

Collection #  
SC 3035

## THE IDYL OF A WHEELBARROW DRAFT, CA. LATE 1910s

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Processed by

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

VOLUME OF  
COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder

COLLECTION  
DATES: Ca. late 1910s

PROVENANCE: James C. Urbain, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2009

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE  
FORMATS:

RELATED  
HOLDINGS: Meredith Nicholson Collection, (M 0666).

ACCESSION  
NUMBER: 2009.0230

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Meredith Nicholson (1866–1947) was born on 9 December 1866 in Crawfordsville, Indiana to Edward and Emily E. Meredith Nicholson. At the age of six, he moved to Indianapolis with his family. Meredith quit school in his first year of high school, despite the protests of his parents. He was, however, an avid reader and influenced by his grandfather, who was a printer and had been a country publisher and editor.

In 1884, Nicholson was hired at the age of nineteen as a reporter for the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, a Democratic newspaper. Nicholson then worked for the *Indianapolis News* from 1885–1897.

Nicholson became a prolific author whose writings extolled the virtues of the state of Indiana and its citizens. His literary career spanned nearly forty years, with his first publication, a collection of poems entitled *Short Flights* (1891) and his last publication *The Cavalier of Tennessee* (1928). Nicholson became primarily known for his essays and novels, which include *The Hoosiers*, *A Hoosier Chronicle*, and *The House of a Thousand Candles*. Nicholson, along with authors Booth Tarkington, George Ade and James Whitcomb Riley, is considered a leader in creating a Golden Age of literature in Indiana during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Nicholson was rewarded for his enthusiastic support of the Democratic Party by being selected for several diplomatic positions in South America, where he served from 1933–1941. He died in Indianapolis on 21 December 1947 and is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery.

In 1896, he married Eugenie Kountze, of Omaha, Nebraska (1896–1931). They had three surviving children: one daughter and two sons. In 1933, Nicholson married Dorothy (Wolfe) Lannon of Marion, Indiana. They divorced on 24 December 1943.

Sources:

Materials in collection.

M 0666 Collection Guide.

SC 2985 Collection Guide.

"About Phi Beta Kappa" [http://www.pbk.org/infoview/PBK\\_InfoView.aspx?t=&id=8](http://www.pbk.org/infoview/PBK_InfoView.aspx?t=&id=8)  
Accessed 28 June 2014.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of a typed manuscript draft entitled "The Idyl of a Wheelbarrow" by Meredith Nicholson. It is a short memoir of Meredith Nicholson's circuitous route from a high school dropout to an accomplished writer. The author has made edits in pencil. The last page is missing a few words, due to tears. There is a card in the folder with a list of suggestions for the missing words.

The eponymous wheelbarrow refers to a wheelbarrow Nicholson used to push around account books and packages of stationary at his first job working in the business office and salesroom of a printing company. Nicholson credits that initial unhappy work experience as one of the main driving forces behind his professional ambition.

Nicholson mentions many people who influenced his life, including famous Hoosier authors General Lew Wallace, Booth Tarkington, James Whitcomb Riley, George Ade, and John T. McCutcheon.

In the manuscript, Nicholson also describes the origin of his pen name. He was baptized Willis Meredith Nicholson, and originally signed his manuscripts as "Will Meredith Nicholson." However, Dan L. Paine of the *Indianapolis News* advised him to eliminate using the name "Will" altogether, which Nicholson did.

Nicholson's wife, Eugenie Kountze, was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, the oldest academic honor society in the United States. He fondly refers to her as "Phi Beta Kappa" throughout the manuscript.

In his conclusion, Nicholson refers to WWI and how the war embodies to him the struggle to ensure that all those laboring under their personal, symbolic wheelbarrows have the freedom to open the doors of opportunity for themselves.

## **CONTENTS**

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Manuscript Draft, [Total of 22 typed pages]

CONTAINER

Folder 1

## 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, SC 3035).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.