University of Delaware audio recordings of poetry readings circa 1953-1964

Abstract: This collection features audiotape recordings of poetry readings and performances by American poets and University of Delaware professors. The collection contains poetry readings dating from 1953 to 1960 by Robert Hillyer, an influential poet and professor at the University of Delaware. There are also recordings of poetry readings, some broadcast by Delaware radio stations, by Wilbur Owen Sypherd, professor and administrator at the University of Delaware. The collection also features a reading by English actor Claude Rains and readings at the University of Delaware by American poets Robert Lowell and Robert Frost.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 696
Creator: University of Delaware.
Title: University of Delaware audio recordings of poetry readings
Inclusive Dates: circa 1953-1964
Extent: 43 1/4" open reel(s)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 696, University of Delaware audio recordings of poetry readings, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Shelved in SPEC MSS Media Reels
Location: Special Collections, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/
Source: Legacy collection, University of Delaware Library.
Processing: Processed and encoded by E. Evan Echols, July 2014.
Access Restrictions: The collection is open for research.
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Biographical Notes

Robert Silliman Hillyer (1895-1961)

Robert Silliman Hillyer (1895-1961) was an American poet. He was Born in East Orange, New Jersey, on June 3, 1895, and educated at Harvard College and the University of Copenhagen. While attending Harvard, Hillyer served as an editor of the Harvard Monthly and the Harvard Advocate and won the Garrison Prize for poetry. From 1919 to 1926 he was an Instructor in English at Harvard and then became Assistant Professor of English at Trinity College (Hartford, Connecticut). He became Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard in 1937 and after 25 years of teaching, retired from Harvard and served as a Visiting Professor at Kenyon College in 1948. In 1952, he accepted a regular professorship at the University of Delaware. In 1954, the University of Delaware created the Harry Fletcher Brown Chair of English Literature and Hillyer became the first incumbent. During World War I, Hillyer served as an ambulance driver in the French Army at the Battle of Verdun for which he received a citation, as well as the Verdun Medal, from the French government. After transferring to the American Expeditionary Force in 1918, he rose from private to First Lieutenant. Hillyer later served at the American Embassy in Brussels, Belgium.

Hillyer was Phi Beta Kappa poet six times: at Tufts, 1923; Harvard, 1928; Columbia, 1936; Harvard (for the Tercentenary of 1936); William and Mary (for the Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of Phi Beta Kappa at that college, 1939); and Goucher, 1940. He was president of The New England Poetry Club, 1923 - 1925, twice president of The Poetry Society of America 1949 and 1951 - 1953, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston and a member of The National Institute of Arts and Letters in New York. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1934.

Hillyer was an amateur composer and student of music. Many of his poems were set to music by various composers, such as Herman Luri, Daniel Pinkham, Gordon Sherwood, Ned Rorem, Mervin Whitcomb, Oscar Harveland, Joseph Clokey and John Drake.

Wilbur Owen Sypherd (1877-1955)

Wilbur Owen Sypherd (1877-1955) was a professor and administrator at the University of Delaware. He was born on June 28, 1877 in Cecil County, Maryland. Dr. Sypherd was the first chairman of the Division of Graduate Studies at Delaware, serving from 1936-1944. He was a prime mover in the project to create a Student Center. It was during his administration and with his support that the transition from coordinate colleges for men and women to a co-educational university was effected in 1944.

Sypherd entered Delaware College in 1893 and was graduated with a Bachelor of Arts after three years. After serving for two years as principal of a grammar school at Port Penn, Delaware, Sypherd entered the University of Pennsylvania where he earned a second Bachelor of Arts in 1900. In 1901 he earned a masters degree and in 1906 he was awarded the degree Doctor of Philosophy, both from Harvard University.

From 1901 to 1903 he taught English as an instructor at the University of Wisconsin. Wilbur Owen Sypherd returned to Delaware College in 1906 as Professor of English and Chairman of the English Department. He served in these roles until 1944, when he became acting president of the University. He
was acting president until 1946, when, in honor of his service to the University of Delaware, he was named president by the Board of Trustees. In 1947 he retired, receiving an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Delaware. Dr. Sypherd died in 1955.

Books written by Dr. Sypherd include The English Bible (1921), Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame (1907), A Handbook of English for Engineers (1913), The Book of Books (1944), The Literature of the English Bible (1938), and Jepthah and His Daughter (1948). Dr. Sypherd's scholarly interests included Geoffrey Chaucer; The English Bible; Robert Browning; technical English; the Biblical figure Jephthah and his daughter; and literary curses through the ages.

