

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION RECORD

RG3263.AM: Aldrich, Bess Streeter, 1881-1954

Papers: 1892-1988, mostly 1925-1954

Elmwood, Cass County; and Lincoln, Lancaster County, Neb.: Author

Size: c.12 cubic feet, and oversize

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bess Streeter Aldrich launched her professional career when she submitted her short story, "The Little House Next Door" to the Ladies Home Journal literary contest under the pen name Margaret Dean Stephens. It won the \$175.00 prize in 1911. Elated by success, she continued to write "in little ten minute stretches between other important if less interesting tasks--on the ironing board and the kitchen sink, quite often baptizing the manuscript with good old sudsy water."*

Mrs. Aldrich drew heavily upon the resources of the region surrounding her native city, Cedar Falls, Iowa; people and prairie provided a wealth of material for the plot and setting of her many novels and stories. She was keenly aware of early life on the prairie frontier, for her parents, James Wareham and Mary Wilson Streeter, were pioneers of northeastern Iowa. She gained her early education in the Cedar Falls primary and secondary schools, graduating in 1895. After earning a degree at the Iowa State Teachers College (Cedar Falls) in 1901, she taught primary grades for five years in Boone and Marshalltown, Iowa, as well as Salt Lake City, Utah.

A brief return to Iowa State Teachers College as assistant supervisor in the primary training school ended in September 1907, when she married Charles S. Aldrich, a banker and attorney from Tipton, Iowa. After the birth of their first child, Mary Eleanor in 1909, the Aldriches moved to Elmwood, Nebraska, where Mr. Aldrich was cashier of the American Exchange bank until his sudden death on May 3, 1925. Although Mrs. Aldrich made several extended trips to New York and California, Nebraska remained her home for the remainder of her life.**

In the late 1940's she left Elmwood and built a Williamsburg style house next door to her daughter, Mary (Mrs. Milton P. Beechner), in Lincoln, Nebraska. The street on which she built her home was renamed Aldrich Road after her death on August 3, 1954. Bess Streeter Aldrich was buried in Elmwood, Nebraska, the small town in which she had lived and done the bulk of her writing.

Among the many organizations to which Mrs. Aldrich devoted her time are: The Order of the Eastern Star, the Methodist Church, the Nebraska Writers Guild (of which she was president), the Nebraska State Press Association, the Omaha Woman's Press Club, the Altrusa Club of Lincoln, and the honorary societies Chi Delta Phi, and Theta Sigma Pi.

Mrs. Aldrich was a frequent contributor of short stories to American Magazine, Ladies' Home Journal, The Saturday Evening Post, Woman's Home Companion, Cosmopolitan and several other

publications. She wrote under the pen name Margaret Dean Stephens until 1918; thereafter she always used her own name.

* quoted in the Omaha World Herald, December 11, 1927

** based on the autobiography by Bess Streeter Aldrich

Aldrich is the author of the following novels and short-story collections:

1924	<u>Mother Mason</u>
1925	<u>The Rim Of The Prairie</u>
1926	<u>The Cutters</u>
1928	<u>A Lantern In Her Hand</u>
1931	<u>A White Bird Flying</u>
1933	<u>Miss Bishop</u> **
1935	<u>Spring Came On Forever</u>
1936	<u>The Man Who Caught the Weather</u>
1939	<u>Song Of Years</u>
1941	<u>The Drum Goes Dead</u>
1942	<u>The Lieutenant's Lady</u>
1949	<u>Journey Into Christmas</u>
1950	<u>The Bess Streeter Aldrich Reader</u>

Miss Bishop was adapted for the film "Cheers for Miss Bishop" produced by Richard A. Rowland in 1940. The film premiered in Lincoln.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Aldrich papers are arranged in eleven series: 1) general correspondence, 2) fan letters, 3) telegrams, 4) business correspondence, 5) legal and financial file, 6) manuscripts and notes, 7) early writings of Mary E. Aldrich, 8) printed matter, 9) newspapers and clippings, 10) scrapbooks, and 11) art and display. An Addendum to the collection in 1995 is organized into the same series where appropriate, and includes three new Series: 12) Journals; 13) Photographs; and 14) Miscellaneous.

