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Guide to the Sophonisba P. Breckinridge Papers 1905-1949



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.BRECKINRIDGE
Title	Breckinridge, Sophonisba P. Papers
Date	1905-1949
Size	2.5 linear feet (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Sophonisba P. Breckinridge (1866-1948) was a social scientist and social work educator. The papers include manuscripts of her unfinished autobiography which describes residents at Hull House; correspondence; newspaper clippings; data from a study on Americanization (1918-1919); and sales and royalty records of her books. Correspondents include Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Breckinridge, Sophonisba P. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

Sophonisba Preston Breckinridge was born April 1, 1866, in Lexington, Kentucky, the daughter of William C. P. Breckinridge and Issa Desha. She graduated from Wellesley College in 1888, and in 1895 was admitted to the Kentucky bar. Her law practice did not prosper, and a Wellesley classmate, May Cook, persuaded her to go to the University of Chicago to take a position as secretary to Marion Talbot, the Dean of Women.

Breckinridge received a Ph.M. degree from the University of Chicago in 1897 and a Ph.D. in political science and economics in 1901. In 1904 she became the first woman to receive the J.D. degree from the University. She taught briefly in the Department of Political Science and then joined Talbot in the Department of Household Administration, becoming an assistant professor in 1909. She also served as head of Green Hall, one of the women's dormitories, and resided there for most of her career.

While teaching at the University, Breckinridge spent her summers at Hull-House and became involved with many of the activities there. She also worked at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, serving as its dean, and was instrumental in the merger of the school with the University to form the School of Social Service Administration in 1920. Her teaching, research, and publications helped to define social work as a profession and mold it into an academic discipline. She was made a full professor in 1925, and was named Samuel Deutsch Professor of Public Welfare Administration in 1929, remaining active until a few months before her death in 1948.

Scope Note

The collection is divided into two series: General and Oversize.

Series I contains excerpts of an autobiography and a small amount of correspondence. Correspondents include Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop. Other material includes newspaper clippings, biographical materials, articles, a speech, and records of sales and royalties of Breckinridge's books. Of possible interest to researchers are a few records of home visits to immigrant families for a study of Americanization in 1918-1919.

The autobiography found in Folders 2 through 13 consists of manuscript and typescript fragments, some of which bear dates between 1944 and 1947. The drafts of various sections have been arranged to follow Sophonisba Breckinridge's own outline, although there is considerable overlap in the narrative. Much of the material concerns Breckinridge's family background, and includes portraits of her grandparents, her father, her sister Curry and brother Desha. Sophonisba Breckinridge also wrote about her early years at the University of Chicago, particularly during her term as assistant to Marion Talbot, and her account includes anecdotes and asides about co-education, race relations on campus, and student life in general.

The oversize series contains a poster from the Hyde Park League of Women Voters.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

University Presidents' Papers

Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. Records

National Conference of Social Work. Records

School of Social Service Administration. Records

Edith and Grace Abbott. Papers and Addenda

Julius Rosenwald. Papers

Marion Talbot. Papers

Archival Biographical Files

University of Chicago Photographic Archive

A large collection of Sophonisba Breckinridge's correspondence is included in the Breckinridge Family Papers at the Library of Congress.

Subject Headings

- Breckinridge, Sophonisba Preston
- Addams, Jane
- Lathrop, Julia Clifford
- Hull House (Chicago, IL)
- University of Chicago. School of Social Service Administration
- Social work education -- Illinois
- Women in social work education -- Illinois

INVENTORY

Series I: General

Box 1

Folder 1

Americanization Study – Family Interviews, 1918-1919

Box 1

Folder 2

Autobiography – Breckinridge Genealogies, Outlines, undated

Box 1

Folder 3

Autobiography – Introduction – Typescripts and Manuscript, undated

Box 1

Folder 4

Autobiography – Breckinridge and Cabell Families – Typescripts, Manuscripts, Source Material, undated

Box 1

Folder 5

Autobiography – Desha and Curry Families – Typescript, Notes, Article, 1942, undated

Box 1

Folder 6

Autobiography – Education (1880s) – Manuscript, undated

Box 1

Folder 7

Autobiography – "1894-1900:The Late Years," Typescript and Manuscript, undated

Box 1

Folder 8

Autobiography – Unordered Manuscript Pages, undated

Box 1

Folder 9

Autobiography – "1901-1919"

Box 1

Folder 10

Autobiography – Early University of Chicago, undated

Box 1

Folder 11

Autobiography, "The Department of Household Administration," undated

Box 1

Folder 12

Autobiography, "The Russell Sage Foundation," undated

Box 1

Folder 13

Autobiography, "Last Will and Testament," undated

Box 1

Folder 14

Book List and Sales Records, 1943, undated

Box 1

Folder 15

Breckinridge, Sophonisba, "Social Security and Public Welfare" – Text of Address, 1937

Box 1

Folder 16

Clipping Photocopies and Press Releases re Sophonisba Breckinridge, 1933-1946

Box 1

Folder 17

Correspondence re Breckinridge Family Papers, 1927-1930

Box 1

Folder 18

Correspondence re Family Welfare Work in a Metropolitan Community, 1925

- Addams, Jane
- Graves, William C.
- Hull, Morton D.
- Lathrop, Julia C.
- Ryerson, Edward L.
- Swift, Harold H.

Box 1

Folder 19

Correspondence – General, 1908-1946

- Abbott, O. A.
- Bowen, A. L.
- Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor
- Costigan, Mabel
- Davison, Emily
- Davison, Ronald
- Delteil, Desha and Jean
- Deutsch, Albert
- Eisendratter
- G., Elinora
- Guilford, Richard
- Lathrop, Julia C.
- Marshall, Catherine E.
- Murphy, J. Prentice
- Roberts, Dorothy D.
- Sexton, Anna May
- Simmonds, B.
- Springer, Gertrude
- Sweet, Forest H.
- University of Chicago
- W., Margaret
- Wiard, Elizabeth
- Wilde

Box 1

Folder 20

Correspondence – Graff, Edith, G. G., 1942

Box 1

Folder 21

Correspondence – School of Social Services Administration – Photocopies, undated

Box 1

Folder 22

Estate of Desha Breckinridge – Correspondence and Court Documents, 1905-1937

Box 1

Folder 23

Event Programs and Invitations, 1933-1946

Box 1

Folder 24

Family Welfare Association of America, Pathfinding Committee on the Study of Governmental Relief Methods -- Report and Correspondence, 1932

Box 1

Folder 25

Neutrality/Peace Issues – Articles, 1936-1937

Box 1

Folder 26

Neutrality/Peace Issues – Events, 1937

Box 1

Folder 27

Neutrality/Peace Issues – Government Publications, 1937

Box 1

Folder 28

Neutrality/Peace Issues – Newsletters and Mailings, 1936-1937

Box 1

Folder 29

Obituaries and memorials, 1948-1949

Box 1

Folder 30

Pre-Printed Greeting Cards, 1938, 1940

Series II: Oversize

Box 2

Folder 1

Hyde Park League of Women Voters – "Neutrality" Poster, circa 1937