
Kay Boyle letters to Basil Burwell
1954-1972

Abstract: American author and activist Kay Boyle (1902-1992) wrote four letters to American actor and educator Basil Burwell (1911-1997) between 1954 and 1972, commenting on the relationship between their families and the Cherry Lawn School, where Burwell taught and both had children in attendance.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 099, F0017
Title: Kay Boyle letters to Basil Burwell
Inclusive Dates: 1954-1972
Extent: 5 items (7 p.)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 099 F17, Kay Boyle letters to Basil Burwell, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
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Biographical Notes

Kay Boyle

Award-winning American author, educator, and political activist Kay Boyle (1902-1992) was a prominent member of American expatriate modernist circle of the 1920s and 1930s. Boyle's later years are characterized by her extensive political activism.

Boyle's career as a writer began in 1923, after moving from St. Paul to New York City, with the publication of her poem "Morning." Soon after, she married Richard Brault and moved to France for a 20-year period. During that time she divorced Brault and, in 1931, married a fellow expatriate, Laurence Vail. She published four novels, Plagued by the Nightingale (1931), Year Before Last (1932), Gentlemen, I Address You Privately (1933), and My Next Bride (1934), which reflected her experiences in France. Boyle divorced Vail in 1943 and married Baron Joseph von Franckenstein. The two were together until his death in 1963. Boyle had six children total—one with Ernest Walsh, with whom she worked in France from 1923-1927, three with Laurence Vail, and two with von Franckenstein.

A prolific short story writer, Boyle won the first of her two O. Henry short story awards in 1935 for the title story of The White Horses of Vienna and Other Stories. Her second O. Henry was awarded in 1941 for "Defeat." In addition to the O. Henry award she was a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship (1934) and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In 1960, Boyle moved to San Francisco and took a position as an English professor at San Francisco State University. Boyle's later works include the 1967 Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali and a 1968 revision of Robert McAlmon's memoir, Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930, to which Boyle added several supplementary chapters.

Basil Burwell

American actor, educator, author, and theatrical producer Basil Burwell (1911-1997) worked as an English and drama teacher and promoted community theater. He published two novels, Our Brother the Sun (1954) and A Fool in the Forest (1963), as well as two poetry collections, Slave Cargo (1948) and Poems for Lovers (1974).

Burwell's teaching career included thirty years at the Cherry Lawn School in Darien, Connecticut, and twelve years at the William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, among others. He acted from the 1930s until the end of his life and worked in several community theaters, most notably founding the Belfast Maskers in Belfast, Maine. He wrote and adapted for the stage as well.

Burwell married Nancy Sadler in 1931, and together they had three sons.

Sources:

Scope and Content Note

American author and activist Kay Boyle (1902-1992) wrote four letters to American actor and educator Basil Burwell (1911-1997) between 1954 and 1972, commenting on the relationship between their families and the Cherry Lawn School, where Burwell taught and both had children in attendance.

Boyle and Burwell moved in the same intellectual circle in Connecticut in the 1950s, and these letters illuminate a connection in a literary group as well as a friendship between the Boyle and the Burwell families. Clover Vail, Kay Boyle's daughter who attended Cherry Lawn in the 1950s, is mentioned in three of the letters.

The letters touch on various topics including a shared reading group that was discussing works by D. H. Lawrence, Langston Hughes, Wolfgang Borchert, and Walter de la Mare, as well as personal invitations and discussions of family members and mutual acquaintances. Burwell seems to have had a close connection with Clover Vail; as her teacher, their relationship is mentioned frequently. The final dated letter was written in 1972; Boyle had moved to California in 1960, and the letter reflects a continued interest in the Cherry Lawn School and her friendship with Burwell.

Also included is an undated letter from Boyle to an unidentified recipient containing the Eugene Lee-Hamilton (1845-1907) sonnet "Baudelaire" from Sonnets of the Wingless Hours (1894) and a note connecting the poem to a person with the initials "C. B."
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Boyle, Kay, 1902-1992--Correspondence.

Burwell, Basil Beckett, 1911- --Correspondence.

Vail, Clover.

Corporate Names

Cherry Lawn School (Darien, Conn.)

Topical Terms

Authors, American--History--20th century--Correspondence.

Form/Genre Terms

Correspondence.

Occupation

Authors.

Personal Contributors


Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 099 Miscellaneous Literary and Historical Manuscripts.

MSS 131, Kay Boyle papers

MSS 147, Padraic Colum papers

MSS 262, Kay Boyle papers relating to the Citizens' Mission to Cambodia

MSS 287, Kay Boyle papers relating to research on Irish women

MSS 410, Kay Boyle papers relating to Robert Nellen

MSS 655, Kay Boyle letters to Helga Einsele
Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.
Detailed Description of the Collection

Kay Boyle letter to Basil Burwell, 1954 February 1 [Box 1 F17]
1 item (1 p.)

Kay Boyle letter to Basil Burwell, 1957 February 7 [Box 1 F17]
1 item (1 p.)

Kay Boyle letter to Basil Burwell, 1957 May 8 [Box 1 F17]
1 item (2 p.)

Kay Boyle letter to Basil Burwell, 1972 June 29 [Box 1 F17]
1 item (1 p.)

Kay Boyle letter to unidentified recipient, undated [Box 1 F17]
1 item (2 p.)