

Collection #
SC 2492

ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON PAPERS, 1890–1925

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Processed by
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 folders

COLLECTION DATES: 1890-1925

PROVENANCE: Walter R. Benjamin, New York, New York, December and Ohio Book Store, 726 Main Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, May 1962.

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in

writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: M 0192, Carleton B. McCulloch Papers; M 0221, Meredith Nicholson Papers; M 0268, James Arthur Stuart Papers; M 0666, Meredith Nicholson Collection; SC 1065, Samuel Caldwell Meredith Papers; SC 2494, Jacquelin and Florence Holliday; See also Card Catalogue under Nicholson, Meredith

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1950.1204, 1962.0504

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Underwood Johnson was born in Washington, D.C., 12 January 1853, the son of Nimrod H. and Catherine (Underwood) Johnson, and died 14 October 1937 in New York. He married Katharine McMahon, 31 August 1876 by which union they had two children, Owen McMahon Johnson and Agnes McMahon Johnson (Mrs. French H. Holden). An editor and author, Johnson earned a B.S. degree from Earlham College in 1871. By 1873 he was on the staff of *Century Magazine*, becoming associate editor, 1881-1909, and editor 1909-1913. He authored numerous books of verse, poetry, and prose.

Meredith Nicholson was born in Crawfordsville, Indiana, 9 December 1866, the son of Edward Willis and Emily (Meredith) Nicholson and died in Indianapolis, December 1947 where he is buried in Crown Hill Cemetery. He married first Eugenie Kountze of Omaha, Nebraska (1896-1931) by which union they had four children: Elizabeth Kountze Nicholson (Mrs. Austin H. Brown--see also collections: BV 2629 and SC 2414), Eugenie Nicholson who died in infancy; Meredith Nicholson Jr., and Charles Lionel Nicholson. He married, secondly, Dorothy (Wolfe) Lannon of Marion, Indiana, 20 September 1933, from whom he was divorced, 24 December 1944.

An author, diplomat, and lecturer, he was a self-educated man of letters, who with Booth Tarkington, George Ade, and James W. Riley is considered a leader in creating, during the first quarter of the twentieth century, a Golden Age of literature in Indiana. Following one year (1884) with the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Nicholson went with the *Indianapolis News*, where he worked from 1885-1897. His literary career spanned nearly forty years with his first publication, *Short Flights* (1891) and his last *The Cavalier of Tennessee* in 1928 and included both prose and poetry.

Nicholson participated with some enthusiasm--as party leader and candidate--in Democratic party politics, serving one term (1928-1930) as a reform city councilman in Indianapolis. For his long years of service and dedication to the Democratic party, Nicholson was rewarded with ministries to Latin America--Paraguay (1933-34), Venezuela (1935-1938) and Nicaragua (1938-1941).

Sources: *Who Was Who in America*, Vol. 1, p. 641; Vol. II, p. 397
Dictionary of American Biography, supplement 4, p. 629-630.
Indiana Authors and Their Books (1949), p. 237-9.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is composed of twenty-seven letters; twenty six of which are addressed to Robert Underwood Johnson and one to Ripley Hitchcock (of Harper & Brothers) concerning a dinner in honor of Robert Underwood Johnson, by Meredith Nicholson and span the years 1890-1925. They are filed chronologically.

The early letters reflect literary concerns, copyright issues, the *Century Magazine* and personal assessments of literary efforts. As the years progressed the letters reflect an evolving friendship with more personal issues arising. Some issues touched on by Nicholson include the changing literary world as reflected in the "vulgarity and coarseness infected into the magazine by Mr. Hearst", his interest in history with reflections on the impact of the Civil War on his generation and recognition that "our Indiana Historical Society has been very active ever since the State Centennial Celebration." Other organizations mentioned include the Contemporary Club, Indiana Society of Chicago and the Hall of Fame Committee of 21.

FOLDER LIST

Folder

- 1 Correspondence, 1890-1912 (13 items)
- 2 Correspondence, 1913-1929 (14 items)

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2492).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.