Sources:

Biographical information derived from the finding aid for Robert Hillyer Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.


Biographical information derived from the finding aid for MSS 232, Wilbur Owen Sypherd papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Scope and Content Note

This collection features audiocassette recordings of poetry readings and performances by American poets and University of Delaware professors. The collection contains poetry readings dating from 1953 to 1960 by Robert Hillyer, an influential poet and professor at the University of Delaware. There are also recordings of poetry readings, some broadcast by Delaware radio stations, by Wilbur Owen Sypherd, professor and administrator at the University of Delaware. Also included are a reading by English actor Claude Rains and readings at the University of Delaware by American poets Robert Lowell and Robert Frost.

The first series of the collection features recorded poems read by Robert Hillyer, poet and professor at the University of Delaware. The readings, which date from the early 1950s to 1960, feature works by a wide variety of authors including Emily Dickinson, Henry Black Fuller, and William Hazlitt. Hillyer also read from his self-created works. The series also contains a May 13, 1960, reading by Hillyer, which was his final at the University of Delaware.

Series II. features audiocassettes containing poetry readings by Wilbur Owen Sypherd, professor and administrator at the University of Delaware in the mid-20th century. The recordings feature Sypherd reading poems on-air for the Dover, Delaware, radio station WDOV and the Wilmington, Delaware, station WTUX in 1954. The poems include 19th-century poems by Robert Browning, William Henry Drummond, and Rudyard Kipling as well as "poems of praise", and 14th-century stories. Also featured are several tapes containing readings from the Bible.

The final series contains audiocassettes of performances by three additional individuals. It features an undated dramatic reading by English stage and film actor Claude Rains, a 1964 recording of American poet Robert Lowell reading at the University of Delaware, and a May 16, 1959 poetry reading by influential American poet Robert Frost, recorded at the University of Delaware. During his performance, Claude Rains read pieces from several authors including Robert Browning, William Shakespeare, and Robert Hillyer. Both Robert Lowell and Robert Frost were introduced prior to their readings by Robert Hillyer.

Additional information regarding the content of the audiocassette was handwritten on their containers and is included in the scope note of each tape.
**Selected Search Terms**

**Personal Names**

Browning, Robert, 1812-1889.

Frost, Robert, 1874-1963.


**Corporate Names**

University of Delaware.

**Topical Terms**

Poetry--Study and teaching--United States.

Literary readings (Radio programs)

**Geographic Names**

Delaware.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Dramatic readings.

Poetry readings (Sound recordings)

1/4 inch audio tape.

**Occupation**

Actors (performing artists)

Poets.

Professors (teacher)

**Related Materials in this Repository**
Arrangement

I. Robert Hillyer
II. Wilbur Owen Sypherd
III. Readings by others
Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Robert Hillyer, 1953-1960

Poems- Robert Hillyer part 1, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0001]

Poems- Robert Hillyer part 2, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0002]


Poems- Robert Hillyer part 4, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0004]

Poems- Robert Hillyer part 5, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0005]

Poems- Robert Hillyer part 6, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0006]

Poems- Robert Hillyer part 7, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0007]

Poems- Robert Hillyer part 8, 1957 February 15 [MSS0696_series01_0008]

Hillyer readings, 1953 October 26 [MSS0696_series01_0009]

Tennyson: Palace of Art; Pater: Conclusion to the Renaissance; Hillyer: A Change of Climate, Intermezzo, In the shadowy whatnot corner; Browning: House, Epilogue to Asalando

Hillyer readings, 1953 November 9 [MSS0696_series01_0010]

Henry B. Fuller: On the Whirlwind; Hillyer: In the time of mistrust; old poems: De Amico ad Amicam, Chaucer: the love unfeigned, Balade (Chaucer); Louise Townsend Nicholl: from collected poems - Snowlight, Identity, Old Apple Trees, Snow Mark, the past, Cigar smoke, sled marks

Hillyer readings, 1953 December 7 [MSS0696_series01_0011]

Traherne; Sassoon; Vaughan; Smart; Anon; herbert; Old poems. Hillyer (from Poems for Music): Deserted Farmhouse, Ironwood Tree, Light Snowfall, New Year's Eve, Christmas Eve.