Approximately 700 items of general correspondence are divided into two file series: a) letters received, 1921-1956, and b) letters sent, 1931-1951. The Aldrich letters tend to be long--often three or four pages typewritten and single-spaced--as well as newsy. Many of the letters are carbon copies, for Mrs. Aldrich often sent the same letter to close friends and members of the family, writing or typing a short personal note to the individual. Such letters were usually addressed: "Dearest Children" or "Dear Folks" and the most common recipients were her four children: Mary, James, Charles, and Robert, as well as her "Aunt Tallie," Mrs. John P. Cobb. Clippings enclosed with the letter often contained notes written by Mrs. Aldrich and may be found with the respective letter.

The remaining correspondence consists of approximately 75 telegrams; 150 fan letters spanning the years 1912 to 1952; and a file of business correspondence dated 1907-1954. This file is the most extensive of the correspondence series in volume as well as scope, for it contains almost sixteen hundred letters from agents, producers and publishers. The bulk of the correspondence is from the D. Appleton Company, Mrs. Aldrich's main publisher.

Correspondents include: Mrs. Keene (Avery) Abbott, 1946; Jacques Chambrun, 1933-1948; Elizabeth Dickenson, 1944-1946; Frank C. Hanighen, 1933-1934; F.M. Holly, 1921-1937; T.A. Leadley, 1926-1930; Robert Leavitt, 1929-1946; Abbott C. Page, 1933-1942; Louise Pound, 1928; Elizabeth S. Roberts, 1942; Richard A. Rowland, 1939-1940, George F. Will, 1942; Blanche Cotton Williams, 1928-1935; John L. B. Williams, 1924-1949 and Luella M. Wright, 1940-1943.

A legal and financial file provides a comprehensive economic record of this Nebraska writer. Approximately 75 contracts, royalty statements and other records are chronologically arranged from 1913 to 1954.

The file of manuscripts and notes, containing approximately 800 items, is arranged alphabetically by story. This series consists largely of typewritten manuscripts with varying quantities of handwritten notes and research data, ranging in years from the college story Xantippe (1899), to notes for the novel The Lieutenant's Lady (1941-1942). The most extensive notes are preserved for four of her novels: A Lantern In Her Hand, The Lieutenant's Lady, Song Of Years, and Spring Came On Forever.

Series seven is a small file perhaps best described as memorabilia. It contains the early letters, verse, and short stories of Mary Eleanor Aldrich (1915-1928).

Printed matter forms a significant portion of the Aldrich collection. Series Eight consists largely of magazines containing articles by or about Bess Streeter Aldrich. A small part of this series is made up of reference material used by Mrs. Aldrich. Of particular interest is a personal copy of Song Of Years, which contains photographs and notes by the author. The printed material is arranged chronologically by book or magazine. When necessary issues of the same publication are arranged chronologically within the alphabetical scheme.

The newspaper file contains complete newspapers as well as clippings dating from 1926 to 1951. Handwritten notes can be found on any number of the approximately 1,000 items in this series.

Series Ten consists of scrapbooks [see addendum for three additional scrapbooks] containing newspaper clippings, book reviews, best-seller lists and memorabilia.

An art and display series contains book jackets, illustrations, posters and display cards. Of particular interest are several drawings for the book jacket of A Lantern In Her Hand which show changes made in the progressive stages of development, as well as the finished product.

Although the Aldrich papers span the years 1892 until 1988, the bulk of the material falls chronologically into the shorter period 1925 to 1954, the most productive years of the author's life. Many sources for her stories and novels are revealed in the correspondence and notes.

