Kate Seredy papers, 1935-1959

Overview of the Collection

Creator  Seredy, Kate
Title      Kate Seredy papers
Dates     1935-1959 (inclusive)
               1935 1959
Quantity  0.5 linear feet, (2 containers)
Collection Number Ax 517
Summary    Kate Seredy (1899-1975) won the Newbery Award and Newbery honors for her children's books. Noted as an illustrator for titles such as Caddie Woodlawn, she also illustrated her own works, drawing on her Hungarian childhood for classics including The Good Master and The White Stag. The collection includes illustrations for Caddie Woodlawn and With Harp and Lute, and a representative sampling of her work.

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 Sponsor English
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Historical Note

Kate Seredy was born on 10 November 1899 in Hungary. She grew up in Budapest and the surrounding area. Seredy trained at the Academy of Arts in Budapest where she earned an art teacher's diploma. When World War I interrupted her studies, she served as a nurse and studied anatomy sporadically "between bouts of patching up anatomy." Following the war, in 1922, she immigrated to the United States where she spent twelve years learning English while working odd jobs ranging from factory work to painting landscapes and stenciling greeting cards. By 1928, she had illustrated children's first-grade textbooks. During the Depression, she "haunted editors' offices" seeking illustrating jobs because it was difficult to find work as an artist.
In 1935, after running a children's book store from 1933 to 1934, Seredy reached a turning point when May Massee, children's editor at Doubleday, recommended that she write a book about her childhood in Hungary. The result of this exchange was Seredy's first book, The Good Master (1935), which received Newbery honor status in 1936. Eleven books followed over the next seventeen years, all of which were both written and illustrated by Seredy, including The White Stag (1937), which won the prestigious Newbery Award in 1938, and The Singing Tree (1940), which also received honors from Newbery. The other books were: Listening (1936), A Tree for Peter (1941), Open Gate (1943), The Chesty Oak (1948), Gypsy (1951), Philomena (1955), The Tenement Tree (1959), Brand New Uncle (1961), and Lazy Tinka (1962).

Seredy illustrated many books for other authors, including Caddie Woodlawn, written by Carol Ryrie Brink, which won the Newbery Award in 1936. She also illustrated several of her close friend Blanche Jennings Thompsoon's books including With Harp and Lute (1935), Oldest Story: The Story of the Bible for Young People (1943) and A Candle Burns for Frances (1946). Other books to Seredy's credit include: Prince Commands, Being Sundry Adventures of Michael Karl, Sometime Crown Prince and Pretender to the Throne of Moravia (1934) by Andre Norton, Broken Son (1934) by Sonia Daugherty, Selfish Giant and Other Stories (1935) and Gunniwolf and Other Merry Tales (1936) collected by Wilhelmina Harper, Mademoiselle Misfortune (1936) by Carol Ryrie Brink, Winterbound (1936) by Margery Will Bianco, a Newbery honoree in 1937, Smiling Hill Farm (1937) by Miriam Evangeline Mason, Ear for Uncle Emil (1939) by Eva Roe Gaggin, Michel's Island (1940) by Mabel Leigh Hunt, Christmas Anna Angel (1944) by Ruth Sawyer, which earned Seredy Caldecott honors in 1945, Living Together at Home and at School (1944) by Prudence Cutchright, The Wonderful Year (1946) by Nancy Barnes, Fun at the Playground (1946) and Fun in swimming (1946) by Bernice Osler Frissell, Hoot-Owl by Mabel La Rue, Adopted Jane (1947), Mary Montgomery, Rebel (1947), and Pilgrim Kate (1949) by Helen F. Daringer, Little Vic (1951) by Doris Gates, Finnegan II, His Nine Lives (1953) by Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, and A Dog Named Penny (1955) by Clyde Robert Bulla. Seredy also translated Who is Johnny? (1939), written and illustrated by Leopold Gedo, from Hungarian to English.

Seredy's illustrations and writings emphasize the human connection to the landscape and its creatures and reveal the profound influence of her father on her work. Louis Peter Seredy was a teacher and served as a mentor to neighborhood boys who came to him for inspirational stories and moral guidance. His great love for the outdoors and appreciation of carvings and paintings of landscapes probably influenced his daughter's similar affection for rural scenes. At age nine, Kate accompanied her father on a visit to the Hungarian countryside to observe peasant life. She recalls her awe at the natural surroundings as well as the novelty of the daily chores and experiences of the peasants.

The themes of Seredy's books range from mischievous children and their escapades to outsiders' alienation from social groups. Seredy's treatment of "aliens," that is children from other countries who must fit into an unfamiliar culture, represents a unique contribution to the genre of children's literature. Additionally, her illustrations of heroic characters in addition to common folk demonstrate the full range of her sensibility and her appreciation for the Hungarian folk tradition. Her studies of anatomy served her well as her illustrations of animals capture their postures and movements perfectly.

Seredy lived in Montgomery in Orange County, New Jersey on a farm that she "tried to run" but ended up just living there while she "let the grass grow wild." her farm was in the Town of Montgomery, Orange County, New York. She referred to her "farm" as a "game preserve" where the "fields are teeming with creatures." Later she moved into the Village of Montgomery, also in Orange County, New York. According to sources consulted, Seredy never married and had no children. Seredy enjoyed making furniture, clothes and pottery by hand and carving wood until her death on March 7, 1975.

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http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv37289
Content Description

The Kate Seredy Papers contains two oversized boxes of illustrations, including all but one of the original illustrations for Caddie Woodlawn, which won the Newbery Award in 1936, and most of the illustrations for With Harp and Lute. The collection, while not complete, provides a representative sampling of Seredy's career as an illustrator by capturing her rural landscapes, realistic animals, sentimental and historical figures and religious iconography. The illustrations are drawn from books that Seredy authored and from those she illustrated for other authors.

The illustrations contained in this collection are arranged by the title of the work in which they appeared. Illustrations not identified with a published book, or those that were not published, are placed at the end of the collection and labeled by their content. All illustration folders list the name of the book in which the illustration appeared, and, where applicable, the title given to that illustration in the published book, a brief description of the subject of each illustration, and a note about the illustration's medium. All charcoal and pastel drawings have been encapsulated, to avoid smudges, and grouped into a separate box.

Researchers interested in the book Little Vic, illustrated by Kate Seredy, may want to consult the Doris Gates Papers (Coll 180), especially dates May 2-May 13 1949, March-April 1950, May 1950, March 1950, April-July 1951, and October-November 1951. Correspondence during this period refers to the author's progress on Little Vic, the editor, May Massee, and the illustrator, Kate Seredy. The Doris Gates Papers are accessible in Special Collections & University Archives at the University of Oregon.

Researchers also may be interested to know that the William David McCain Library at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, home of the De Grummond Children's Literature Collection, contains Kate Seredy's papers from 1941 to 1985, including correspondence with her publisher, Viking.

Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

Description

Guide to the Kate Seredy Papers

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :
Children's literature
Children's literature--Illustrations

Personal Names :
Seredy, Kate

Form or Genre Terms :

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Correspondence

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