Hillyer readings, 1954 January 11 [MSS0696_series01_0012]

Boswell's Account of Dr. Johnson's meeting with John Wilkes; Hazlitt on the Living Poets; Louis Kent: Selections from Declensions of the Air; Poetry Awards anthology 1953 - selections including Hillyer's "The Bats," "In My Library Late Afternoon."

Hillyer readings, 1954 February 22 [MSS0696_series01_0013]

Emily Dickinson: selection; Oliver St. John Gogarty; Hillyer: The Lunar moth; the Garden in Pomfret; Yeats: The Lake Isle, When you are old and grey and full of sleep, Wild Swans at Coole, Sailing to Byzantium.
Hillyer readings, 1954 March 22 [MSS0696_series01_0014]

Reading - Brown Hall.

Hillyer readings, 1954 May 3 [MSS0696_series01_0015]

Hillyer readings, 1954 May 31 [MSS0696_series01_0016]

The Death of Captain Nemo. Side one - Cantos I - VII, Side two - VII-X.

Elizabethan recordings, Misc. reading, 1955 February 21, 1955 March 21 [MSS0696_series01_0017]

#1 Elizabethan Recording - 2/21/55. #2 Misc. Reading (reverse) - 3/21/55

Readings, 1954 January 11, 1955 April 4 [MSS0696_series01_0018]

Side A (shining), Side B (dull)

Hillyer readings, 1956 May 7 [MSS0696_series01_0019]

Hillyer readings, 1960 May 13 [MSS0696_series01_0020]

Final reading at Delaware

Series II. Wilbur Owen Sypherd, 1954

A Sheaf of Sonnets, 1954 June 13, 1954 August 7 [MSS0696_series02_0001]

WDOV 6/13/54, WTUX 8/7/54.

Five Poems by Rudyard Kipling, 1954 June 6, 1957 August 8 [MSS0696_series02_0002]

WDOV 6/6/54, WTUX 8/8/57.

Some 19th century poems - part I, WDOV, 1954 June 20 [MSS0696_series02_0003]

WDOV 6/20/54.

Some 19th century poems - part II, WDOV, 1954 June 20 [MSS0696_series02_0004]

WDOV 6/20/54.

Robert Browning - part I, undated [MSS0696_series02_0005]

Last line - "So fair she was."

Robert Browning - part III, undated [MSS0696_series02_0006]

Poems of Praise, undated [MSS0696_series02_0007]
Series II.

14th century stories in verse , undated [MSS0696_series02_0008]

Lyrics from four centuries , undated [MSS0696_series02_0009]

Wm Henry Drummond , undated [MSS0696_series02_0010]

Wilbur Owen Sypherd- A Sheaf of Sonnets and Five Poems by Rudyard Kipling, Lyrics from Four Centuries and William Henry Drummond , undated [MSS0696_series02_0011]

Wilbur Owen Sypherd- Some 19th Century Poems, Part 1 and 2 and Speeches from the Plays of Shakespeare, 14th Century Stories in Verse , undated [MSS0696_series02_0012]


Wilbur Owen Sypherd- Bible Reading , undated [MSS0696_series02_0014]

Wilbur Owen Sypherd- Bible Reading , undated [MSS0696_series02_0015]

Wilbur Owen Sypherd- Bible Reading , undated [MSS0696_series02_0016]

Wilbur Owen Sypherd- Bible Reading , undated [MSS0696_series02_0017]

Wilbur Owen Sypherd- Bible Reading , undated [MSS0696_series02_0018]

Series III. Readings by others , 1959-1964

Claude Rains reading , undated [MSS0696_series03_0001]

Porphyro's Lover - Browning; Scene from William Shakespeare -Day; April Morning - Hillyer; Scene for Richard II; Letter to Hebrew Congregation at Newport - Washington; Cassius' speech to Brutus from Julius Caesar.

Robert Lowell reading his poems, U of D , 1964 April 16 [MSS0696_series03_0002]

Robert Frost reading at the University of Delaware , 1959 May 16 [MSS0696_series03_0003]

Original tape for Department of English, University of Delaware. Introduction by Robert Hillyer.

C1. Robert Frost reading at the University of Delaware , 1959 May 16 [MSS0696_series03_0004]

C2. Robert Frost reading at the University of Delaware , 1959 May 16 [MSS0696_series03_0005]