

# Ruth Epperson Kennell papers, 1915-1970

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Kennell, Ruth Epperson
<b>Title</b>	<a href="#">Ruth Epperson Kennell papers</a>
<b>Dates</b>	1915-1970 (inclusive) 1915 1970
<b>Quantity</b>	13.5 linear feet, (9 containers)
<b>Collection Number</b>	Ax 872
<b>Summary</b>	Ruth Epperson Kennell (1889-1977) was an author who has a long and varied career, which included many years spent in the Soviet Union. The collection includes book manuscripts, short stories, screenplays, magazine articles, and general correspondence. Kennell was secretary to Theodore Dreiser.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives.</a> UO Libraries--SCUA 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 <a href="mailto:spcarref@uoregon.edu">spcarref@uoregon.edu</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	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.
<b>Additional Reference Guides</b>	<a href="#">See the Current Collection Guide for detailed description and requesting options.</a>
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Historical Note

Ruth Epperson Kennell, author, was born in Oklahoma City, September 21, 1893, to Julius and Sara Ellen Seeger Epperson. Her Family was relatively poor and her father died of tuberculosis when Kennell was still quite young. Thereafter, she and her mother moved to the San Francisco Bay area as young Ruth's own health was poor. Kennell attended the University of California at Berkeley in 1913, but did not obtain a degree. She married Frank Risley Kennell, a teacher, in 1917.

Kennell had a long and varied writing career, which included ten years spent in the Soviet Union. She began as a children's librarian in the Richmond (California) Public Library (1914-1917). In 1922, she and her husband, Frank, joined the American Colony Kuzbas in Kemerovo, Siberia. The Kuzbas

experiment was designed to provide American personnel and techniques to post-revolutionary Russians engaged in rebuilding and industrializing their strife-torn country. Kennel reluctantly left her baby son, James, in the care of his paternal grandmother, Kate Kennell, in order to participate in the Kuzbas colony.

After two years as Kuzbas, serving as librarian and secretary to the colony, Kennell joined the staff of the International Library in Moscow as a reference librarian (1925-1927). In 1927-1928, she was selected to serve as secretary and guide to Theodore Dreiser as he toured the Soviet Union. Her final years in Russia were spent as Russian correspondent for the Newspaper Enterprise Association (NEA). She also wrote articles on the Kuzbas colony and facets of the life in Moscow for *The Nation Magazine*.

After returning to the U.S., Ms. Kennell concentrated on writing books and short stories for children, often based in Russia, including *Vanya of the streets* (1931), *The Boy, Nikolka* (1943) and *Adventure in Russia: The Ghost of Khirgizia* (1947). Her story, *The Secret Farmyard* (1956) was based on her second son's (David) real experience. In 1969, she wrote the well-known account of her experience with Dreiser, *Theodore Dreiser and the Soviet Union*. The writing of a book on the American Colony Kuzbas in Siberia occupied her last years.

Ruth Epperson Kennell died in 1977.

## Content Description

The first section of the Kennell's collection is comprised of manuscripts for books, articles and short stories, with related notes and reference material. Researchers who desire first-hand autobiographical material are advised to read the manuscripts for *Kuzbas: a Romantic Chronicle*, in which Kennell recounts her life experiences.

The correspondence section reveals Kennell's wide range of contacts and acquaintances. She received letters from conservative Christian friends as well as the intellectual, politically sophisticated activists one might expect. Of special interest are Kennell's long, detailed, almost diary-like letters to her relatives at the Kuzbas colony, the hardships of living in Russia, the condition of life for the Russian population and to events in her own often turbulent, personal life. The letters, combined with Kennell's trip diaries are articles written by her as Russian correspondent, will provide the researcher with a rich source of material on both the leftist political movement of the period and on post-revolutionary Russia.

The correspondence between Kennell, her husband and various relatives and friends reveals some of the questions, doubts, and conflicts of individuals trying to replace Victorian values in their personal lives. Emancipation of woman from confining sex roles was a prevailing issue among leftists woman in the 1920s.

Other highlights of the correspondence section are original letters from Theodore Dreiser, Pearl J. Buck and H.L. Mencken (for whom Kennell wrote several articles). The Dreiser correspondence is of great interest, as he and Kennell maintained contact for the rest of his life. In one letter, Ms. Kennell criticizes Dreiser severely for his attitude toward woman, as expressed in a book he had written.

