Taggart, The One-Armed Magician, Tom Taggart, [at] French Lick April 1941	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 9
"Booth Family" Album: portraits of BT's relatives on his mother's side with genealogical and biographical information provided by a Tarkington cousin	Album Storage: PAB
Bebee Booth daguerreotype, ca. 1850 [BT's grandfather on his mother's side]	Cased Images: Item 1
4111 Washington Boulevard, exterior view	Photographs: Box 1, Folder 15
4111 Washington Boulevard, interior view	OVA Photographs: Box 1, Folder 10
Portrait of Booth Tarkington from printed source	Graphics: Folder 1
Meredith Nicholson portrait, autographed and inscribed with note by author, February 1927	Graphics: Folder 1
"Booth Tarkington His dog Figaro. 1935" [silhouette]	Graphics: Folder 1
"Booth Tarkington" [signed bookplate]	Graphics: Folder 1
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