DESCRIPTION

SERIES ONE: GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Box 1

Letters received:

1921-1926
1927
1928
1929-1930
1931-1932
1933
1934
1935
1936
1937
1938
1939
1940
1941
1942
1943
1944
1945-1946
1947-1948

Box 2

Letters received [cont.]:

1949-1951; 1954; 1956
Undated

Letters sent:

1932
1934
1935 [2 folders]
1936 [2 folders]
1938
1939 [2 folders]

Box 3

Letters sent [cont.]:

1940 [2 folders]
1941
1944
1947
1951 [2 folders]
Undated

SERIES TWO: FAN LETTERS

Box 3

1912-1913
1923
1930-1932
1933
1934
1935
1936 [Folder 1]

Box 4

1936 [Folder 2]
1937-1938, 1943
Undated

SERIES THREE: TELEGRAMS

Box 4

Telegrams c.1925-1952 [2 folders]

SERIES FOUR: BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

Box 4

1907-1911
1912-1913
1914-1915
1916
1917
1918
1919
1920
1921

Box 5

1922
1923
1924
1925
1926
1927
1928
1929
1930
1931
1932

SERIES FOUR: BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE [cont.]

Box 6

1933 [2 folders]
1934
1935 [folder 1]

Box 7

1935 [folder 2]
1936
1937
1938
1939
1940
1941
1942
1943
1944

Box 8

1945
1946
1947
1948
1949 [2 folders]
1950
1951
1952
1953
1954
Undated

SERIES FIVE: LEGAL AND FINANCIAL FILE

Box 8

c.1913-54 [contracts, royalty statements, etc.]

SERIES SIX: MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTES

Box 9

Advanced short-story correspondence course
Letters, 1917-21
Short-story: Through Hawthorne Hedge
Plot outlines, etc.
Autobiography; biographical data

SERIES SIX: MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTES [cont.]

Box 9

The Case of Emmaline Smith
 The Cat is on the Mat
 Concerning the Best Man [c.1915]
 The Drum Goes Dead [c.1941]
 Grandpa Statler
 The Great Wide World of Men
 The Heart o' The Giver
 Hitching Post Mother
 How Gretchen Won the Prize
 How I Mixed Stores With Doughnuts
 How to write a novel
 I remember
 Influence of the Bible on Law and Ethics"
 Journey into Christmas

A Lantern in Her Hand [c. 1928]
 Partial manuscript, synopsis, and notes
 "The Story Behind 'A Lantern in Her Hand' by Bess Streeter
 Aldrich", Christian Herald, March 1952
 Miscellaneous notes

The Lieutenant's Lady [c.1941-42]
 Partial manuscript and notes
 Letters, 1941-42
 Diary of Andrew Nahum Canfield, (1868) & Sarah Elizabeth
 Canfield, (1866-1869) [typescripts]
 Copies of letters, 1867-68
 Miscellaneous notes
 Clippings

Box 10

The Light O' Day
 The Little House Next Door [c.1911]
 The Madonna of the Purple Dots
 Misdirected Zeal

Miss Bishop
 Typescript and galley proofs, [c.1933] [2 folders]
 Synopsis, Screen adaptation, "Cheers for Miss Bishop" by Stephen
 Vincent Benet, 4-17-40
 Final script, September 26, 1940 [shooting script]

Mother Mason, screen adaptation by Josephine F. Campbell
 Mr. Kurtz and Christmas
 Mrs. Piper Makes A Call

SERIES SIX: MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTES [cont.]