Also included in the collection are photographs of the Kennell family and of Russia, stories by Frank Kennell and Ruth. Kennell's mother, Ella Epperson Tosh, assorted essays, clippings and articles on Russia, copies of Ms. Kennell's published books and some miscellaneous personal material.

The Kennell Papers are doubly valuable for its fine assortment of manuscripts and working material from a successful author, and for the personal correspondence and diaries which express the

perspective of an active American socialist from the 1920s through the McCarthy era and on into the Vietnam war.

## Use of the Collection

### Restrictions on Use

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### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Ruth Epperson Kennell Papers, Ax 872, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

## Administrative Information

### Arrangement

Collection is organized into six series: Series I: Book manuscripts and related materials Series II: Short stories and screenplays Series III: Magazine-length articles Series IV: Short articles and newspaper articles Series V: Correspondence Series VI: Biographical and personal materials

### Acquisition Information

Gift of Ruth Epperson Kennell, 1979.

### Processing Note

Collection processed by processing staff, November 1979. Revisions completed by Alexandra M. Bisio, 2018

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### [Guide to the Ruth Epperson Kennell papers](#)

#### **Series I: Book manuscripts and related materials, 1928-1975**

This series includes materials related to Kennell's full length books for both children and adults. Other materials filled with manuscripts and drafts include correspondence, background research material, press clippings, reviews, notes, editor's changes, and sample illustrations. All additional material is filled under the manuscript title.

This series is arranged alphabetically by book title.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
1	1-5	Adventure in Russia	1947-1948
1	6-8	American Family Robinson	1935, 1938
1	9-11	The Children's Railroad	1939, 1943
1	12-14	Comrade One-Crutch	1932
1	15-19	Factory Train to Soviet Asia	1943-1944, 1975
1	20-21	Home Room 219	1940-1941
1	22-34	The Kuzbas Story	1928-1976
2	1-12	The Kuzbas Story	1928-1976
2	13-16	Kuzbas: A Romantic Chronicle	1930
2	17-22	The Montezuma Story	1948-1961
3	1-2	No Villain	undated
3	3-6	The Secret Farnyard	1953-1973
3	7-12	Seventy-Seven Days that Shook Dreiser	1967-1969
3	13-16	Stories Zenia Told Me	undated
3	17-22	Theodore Dreiser and the Soviet Union	1928-1969
4	1-21, 62	Theodore Dreiser and the Soviet Union	1928-1969
4	22-25	Vanya of the Streets	1929-1931

## Series II: Short stories and screenplays, 1935-1953

This series includes materials related to Kennell's short stories and screenplays. In addition to manuscripts and drafts, this series also includes published copies of her work, correspondence, summaries, and source material.

This series is arranged in alphabetical order by story title.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
4	26	Army Women	undated
4	27	"As Clay in the Potter's Hand"	1942
4	28-29	The Borrowed Perambulator	1939
4	30	"The Broken Windows"	1939
4	31	"Carper the Crow"	undated
4	32	"Certain Inalienable Rights"	1936
4	33	"The Christmas Fire"	undated
4	34	"The Christmas Message in the Snow"	1944
4	35	"The Christmas Spirit"	1935
4	36	"A Clandestine Divorce"	undated
4	37	"Commencement"	1936
4	38	"The Cotton Pickers"	1937
4	39	"Dad's Night"	1936
4	40	"The Decoy"	1940
4	41	"The Derelict Ducks"	1936
4	42	"Desert Samaritan"	1938-1939
4	43	"The Dog that Found his Master"	1936
4	44	"Easter"	1939
4	45	"Elsa's Revenge"	1943
4	46	"Evening Hymn"	1936

Container(s)		Description	Dates
4	47	"Fedora's Trouble"	1936-1943
4	48	"Finders Keepers"	1947
4	49	"Flash"	1940
4	50	"The Forbidden Christmas Trees"	1938
4	51	"Forty Boys and Antonio"	1939
4	52	"Fountain of Youth"	undated
4	53	"The Friendship Coat"	1944
4	54	"Ghosts of the Past"	undated
4	55	"The Girl at Summit Boys School"	undated
4	56	"Haircut Deferred"	undated
4	57	"The Happy Exiles"	undated
4	58	"Hens in Specs"	1939
4	59	"Her Husband's Portrait"	1940
4	60	"His Brother's Keeper"	1936
4	61	"The Immortal Railroad"	1942
5	1	"Insurance Man"	1937
5	2	"The International Spirit"	1936
5	3	"In the Clouds"	undated
5	4	"Kippie, Kippie, Kippie"	undated
5	5	"The Law Breaker"	1936
5	6	"The Life Guard"	1941

