Harry Bache Smith:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Smith, Harry Bache, 1860-1936
Title	Harry Bache Smith Papers
Dates:	1773-1935
Extent:	15 document cases, four oversize folders (7 linear ft.)
Abstract:	The papers document the writing career and collecting interests of this American composer, critic, and collector. They consist of correspondence, autographs, manuscripts of his own work and that of others, notes and drafts, scrapbooks and clippings, receipts, and music scores.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-03882
Language:	English
Access	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, June 1968
Processed by	Deborah Shelby, 1992 Processing Note: The materials in the correspondence series are arranged in the same order in which Smith maintained them. The front covers of the original folders on which Smith had listed the names of individual correspondents have been retained within each folder. The other series are arranged in alphabetical order by title of the work, name of the author, or subject.
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Harry Bache Smith was born in Buffalo, NY, on December 28, 1860, to Elizabeth Bach and Josiah Bailey Smith. The Smith family moved to Chicago in the 1860s where Harry began writing and collecting rare books, manuscripts, and autographs. After starting as a reporter for the *Chicago Daily News*, Smith later became a music critic for that paper. He also worked for the *Chicago Tribune* as a drama critic. By 1874, Smith had begun writing musical plays and operettas. His first operetta, *Rosita*, or *Cupid and Cupidity*, was produced by the Fay Templeton Opera Company. *Amaryllis*, his second production, was a musical comedy and became popular with amateur dramatic clubs. As a result of this exposure, Smith was engaged to write a series of burlesques for the Chicago Opera House.

In 1887, Smith and Reginald DeKoven collaborated on *Begum*, a comic operetta that received enough support for the collaboration to continue and to produce one of the most popular American operas, *Robin Hood*, which played almost continuously for twenty years. *The Wizard of the Nile* was created for the comedian Frank Daniels in 1895, with Victor Herbert writing the score. Besides Herbert and DeKoven, Smith collaborated with Irving Berlin, Ivan Caryl, Leo Fall, Gustave Kerker, Jerome Kern, Franz Lehar, Sigmund Romberg, John Philip Sousa, and Oscar Strauss. The author of some 300 librettos and over 6000 lyrics, Smith was respected in the theater world for his creative and humorous style of writing. Broadway saw 123 of his shows, which also played in other cities such as Chicago and Philadelphia. Smith was the earliest American lyricist to be honored with a published collection of his lyrics.

Smith wrote articles on literature and music for *Scribner's*, *The Century*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *American Mercury*, and other magazines. He was also known by collectors of rare books, manuscripts, and autographs. Published in 1914, *A Sentimental Library* (available in the HRC book collection) is a catalogue of books, manuscripts, drawings, and presentation copies collected and described by Smith.

Smith married Lena Reed in October 1887, and had one son, Sydney R. Smith. In November 1906, Harry Smith married actress Irene Bentley. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Smith summarized, critiqued, and evaluated plays and stories that Warner Brothers was considering for theatrical productions or motion pictures. Harry Bache Smith died on January 1, 1936.

Scope and Contents

The material in the Harry Bache Smith papers pertains primarily to his writing career and collecting interests as illustrated by correspondence, autographs, manuscripts of his own work and that of others, notes and drafts, scrapbooks and clippings, receipts, and music scores. The majority of the material concerns Smith's book and manuscript collecting interests, however, only a few of the manuscripts

and autographs described in *A Sentimental Library* are included in this collection. Materials range in date from 1773 to 1935 with the bulk dating from 1890-1930. The collection is arranged in four series: Correspondence, Works by Smith, Collecting Activities, and Miscellaneous.

Series I: Correspondence, 1775-1931 (2 boxes) contains information about Smith's theater career and collecting activities. Several of his collaborators, actors, actresses, and publishers discussed changes or additions to his works and the production of his writing in their correspondence with Smith. Correspondents include Victor Herbert, Reginald DeKovan, Irving Berlin, Ivan Caryl, David Belasco, Jerome Kern, John Philip Sousa, as well as many others. Also included in the correspondence series are the autographs and third party letters collected by Smith from people such as Joanna Baillie, Dion Boucicault, George Coleman, Robert William Elliston, David Garrick, Charles John Kean, and Mitchell Kennerley.

Series II: Works by Smith, 1902-1934 (3 boxes) pertains specifically to his writing for the theater. Over fifty manuscripts of his plays and librettos are in this series, spanning in date from 1902-1934, although most of the manuscripts are undated. None of his major theatrical hits are present in the collection, but typescripts for *The Office Boy* (1903), [Ziegfield] *Follies of 1912, Angel Face* (1919), *The Highwayman, Babette*, and *Dolly Dollar* are a few of the titles present in this series.

Writings relating to Smith's interest in collecting are in Series III: Collecting Activities, 1823-1935 (9 boxes). More than twenty of his articles relating to his collecting interests are in this series. Smith created seven scrapbooks consisting of newspaper clippings, articles, descriptions from book dealer's catalogs, and his notes about authors such as Charles Dickens, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, William Makepeace Thackeray, Lord Byron, and others. The information in these scrapbooks supplements the drafts and notes for his book, *A Sentimental Library*. Other documents in this series include receipts for books and manuscripts purchased by Smith from 1894-1935, and works by others that Smith collected, including original music scores by Victor Herbert, Riccardo Drigo, and Jerome Kern.