Box 10

Molly Porter, 1914
 Nebraska History in Nebraska Novels
 The Nightgown [humor]
 Novels and Nebraska History
 The Old Crowd, 1915

Box 11

Reunion
 The Rim of the Prairie drama [c.1926]
 The Soap Kettle
Song Of Years [c. 1938, 2 folders], notes written in longhand on back of
 "Miss Bishop" carbon
 Speeches, miscellaneous and undated
Spring Came On Forever [c.1935]

Verse:

By the Wharf
 The Children We Used to Be
 Little Boy Blue in Many Lands
 To My China Painting Teacher
 To My Wash Lady
 Miscellaneous [undated]

The Weakling [c.1925]
 The Why of Waterloo
 Working Backward
 Xantippe, Oct. 1899
 Miscellaneous manuscripts and notes [folder 1]

Box 12

Miscellaneous manuscripts and notes [folder 2]
 Miscellaneous manuscripts and notes [folder 3]
 Miscellaneous manuscripts and notes [folder 4]
 Research data
 Research data--Pioneers
 Research data--Pioneers--Aldrich [c.1938]

SERIES SEVEN: MARY ELEANOR ALDRICH FILE

Box 12

c.1915-28. Early letters, verse and short stories of Mrs. Aldrich's daughter,
 Mary Eleanor (Mrs. Milton P. Beechner)

SERIES EIGHT: PRINTED MATTER

Box 12

The Alumnus, Iowa State Teachers College

1932 October, July

1933 April

1951 May

1954 [missing as of 3-1-96]

The American Magazine

1920 May

1921 November

1922 January, February

Box 13

The American Magazine [cont.]

1922 April, May

1922 September, October

1922 December

1923 February, July

1923 August

1923 October, December

Box 14

The American Magazine [cont.]

1925 February

1927 June

"Bess Streeter Aldrich, Novelist" by Blanche Colton Williams [4 copies]

Biographical Materials

The Black Cat, November 1917*Century*, July 1928*Christian Herald*, December 1949*Christmas Book News*, 1942*Cosmopolitan*

1932 March

1933 January

1933 January, July

1936 January

1938 January

"A Daughter of Pioneers: Bess Streeter Aldrich and Her Books" by Annie Russell Marble [5 copies]

McClintock's

1921 May

1922 December

1923 January

1929 June, October

1930 March, April

SERIES EIGHT: PRINTED MATTER [cont.]

Box 14

Nebraska Writer's Guild Bulletin

1940 April
 1941 October
 1942 April, October
 1943 April

Box 15

Nebraska Writer's Guild Bulletin [cont.]

1944 April, October
 1946 October
 1950 April

The Normal Eye, June 1905*The Palimpsest*

1938 December
 1947 April

Pearson's Magazine 1922 November*Physical Culture* 1931 September*Prairie Schooner*

1927 Fall
 1941 Spring
 1943 Fall
 1946 Winter

Short Stories [some photocopies]

Short Stories [fragments]

Box 16

Song Of Years [personal copy of the novel, with photographs and author's notes]

Correspondence excerpts
 Radio program scripts
 Reviews

Story World and Photo Dramatist, 1924 April*A Stranger In a Strange Land*, By Leonora Scholte, 1939*Think* 1944 August

Two Hundred Topics in Iowa History 1932

Variety 1941*Woman's Day* 1939 April*Woman's Pictorial* [missing as of 1989] 1924 April 12*The Writer* 1941 December*Writer's Market and Methods* [missing as of 12-14-88]*The Young Citizen*

1902 December
 1903 February, October, November
 1904 February, May

Reviews

SERIES EIGHT: PRINTED MATTER [oversize items]

OB 044

Christian Herald [missing as of 3-5-96]
 1930 August 9th, August 16th
 1931 March, November [inclusive]
 1949 December
The Country Gentleman [missing as of 3-5-96], 1930 June
Harper's Weekly [missing as of 3-5-96], 1941 December
Ladies Home Journal
 1932 February, July
 1933 June
 1934 September
 1935 January
The Ladies' World, 1915 June
McCall's
 1918 May
 1919 August
 1926 November
Opportunity, 1938 August
Saturday Evening Post
 1938 December 3, 10, 17, and 31
 1939 January 7, 14, and 21
 1948 December 25 [acc.1995.0116]
Woman's Home Companion
 1944 November
 1950 May [acc.1995.0116]