Container(s)		Description	Dates
5	7	"Lisa's Song"	1941
5	8	"Little Farm Next Door"	1937
5	9	"The Lost Child"	1937
5	10	"The Lost Indian Spearhead"	1952
5	11	"Lubov"	undated
5	12	"The Magic Box"	1943
5	13	"The Magic Christmas Tree"	1937
5	14	"The Magic Horse"	1936, 1939
5	15	"The Magic Light"	1937
5	16	"The Message in the Snow"	1942-1943
5	17	"Mr. Hammond Solves His Own Problems"	1936
5	18	"My Pets"	undated
5	19	"The Mystery of Hidden Houses"	1942
5	20	"The Neighbor on the Ground Floor"	1939
5	21	"New Altars"	1934-1935
5	22	"No Dogs Allowed"	1942
5	23	"Not Strictly Business"	1930
5	24	"On the Way to California"	1940
5	25	"The Perennial Drought Sufferers"	undated
5	26	"The Perfect Hiding Place"	1944-1946
5	27	"The Phantom Masquerade"	1939

Container(s)		Description	Dates
5	28	"The Poison Oak Mystery"	1940
5	29	"Prussian Snowdrop"	1945
5	30	"The Psychologists Wife"	undated
5	31	"A Real Bedtime Story"	undated
5	32	"The Red Geranium"	1938
5	33	"The Rest Home"	1935
5	34	"The Right Boy"	1937
5	35	"Rough Landing"	1937
5	36	"Saucy Pete the Parakeet"	1953
5	37	"The Secret Weapon"	1944
5	38	"The Shipwrecked Baby"	1938
5	39	"Stories My Mother Told Me"	1935
5	40	"Stories by Ella Epperson, b. 1864 - d. 1957"	undated
5	41	"Strange Survival"	1946
5	42	"Strangers and Foreigners"	1941
5	43	"The Strike"	1936
5	44	"Test Tube Triangle"	1955
5	45	"The Thanksgiving Baskets"	1935
5	46	"Thanksgiving in Siberia"	1937
5	47	"They All Come to Moscow"	1933
5	48	"The Time Cheater"	undated



Container(s)		Description	Dates
5	49	"Transplanted Village"	1943
5	50	"Unto One of the Least of These"	undated
5	51	"Vacation on a Russian Farm"	undated
5	52	"Village Girl"	undated
5	53	"The Village Treasure"	1945
5	54	"When the Century Plants Bloomed"	1936
5	55	"Who Is My Neighbor?"	1937-1938
5	56	Wonder Tales of New Russia	undated

### Series III: Magazine-length articles, 1923-1970

This series includes materials related to journalistic articles Kennell wrote from 1928 to 1975 for publication in magazines. Many of her works were printed in national publications, such as the Nation, Atlantic Monthly, and Cosmopolitan. Unpublished works are also included in this series.

This series is arranged alphabetically by article title.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
5	57	"America Rediscovered"	1929
5	58	"Americans in the Soviet Land"	1929
5	59	"Children of the Streets"	undated
5	60	"Christlike Charity"	undated
5	61	"Cinema Art Escapes from Hollywood"	1928
5	62	"Cultural Life in the Soviet Capital"	1927
5	63	"Defending Russia - A Letter"	1939
5	64	"End of Kuzbas"	1929

Container(s)		Description	Dates
5	66	"A Famous Russian of Negro Blood"	1946
5	67	"The Fate of Genius in America"	undated
5	68	"How an American Realist Looked at Russia"	undated
5	69	"How America Looks to Me After Six Years in Russia"	undated
5	70	"Is America Dry?"	undated
5	71	"A Kuzbas Chronicle"	1923
5	72	"Kuzbas: A New Pennsylvania"	1923
5	73	"Kuzbas in 1924"	1924
5	74	"Kuzbas Tells Its Own Story"	1923
5	65	"Library Work in Russia"	1928
5	75	"News from Hollywood"	1929
5	76	"On Leaving Russia"	1936
5	77	"Pioneer Life on the Soviet Frontier"	1931
5	92	Possible Illustrations for articles	undated
5	78	"Reunion in Finland"	1939
5	79	"Return to America after Six Years in Soviet Russia"	undated
5	80	"Marrying Around the World: Russia"	1934
5	81	"The Russian Children's Theater"	1943-1944
5	82	"Social Consciousness in Children"	1946
5	83	"Some Striking Differences Between the US and the Soviet Union"	undated
5	84	"Soviet Family Life in Theory and Practice"	undated

