

Collection #
M 0840

RUTH BREWER DIARIES, 1944–1979

[Collection Information](#)

[Biographical Sketch](#)

[Scope and Content Note](#)

[Contents](#)

[Cataloging Information](#)

Processed by

Susan A. Fletcher
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org

COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	6 manuscript boxes, 11 folders of photographs, 5 folders of color photographs
COLLECTION DATES:	1944–1964, 1966–1979
PROVENANCE:	Whitmore's Auctions, P.O. Box 247, Nashville, IN 47448, 15 October 2004
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2005.0023

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ruth Irmadell Brewer was born to J. Fred and Grace Brewer on 3 April 1914. Her parents were both native Hoosiers who lived in rural Perry Township in Marion County. Ruth Irmadell had five brothers and sisters: Elnora, Mildred, Kenneth, Calvin, and Robert. When Ruth was a little girl her father delivered rural route mail and operated a farm. Ruth began keeping a diary when she was eighteen years old. In her mid-twenties she moved to California for about a year where she met a man named Ralph with whom she became romantically involved. When Ruth returned to Indiana to care for her ailing family members Ralph married another woman, much to Ruth's annoyance.

The collection that the Indiana Historical Society has picks up in 1944, when Ruth is 30 years old and living with her parents, brother Robert, and sisters. In her war-years diaries Ruth pondered how she could help the war effort and tried to join the Red Cross and the Army Nurse Cadets. In 1945 her brother Calvin passed away. Ruth confided her anxiety over the safety of her boyfriends Bill Leachman and John Winship as they fought "over there" and wondered which one of them she would marry. Each of the three men returned home safely and tried to woo Ruth. She moved back to California to be with Bill but returned home in less than a year.

During the next three decades of her life, Ruth recorded information relating to her family, friends, neighbors, and world events. She worked for a number of different employers, including the Indiana State government, Wasson's Department Store, Webber Appliance Company, and the Internal Revenue Service. She was a member of Southport Baptist Church and the Indiana Alpha Chapter of Zeta Beta Chi. Although, she dated numerous men over the course of her life, Ruth never married, choosing instead to take care of her aging parents and her mentally ill brother Robert. Her father John Fred died in 1970 after a protracted time of invalidity and her mother died suddenly on 27 July 1972. After her parents' deaths, Ruth remained in her childhood home throughout the 1970s in order to take care of Robert, who required her constant attention.

Sources:

Materials in collection

1920 Federal Census for Marion County, IN. <www.heritagequest.com>

"Kenneth Brewer" 17 August 2000 www.indystar.com

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains thirty-five diaries spanning the years 1944–64, and 1966–79. The diaries bear witness to three

decades of Ruth Brewer's life as she interacts with her family and friends and navigates the world around her. The 1944–45 diaries chronicle Ruth's life on the World War II home front as she worries about her soldier boyfriends, ponders being single at the age of thirty, and reacts to the cataclysmic events of the war. In addition to bearing witness to Ruth's private life, these war year diaries discuss her reactions to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death, V-E Day, the bombing of Japan, and the final end of the war.

The next three decades of Ruth's diaries discuss adventures with her best friend Eva, romantic entanglements, her work life, home life, and her outlook on the world. Ruth recorded many of her entries in shorthand, intending to go back one day and translate these notes. Ruth and Eva shared their diaries with one another as a way to keep in touch and to remember the old days, and Ruth makes frequent reference to the passages that she copied into Eva's own diary. Ruth's journal entries also bear witness to the private tragedies in her world as she describes her family's declining health and the necessity for her to care for them. She discusses with great frankness the daily chores involved in caring for her aging father and her invalid brother.

The diaries also provide a picture into the public culture and events of the time. Ruth writes about watching Lawrence Welk and the Lennon Sisters, *The Waltons*, and various popular movies. She writes of her family's new Chevrolet and popular hair and fashion styles of the 1950s. Her entries discuss adventures at the Indiana Roof Ballroom, at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and in downtown department stores. In addition, Ruth also records her reactions to the Korean War, the John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy assassinations, Vietnam War, the 1969 moon landing, the Apollo 13 mission, the Bicentennial, presidential elections, and the 1970 census.

In addition to the diaries themselves, the collection contains the clippings that Ruth put into her journals. These include letters from Eva, love letters, poems from the newspaper, Billy Graham's articles, prayers, obituaries, wedding invitations, pay stubs, and other items. Each of the clippings is housed in the folder that contains the diary from which it was pulled.

This collection also contains several visual images that Ruth inserted into the pages of her diaries. The photographs depict Ruth, her family, and her love interests from the Second World War until the late 1970s.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Diary and clippings, 1944	Box 1, Folder 1
Diary and clippings, 1945	Box 1, Folder 2
Diary and clippings, 1946	Box 1, Folder 3
Diary and clippings, 1947	Box 1, Folder 4
Diary and clippings, 1948	Box 1, Folder 5
Diary and clippings, 1949	Box 1, Folder 6
Diary and clippings, 1950	Box 2, Folder 1
Diary and clippings, 1951	Box 2, Folder 2
Diary and clippings, 1952	Box 2, Folder 3
Diary and clippings, 1953	Box 2, Folder 4
Diaries and clippings, 1954 and 1955	Box 2, Folder 5

Diaries and clippings, 1955 and 1956	Box 3, Folder 1
Diary and clippings, 1958	Box 3 , Folder 2
Diaries and clippings, 1959 and 1960	Box 3 , Folder 3
Diary and clippings, 1961	Box 3, Folder 4
Diary and clippings, 1962	Box 3, Folder 5
Diary and clippings, 1963	Box 4, Folder 1
Diary and clippings, 1964	Box 4, Folder 2
Diary and clippings, 1966	Box 4, Folder 3
Diary and clippings, 1967	Box 4 , Folder 4
Diary and clippings, 1968	Box 4, Folder 5
Diary and clippings, 1969	Box 5, Folder 1
Diary and clippings, 1970	Box 5, Folder 2
Diary and clippings, 1971	Box 5, Folder 3
Diary and clippings, 1972	Box 5, Folder 4
Diary and clippings, 1973	Box 5, Folder 5
Diary and clippings, 1974	Box 6, Folder 1
Diary and clippings, 1975	Box 6, Folder 2
Diary and clippings, 1976	Box 6, Folder 3
Diary and clippings, 1977	Box 6, Folder 4
Diary and clippings, 1978	Box 6, Folder 5
Diary and clippings, 1979	Box 6, Folder 6
Photographs found in 1944 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 1

Photographs found in 1947 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 2
Photographs found in 1948 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 3
Photographs found in 1954 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 4
Photographs found in 1956 and 1957 diaries	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 5
Photographs found in 1958 and 1959 diaries	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 6
Photographs found in 1961 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 7
Photographs found in 1962 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 8
Photographs found in 1964 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 9
Photographs found in 1977 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Folder 10
Photographs found in 1978 diary	Visual Collections: Photographs Box 1, Folder 11
Color photographs found in 1963 diary	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Folder 1
Color photographs found in 1968 diary	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Folder 2
Color photographs found in 1971 diary	Visual Collections: Color Photographs, Folder 3
Color photographs found in 1973 diary	Visual Collections: Color Photographs,

Folder 4

Color photographs found in 1978 diary

Visual Collections:
Color Photographs,
Folder 5

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, M 0840).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.