

Collection #
M 0767

SYBIL M. AND CLAUDE G. BOWERS LETTERS, CIRCA 1932–CIRCA 1952

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Processed by

Pamela Tranfield
21 February 2002

Revised 31 March 2003

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

www.indianahistory.org

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 manuscript box and 1 folder of visual materials
COLLECTION DATES:	Circa 1932-circa 1952
PROVENANCE:	Peter Sehlinger, 2129-A Rome Drive, Indianapolis, IN, 46228-3259, 29 November 1999

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: Claude Gernade Bowers Letters (SC 1809); Bowers, Claude. *My Life: the Memoirs of Claude Bowers*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962. (E748.B724 A3 1962); Bowers, Claude. *Indianapolis in the "Gay Nineties", High School Diaries of Claude G. Bowers*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1964 (E748.B724 A33 1964); Sehlinger, Peter J. and Holman Hamilton. *Spokesman for Democracy, Claude G. Bowers, 1878-1958*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2000 (E748.B724 S44 2000).

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2000.0142

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sybil McCaslin Bowers (1882-1964), the daughter of an Indianapolis accountant, graduated from Shortridge High School and the Indiana Normal School. She met Claude Gernade Bowers (1878-1958) in 1901. The couple married in 1911 and raised one child, Patricia (1915-75).

Claude Bowers was born in Westfield, Indiana, to Lewis Bowers (d. 1891) and Julia Etta Bowers. Lewis Bowers operated general stores in Jolietville (Hamilton County) and in Whitestown (Boone County). Lewis and Julia Bowers divorced in 1888, after which Claude lived with his mother in Lebanon. They moved to Indianapolis in 1891. Claude graduated from Indianapolis High School in 1898 but could not afford to attend college. He became an editorial writer for the *Indiana State Sentinel*, and later the *Terre Haute Gazette* and the *Terre Haute Star*.

Bowers was the Democratic congressional candidate in 1904 and 1906, and in 1911 moved to Washington, D.C., to serve as secretary to Senator John W. Kern. He delivered the keynote address at the 1928 Democratic convention and campaigned for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932. Bowers served as ambassador to Spain from 1933 to 1939, and ambassador to Chile from 1939 to 1953. Sybil Bowers lived in St. Jean de Luz, France, following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936. After 1953 Claude and Sybil lived in New York where Claude worked with Eleanor Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson.

Jessie E. Moore (circa 1881-8 Dec. 1962) taught English at Emmerich Manual Training High School in Indianapolis from the 1920s to circa 1951. She was active a member of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church and various art and literature clubs in Indianapolis, as well as the Travel Study Club. Moore was a guest of Claude and Sybil Bowers July 1936 when the embassy was evacuated to France in the early months of the Spanish Civil War. She visited the Bowers on at least two occasions during their stay in Chile. Moore never married. She died in Jay County Hospital in Portland, Indiana.

Sources: Material in the Collection; Peter J. Sehlinger, and Holman Hamilton. *Spokesman for Democracy, Claude G. Bowers, 1878-1958*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2000 (E748.B724 S44 2000); David J. Bodenhamer and

Robert G. Barrows. *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994 (F534.I55 E4 1994); "Miss Moore, 30 Years at Manual," *Indianapolis News*, 9 December 1962, p. 47, c. 2.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection includes sixty-five letters, mostly from Sybil Bowers to her friend Jessie E. Moore. Sybil Bowers' letters discuss her activities as a hostess at the American embassies in Spain and Chile, and at St. Jean de Luz, France. The letters describe the furniture and architecture of the embassy compounds, social activities, and the surrounding countryside. She rarely comments directly on domestic or international politics, or her husband's role in these affairs. Sybil's life at the embassies revolved around teas, parties, and official functions. Her social life was sometimes frenetic, and other times dull. In a letter dated 13 September 1936 from St. Jean de Luz, France (folder 2), she states: "Pat and I have a room full of good looking new clothes and no chance to wear them."

A letter written in November 1936 (folder 2) offers a rare glimpse at the political situation in Spain: "Pepe's family is at Marseilles and will soon be here having been evacuated from Madrid. Then we will have seventeen people in this villa-all servants or refugee members of their families besides our three selves."

Sybil Bower's friendship with Jessie E. Moore began in 1909 when the young women attended a course in botany before entering the Indiana Normal School. A note written by Sybil in the collection (folder 8) describes their earliest encounters: "I think we each squinted through the microscopes almost in vain, with this important difference. If Jessie did spot a bit of chlorophyll or a group of cells she could make an excellent drawing whereas I could not draw. . . . it was reassuring to look up from squinting to meet Jessie's clear gaze and see the pretty smiling face and to know we were friends."

Folder 10 contains seven letters from Claude Bowers to Moore. Bowers wrote the letters from Fuenterrabia, Spain; St. Jean de Luz, France; and Santiago, Chile. The letters elaborate on points made in Sybil's letters concerning the architecture and decoration of the embassy compounds. He also comments on the sales of his book (*Jefferson in Power*), discusses the social situation in Spain, and where fighting has taken place (2 Dec. 1936). One letter in this series is from Pat Bowers, thanking Jessie for the gift of American stockings.

Also included in the collection are fifty-one envelopes addressed to Jesse E. Moore from Sybil and Claude Bowers, and three hand painted Christmas cards sent to Jessie from the Bowers, possibly from Chile. Scenes on these cards show small homes in the countryside. Other Christmas cards in the collection are printed items, likely sent from Chile. Two items include the artist's name: L. V. Bentinck.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Sybil Bowers to Jessie Moore, circa 1932–39

CONTENTS	CONTAINER
Circa 1932-7 May 1934	Box 1, Folder 1
Early 1936?-15 Mar. 1937?	Box 1, Folder 2
Summer 1937?-3 Jan. 1938	Box 1, Folder 3

Circa 1938-23 May 1939

Box 1, Folder 4

Series 2: Sybil Bowers to Jessie Moore, 1939–circa 1952

CONTENTS

11 Aug. 1939-Aug. 1940?

14 Feb. 1941-8 Nov. 1942?

23 Apr. 1943-17 Sept. 1944

21 May 1945-17 Oct. 1946

23 Mar. 1948-1952?

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 5

Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 8

Box 1, Folder 9

Series 3: Claude Bowers and Pat Bowers to Jessie Moore, 1936–47

CONTENTS

From Claude Bowers and Pat Bowers, 7 June
1936-14 May 1947

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 10

Series 4: Envelopes and cards to Jessie Moore from Sybil and Claude Bowers, 1933–51

CONTENTS

Envelopes, 18 June 1933-Aug. 1939

Envelopes, 20 Mar. 1939-17 Oct. 1946

Envelopes, 14 May 1947-8 Mar. 1948

Printed Christmas Cards, 1940s-51

Hand-Painted Christmas Cards, 1940s

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 11

Box 1, Folder 12

Box 1, Folder 13

Box 1, Folder 14

Visual Collections: OVA
Graphics

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://157.91.92.2/>
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 0767).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for

related materials.