Container(s)		Description	Dates
5	85	"Subway Etiquette"	1936
5	86	"The Theater in the Soviet Union"	undated
5	87	"Theodore Dreiser and the Soviet Union"	1970
5	91	"Two Years in Siberia"	1929
5	93	Untitled manuscripts	1929
5	88	"Women are Mammals"	1937
5	89	"Women in Soviet Russia"	1928
5	90	"Women in Present Day"	undated

#### Series IV: Short articles and newspapers articles, 1923-1937

This series includes drafts and published copies of short journalistic and literary articles written by Kennell from 1923-1970. Like her long form works, most articles in this series focus on her experience living in the Soviet Union in the interwar period.

This series is arranged alphabetically by article title.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
6	5	"The Adventures of an American Girl in Soviet Russia"	1928
6	2	"Actors Under the Soviet Union"	1931
6	29	Book reviews	1921-1970
6	7	"Caviar"	1936
6	4	"The Good that has Come Out of the Russian Revolution"	1928
6	3	"In the Heart of Siberia"	1932
6	6	"How Moscow Stages a Demonstration"	undated
6	8	"Industrializing the Russian Kitchen"	undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
6 9	"The Mysterious Death of the Soviet Poet Laureate"	1930
6 10	"A New Wonderland of Travel"	1937
6 1	"Our Russian Correspondent"	1937
6 11	"The Russian Experiment"	undated
6 12	"Russia's Children of the Streets"	1929
6 13	"Russia's Unique Effort to Get Along Without Home Cooking Like Mother's"	1930
6 14	"Russia's Woman Andy Mellon"	1930
6 15	"The Servant Problem in Moscow"	1929
6 16	"Soviet Satisfied with 'Free Love'"	undated
6 17	"Strange Stories of Soviet Stage Stars"	1931
6 18	"Sunflower Seeds"	1936
6 19	"Ten First Ladies of the Soviet Land"	undated
6 20	"Train Service in Russia"	1936
6 28	Untitled articles for the NEA	1931
6 21	"Vacationing in Bolshevik Land"	1929
6 22	"Where Women are Really Equal"	1932
6 23	"A Woman General"	1929
6 24	"Women in Soviet Russia"	1928
6 25	"Women's Battalions on the Soviet Industrial Front"	undated
6 26	"Women's Style Troubles in Russia"	1931
6 27	"Young Russia"	1934

## Series V: Correspondence, 1916-1975

The correspondence series includes letters to and from Kennell's wide range of contacts and acquaintances. Of special interest are Kennell's long, detailed, almost diary-like letters to her relatives at the Kuzbas colony, the hardships of living in Russia, the condition of life for the Russian population and to events in her own often turbulent, personal life. Other highlights of the correspondence section are original letters from Theodore Dreiser, Pearl J. Buck and H.L. Mencken.

This series is arranged alphabetically by the last name of the correspondent. A folder of first name only correspondence is included at the end of the series.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
6	40	A	1922-1971
6	41	Amlie, Millie	1932-1953
6	42	B	1939-1959
6	44	Bullard, R.W.	1931-1945
6	43	C	1939-1968
6	46	Calvert, Mellie	1922-1976
6	45	Clyman, Rhea	1957-1960
6	47	D	1926-1972
6	48	Dembo, Rosa	1964-1971
6	49	Dinanirov, Sergei	1928-1931
6	50-53	Dreiser, Theodore	1928-1945
6	54	E	1928-1941
6	55	Edson, Peter	1930-1957
6	56	Epperson, Helen and Heber	1917-1973
6	57	Epperson, Robert	1922-1960
6	58	F	1924-1974