Items not connected with Smith's theater career or collecting activities are in Series IV: Miscellaneous, 1913-1931 (1 box), which includes over 67 plays and stories evaluated by Smith for Warner Brothers. Personal information is limited to his writing and collecting. There is no correspondence between Smith and family members, nor is there information regarding his personal relationships with either of his wives, or his son.

Several published collaborations between Smith and Reginald DeKoven, Richard Wagner, and Victor Herbert are part of the book collection at the HRC. Smith's autobiography, *First Nights and First Editions*, as well as *A Sentimental Library* are also part of the HRC book collection. Other materials about Smith can be found in the Biographical files of the Theater Arts collection of the HRC.

Series Descriptions

Series I: Correspondence, 1773-1931

Smith interfiled his personal correspondence with the autographs and third party letters he collected, and filed them into categories such as American actors, British authoresses, or under a few select individual names. The letters are filed in the same order Smith had arranged them. Some individuals are in more than one category. An alphabetical index to the correspondence series is provided at the end of the inventory to help locate letters by individual writers. The index identifies letters written to Smith, writers and recipients of third party correspondence, and names that are represented by signatures only. Individuals whose names were not legible are not listed in the index.

Series II: Works, 1902-1931, undated

Writings from Smith's theater career are filed alphabetically in this series. Charles Dickens, about whom Smith wrote several stories and articles, is represented in both Series II and III. The fictional stories written by Smith about Dickens are in this series, while biographical articles written about Dickens as an author to collect are in Series III. In addition to the title of each work, the folder list contains information written by Smith on the title pages, such as "comedy,""act I and III,""scenario," etc.

Series III: Collecting Activities, 1823-1935, undated

This series is divided into five subseries: Works by Smith, Notes and Articles, Purchases and Receipts, Scrapbooks, and Works by Others. Works by Smith (1922-1929) in this series are about individuals that he was interested in collecting or have biographical information about an individual. Also included in this subseries are several articles Smith wrote about book and manuscript collecting. He published a catalogue of his own collection, *A Sentimental Library*, and the notes and drafts for this publication comprise the bulk of the material in the Notes and Articles subseries (1823-1934).

Purchases and Receipts date from 1894-1935 (bulk 1925-1934). These materials are arranged chronologically. There are receipts for books and manuscripts purchased as well as offers made to Smith for his writings. Correspondence relating to the selling and purchasing of books and manuscripts are also in this subseries. Details about particular books, such as their binding, are also found in this correspondence.

There are seven scrapbooks of materials about specific authors in this series. Lord Byron, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare, and William Makepeace Thackeray are represented by four individual scrapbooks, while Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Robert Browning, the Bronte family, and Swinburne share the remaining three. These scrapbooks include clippings about the authors as well as bibliographic information regarding their works. The order of the material within each scrapbook has been maintained, though all were disbound and the covers were removed for preservation purposes. Some of the clippings were too brittle to remain in the collection and were replaced with photocopies. The Works by Others subseries is arranged alphabetically by author. Schwartz and Molnar, Roberto Bracco, James F. Cook, and Lawrence Houseman are some of the authors present in this subseries. Music scores by Riccardo Drigo, Victor Herbert, and Jerome D. Kern are also included in this subseries. Materials by unknown authors and untitled works are filed at the end of this subseries.

Series IV: Miscellaneous, 1913-1931, undated

This series contains over 67 plays and stories that Smith reviewed, summarized, critiqued, and evaluated for Warner Brothers. His notes about the story or play are also present for most of the titles. *La Petite Illustration*, no. 13, 1913, and a watercolor painting are also filed here.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Ade, George, 1866-1944. Baillie, Joanna, 1762-1851. Belasco, David, 1853-1931. Berlin, Irving, 1888-. Boucicault, Dion, 1820-1890. Caryl, Ivan. Cohan, Geroge M. (George Michael), 1878-1942. Coleman, George Dromgold, 1795-1884. Damrosch, Walter, 1862-1950. DeKoven, Reginald, 1859-1920. Dunne, Finley Peter, 1867-1936. Elliston, R. W. (Robert William), 1774-1831. Flagg, James Montgomery, 1877-1960. Garrick, David, 1717-1779. Green, Anna Katharine, 1846-1935. Guizot, M. (François), 1787-1874. Held, Anna, 1877?-1918. Herbert, Victor, 1859-1924. Kean, Charles John, 1811?-1868. Kennerley, Mitchell, 1878-1950.

Kern, Jerome, 1885-1945. Russell, Lillian, 1861-1922. Sardou, Victorien, 1831-1908. Sousa, John Philip, 1854-1932.

Subjects

Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824. Dickens, Charles, 1812-1870. Keats, John, 1795-1821. Shakespeare, William 1564-1616. Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 1792-1822. Thackeray, William Makepeace, 1811-1863. Authors, American--20th century. Autographs--Collectors and collecting. Bibliography--Rare books. Book collectors--Correspondence, reminiscenes, etc. Books--Collectors and collecting. Dramatists, American--20th century. Dramatists--Correspondence, reminiscenes, etc. English literature--Bibliography--First editions. Manuscripts--Collectors and collecting. Operetta--United States--20th century. Theater--Anecdotes, facetiae, satire, etc.

Document types

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Harry Bache Smith Papers--Index of Correspondents and autographs

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