

Alfred Betts Caldwell papers

Ms. Coll. 1113

Finding aid prepared by John F. Anderies.

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 August 6

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Caldwell, Alfred Betts
Title	Alfred Betts Caldwell papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1113
Date [inclusive]	1917-1978
Extent	15 linear feet (3 boxes and 1 oversized folder)
Language	English
Abstract	Alfred Betts Caldwell (1900-1980) was a 1924 graduate of The Wharton School at University of Pennsylvania and an author of mystery novels. The Alfred Betts Caldwell papers are comprised primarily of Caldwell's writings, including typescripts and some of his published novels. Also there are assignments and projects undertaken 1963-1965 while completing correspondence courses with the Professional Writers School located in Westport, Connecticut, and a scrapbook kept by Caldwell from 1917 to 1936.

Cite as:

Alfred Betts Caldwell papers, 1917-1978, Ms. Coll. 1113, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Alfred Betts Caldwell (1900-1980) was a writer specializing in mystery novels. He was born to Francis G. and Josephine B. Caldwell of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and attended West Philadelphia High School. He graduated from University of Pennsylvania in 1924, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from the Wharton School. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity, Beta Pi chapter for all four years at Penn and was known as "Biff". Following a brief stint at investment bank Dillon, Read & Co. ("the world's worst bond trader," he called himself), Caldwell spent the next several years working in the advertising industry as a salesman and copy editor. Caldwell's true passion, however, was writing. His first mystery novel, *Coffee for None*, was published in England by Elkin Matthews & Marrot, Ltd. in 1934. Additional mysteries published in the United States by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc. followed: *Turquoise Hazard* in 1936, *No Tears Shed* in 1937, and *Death Rattle* in 1940.

In 1930, Caldwell married Canadian Muriel Gordon ("Gordie") Herkins and together they moved from Philadelphia to Bridgeton, New Jersey, where they would remain for the rest of their years. From the 1940s through the 1960s, Caldwell worked for the Ferracute Machine Company, a Bridgeton manufacturer which produced presses in support of munitions and airplane components. In the 1960s, Caldwell took correspondence courses from the Famous Writers School located in Westport, Connecticut. Caldwell was a member of the Sons of the Revolution and the Society of Cincinnatus. He died after an extended illness at the age of 79.

(Source: Internal; Alumni file of University Archives, University of Pennsylvania; *The Record* (yearbook), University of Pennsylvania, 1924.)

Scope and Contents

The Alfred Betts Caldwell papers are comprised primarily of the mystery novelist's writings. In addition to three of his four published mystery novels (*Coffee for None*, *Turquoise Hazard* and *Death Rattle*), there are typescripts for both *Coffee for None* and an unpublished novel called *Dark Saying*. There are also typescripts (many labeled variously "Desk Copy" or "File Copy") of about 67 poems, short stories, and scripts dating mostly from 1927 to 1936. Two of his mystery novels, *Turquoise Hazard* and *No Tears Shed*, were also published in the *Supplement of the Philadelphia Record*, in 1937 and 1938, respectively, and the published copies are included in the collection. There are also assignments and projects undertaken while completing a correspondence course with the Famous Writers School located in Westport, Connecticut, a folder of "unused material," a folder of "story ideas" (newspaper clippings), and another folder of assorted writings, clippings, and personal materials. There is also one folder on the copyright of Caldwell's mystery novels. Existing arrangement and folder titles have been maintained when supplied. Finally, the collection includes a scrapbook kept by Caldwell from 1917 until 1933. It includes newspaper and magazine clippings (the former on topics such as birth control and alcohol; the latter comprised heavily of women in bathing suits, but also cuddly zoo animals), comic strips, poetry,

programs from operas and plays, and souvenir photographs from a 1923 trip to Europe. The scrapbook is inscribed with the following admonition from Caldwell: "This book is to run along the way I think. It combines my fancy and my thoughts. In it are my worst and best sides. It is my character. If you have not your mind open to its fullest extent, do not open this book, for you will not be able to separate [sic] the rhyme from the reason. You will either be disgusted or take it all as a joke. Probably you had best not open it."

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 August 6

Finding aid prepared by John F. Anderies.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Gift of Mrs. John F. (Eleanor P.) Bacon, 1992.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Famous Writers School.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Novels
- Poems
- Scrapbooks
- Short stories
- Typescripts
- Writings (document genre)

SUBJECT(S)

- Authors
- Authors, American--20th century
- Correspondence schools and courses
- Fiction--20th century

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Famous Writers School: Assignments returned from school with evaluation, 1964-1965.	1	1
Famous Writers School: Projects (first part of course), 1963-1964.	1	2
Famous Writers School: Projects (second part of course), 1964-1965.	1	3
Story ideas (newspaper clippings), 1964-1965.	1	4
Unused material, 1931-1965.	1	5
Assorted writings, clippings, and personal material, 1939-1978.	1	6

Copyrights to Caldwell's works, 1933-1965.	1	7
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Typescripts of poetry, short stories, and scripts, 1927-1936, undated.	1	8
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Typescript of "One of Those Moments", undated.	1	9
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Typescript of <i>Coffee for None</i> , undated.	1	10
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Typescript of <i>Dark Saying</i> , undated.	2	1
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<i>Coffee for None</i> (London: Elkin Matthews & Marrot, Ltd.), 1934.	2	2
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<i>Turquoise Hazard</i> (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.), 1936.	2	2
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Death Rattle (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.), 1940.

2

3

Box

Fold

"Turquoise Hazard" in *Supplement of the Philadelphia Record* (Sunday, January 10, 1937), 1937.

49

"No Tears Shed" (2 copies) in *Supplement of the Philadelphia Record* (Sunday, February 6, 1938), 1938.

49

Box

Fold

Scrapbook, 1917-1933.

3