Overview of the Collection

Creator Branch, Houston, 1905-1968
Title Houston Branch papers
Dates 1919-1962 (inclusive)
1919 1962
Quantity 15 linear feet, (12 containers)
Collection Number Coll 249
Summary Houston Branch (1899-1968) was a writer, editor, publicist, and organization executive. The collection contains literary manuscripts, correspondence, and records relating to Branch's work as a creative writer and in public relations.
Repository University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives.
UO Libraries--SCUA
1299 University of Oregon
Eugene OR
97403-1299
Telephone: 541-346-3068
spcarref@uoregon.edu
Access Restrictions Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections and University Archives Reading Room. Collection or parts of collection may be stored offsite. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives in advance of your visit to allow for transportation time.
Additional Reference Guides See the Current Collection Guide for detailed description and requesting options.
Languages English
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Historical Note

Houston Branch, writer, editor, publicist, and organization executive, was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on March 5. The year of Branch's birth has been listed as 1899, 1903, or 1905; the correct date cannot be verified, but it is most likely 1899 since that is the year Branch himself used on copyright documents found in the collection. Branch began his career as a reporter for the St. Paul Pioneer Press in 1920, became associate editor of Western Magazine in 1922, and then worked as a feature writer for the San Antonio Express and Dallas News from 1922 to 1924. Branch began writing plays in the early 1920s, and by 1926 was living in and writing for Hollywood. He is the author of more than 200 works, ranging from screenplays and teleplays to novels, short stories and theatrical plays. Branch pioneered the use of the achievements of industry as background and themes for theatrical films such as Tiger Shark (tuna fishing), Wild Harvest (harvesting), and Silk Express (railroading). Branch was also a pioneer in the field of public relations, and is credited with organizing the first "Neiman Marcus style" runway
fashion show. In many ways he was ahead of his time, writing a self-help book in 1950, Duality, The Science of Dynamic Living, and initiating the now widespread public relations practice of "exploitation campaigns," using product placement in feature films and television programs. In this way Branch often combined his skills as a writer and publicist.

Branch's career was not limited to writing and public relations; however, he served as an expert consultant on training films for the U.S. Army Signal Corps from 1942 - 1943, as editor of technical publications for the Marguardt Corp from 1959 - 1963, and as the executive director of the Academy of Applied Science from 1963 - 1968. In 1938, Branch founded the American Library Foundation, organized to secure books and libraries for rural school children, and served as the foundation's director.

Branch married Mildred E. Clark on January 13, 1942, and they had one daughter, Victoria Elaine. Mildred died in July 1957. Branch, who had spent most of his adult life in California, moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts to serve as director of the Academy of Applied Science in 1963 and he lived there until his death on January 27, 1968.


Content Description

The Houston Branch Papers consist primarily of manuscripts, including screenplays, teleplays, short stories, novels, screen treatments, screen stories, theatrical plays, and operettas. The manuscripts are arranged alphabetically by title. Branch often collaborated with composer Charles Wakefield Cadman, Branch writing the book for operettas or musicals and Cadman composing the music. The two sometimes collaborated on song lyrics, but Branch primarily wrote the lyrics in addition to the book while Cadman wrote the score. Notable among the many manuscripts are the shooting script for Tiger Shark, starring Edward G. Robinson; The Black Pearl; The Booby Prize; and Feather In His Crown, among others. Although the manuscripts of Branch's two novels written with Frank Waters, Diamond Head and River Lady, are not included in the collection, there are folders of material related to them, including a legal suit over the use of the title "Diamond Head" which spanned 14 years.

It is important to note that Branch often wrote under pseudonyms, and nine different pseudonyms appear on various manuscripts within the collection. A list of these pseudonyms appears at the end of the inventory.

A small amount of Branch's correspondence is included in the collection. The majority of the correspondence has been placed in the relevant Public Relations folders. General correspondence comprises only one folder at the beginning of the collection. Notable among the correspondence are original letters from Albert Einstein, Carl Sandburg, and Edna Ferber regarding the American Library Foundation (11/16). The originals have been removed to safe folder #31 and copies remain in the collection. An original letter from Prince Rainier of Monaco has been removed from 11/8; this letter contains public relations material regarding the submarine "Cetacean."

A sampling of Branch's public relations work concludes the collection. In addition to the previously mentioned American Library Foundation, Branch established the American Landmarks Association, and also spent several years promoting the aforementioned privately constructed and owned two man submarine, the "Cetacean." The "Cetacean" was used as a theme for a T.V. series and several projected movies, most of which were never produced. Also included are folders from Huston Branch
Associates, Branch’s public relations firm, including promotions for Cuban tourism and an "exploitation campaign" for the Tucker Sno-Cat.

Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

Description

Guide to the Houston Branch Papers

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:
- Dramatists, American
- Public relations--United States
- Screenwriters--United States

Personal Names:
- Branch, Houston, 1905-1968
- Cadman, Charles Wakefield, 1881-1946
- Einstein, Albert, 1879-1955
- Ferber, Edna, 1887-1968
- Rainier, Prince of Monaco, III, 1923-2005
- Sandburg, Carl, 1878-1967

Corporate Names:
- American Library Foundation
- Houston Branch Associates

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