SERIES NINE: NEWSPAPER FILE

Boxes 17-20

c.1926-1951. Newspapers and clippings, from various publications, including:

Cedar Falls [Iowa] Daily Record
 Des Moines [Iowa] Tribune
 Kansas City Star
 Lincoln State Journal
 Parkersburg [Iowa] Eclipse
 Pella [Iowa] Chronicle
 Toronto Star [Canada]
 Omaha World Herald

NOTE: The first three folders contain clippings folders as Mrs. Aldrich kept them. Folder 1 includes two items of correspondence.

SERIES TEN: SCRAPBOOKS [Oversize]

Item 18	1921-1932	Clippings and memorabilia
Item 19	1925-1932	Clippings [some 1936]
Item 20	1925-1939	Clippings, reviews
Item 21	1928	Iowa State Teachers College
Item 22-23	1933-1934	Clippings, photographs
Item 24	1933-1941	<u>Miss Bishop</u> clippings, reviews
Item 25	1935-1936	<u>Spring Came On Forever</u> , best-seller lists
Item 26	1935-1939	Clippings
Item 27	1938	Clippings
Item 28	1941	<u>Miss Bishop</u> screenplay
Item 29	1942	Clippings, best-seller lists
Item 30-34	1932-1940	"Looking Back" clippings

SERIES ELEVEN: ART AND DISPLAY

OB 044

Item 35	Book jackets, display cards, prints to illustrate novels; several stages in the development of a book jacket for <u>A Lantern In Her Hand</u>
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ADDENDUM TO INVENTORY

Accession #1995.0116

SERIES ONE & TWO: CORRESPONDENCE

Box 21

c. 1921-1988; and undated

SERIES FIVE: LEGAL AND FINANCIAL FILE

Box 21

Literary [income] record, 1915-1955

SERIES SIX: MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTES

Box 21

The Woman Who Was Forgotten
Resolute Writer
Home Stories of 2020
One Slender Moment [photocopy]
Meet the Author
The Outsider
Man of Conviction
I Made My Own Diagnosis
Can the Midwest Give Thanks?
The Qwill Club materials
Poem [by Rob Streeter]
Fragments

SERIES EIGHT: PRINTED MATTER

Box 21

The Alumnus, U. of Northern Iowa. 1954
Bess Streeter Aldrich, Novelist.
Cedar Falls Centennial Historical Souvenir and Official Program.
Christian Herald
 1947 December
 1954 May
Mothers of Achievement in American History 1776-1976
Pageant, 1955 June
Pulpit Preaching, 1951 March
This Day, 1949 September
25 Short Short Stories from Collier's

ADDENDUM TO INVENTORY

Accession #1995.0116

SERIES NINE: NEWSPAPER FILE

Box 22

c. 1933-1979, clippings

SERIES TEN: SCRAPBOOKS [oversize]

1933, "Cheers for Miss Bishop" clippings
1954, Obituary clippings, memorial sermon
1973, Induction to Nebraska Hall of Fame [program, photos, clippings,
etc.]
n.d., Clippings, mostly poetry [some loose]

SERIES TWELVE: JOURNALS

Box 22

Diary and financial notebook, 1944-1948
Diary and financial notebook, 1949-1954
"A Mother's Thoughts By the Way..." [Poetry notebook, 1892-1905, Mary
W. Anderson Streeter; holograph]

SERIES THIRTEEN: PHOTOGRAPHS

Box 22

Photographs

SERIES FOURTEEN: MISCELLANEOUS

Box 22

Book [sales?] chart, 1924-1938
Tributes and Awards
Lincoln Kiwanis Medal, 1929
Landmark program & speech, 1966
Nebraska Hall of Fame, 1973
Cedar Falls Tribute, 1974
Genealogy
Miscellaneous