Container(s)		Description	Dates
6	59	Fritsch, Margaret	1968-1975
6	60	G	1923-1970
6	61	Gorn, Amelia Perlmutter	1941-1975
6	62	Griffiths, David and Linette	1970-1975
6	63	H	1966-1970
6	64	J	1928-1956
6	65	K	1922-1971
6	66	Kennell, Beatrice	1938-1973
6	67	Kennell, David and Wilma	1943-1961
9	1-3	Kennell, Frank	1916-1952
6	68	Kennell, James	1929-1975
7	1	Knudsen, Jack	1967-1973
7	2	L	1929-1974
7	3	Lambkin, Cyril	1928-1968
7	4	M	1928-1970
7	5	Mencken, H.L.	1929-1932
7	6	Mazkewitsch, David and Gita	1947-1970
7	7	Mc	1917-1971
7	8	McFarland, Wilma	1934-1946
7	9	McGrath, Vera Washburn	1934-1975
7	10	N	1939-1969

Container(s)		Description	Dates
7	11	National League of American Pen Women	1947
7	12	O	1926-1975
7	14	O'Callaghan, M.	1924-1970
7	13	O'Neill, Charles	1946-1975
7	15	P	1936-1957
7	16	Pederson, Inga and Al	1966-1971
7	17	Peixotto, George	1935-1937
7	18	Plumb, Mona and Jim	1923-1971
7	19	Podusor, Marta and Sasha	1971-1975
7	20-21	Preikshas, Anna	1966-1975
7	22	R	1924-1967
7	23	Rathborne, Nellie	1941-1973
7	25	Roberts, Holland	1969-1972
7	24	S	1923-1973
7	25	Seckar, Alvena	1949-1975
7	26	Selivanova, Nina	1952-1967
9	4	Shipman, Sam	1924-1926
7	27	Smith, Jessica	1949-1973
7	28	Sullivan, Hattie	1951-1970
7	29	T	1947-1969
7	30	Tanner, Iona B.	1958-1968

Container(s)		Description	Dates
9	6-8	Tosh, Ella Epperson	1922-1945
7	31	U	1969-1970
7	32	V	1940-1969
7	33	W	1917-1970
7	34	Ward, Ethel and Walter	1945-1971
7	35	Wood, Junius B.	1928-1969
7	36	Y	1936
7	37	Z	1970-1975
7	38	First name only correspondence	1923-1970

## Series VI: Biographical and personal materials, 1922-1975

This series includes biographical information about Ruth Epperson Kennell, as well as a collection of personal ephemera primarily related to her travels and life in Russia. A few examples of Kennell's more political work, particularly material collected for an exhibit on nuclear disarmament, as well as unfinished essays are included in this series.

This series is arranged in alphabetical order.

Container(s)		Description	Dates
<a href="#">Box</a>	<a href="#">Folder</a>		
9	9	Articles about American authors	circa 1930
7	44	Articles in Russian	circa 1920
6	36	Bibliography	1947
8	12	Birthday, greeting, and anniversary cards	1950-1974
8	16	Block, L.A. A Pocket Guide to the Soviet Union. Moscow: Veneshtorgisdat	1932
8	13	Book jackets	1927-1931



Container(s)	Description	Dates	
8	3-5	Clippings and notes related to Russia	1928-1937
6	31	"Contemporary Authors" listing: Biographical information	1975
8	1-2	Diaries and personal accounts of trips	1931-1971
7	43	Essays on the U.S.S.R.	1931
6	35	Fragments of adult stories and plays	undated
6	37	Frank Kennell stories	undated
8	10	Frank Kennell obituaries	1970
6	30	General notes on writing	1929-1940
7	40	"H Stands for Humanity," Nuclear Disarmament Exhibit materials	1959-1961
6	32	Juvenile writers session material, "In Defense of Culture," Fourth American Writers Congress, New York City	1941
7	39	Mooney Case - Records for Dreiser	1918, 1926-1928
7	41	Nemmy Sparks - Notes and articles	1973
8	6	Newspaper articles - Roosevelt's death	1945
8	7	Newspaper clippings	1937-1970
8	9	Passports and travel ephemera	1923-1952
8	11	Photographs	1926-1975
7	42	Political comments and essays	1923-1941
8	14-15	Postcards	1928-1975
9	10	Press clippings scrapbook	1928-1970
7	46	Russian newspapers	circa 1927

Container(s)	Description	Dates
7 45	Russian posters	circa 1932
6 38	Selivanova, Nina, "Outcast of the Desert"	1951-1952
6 39	Simone, Andre, "J'Accuse"	circa 1940
6 34	Story telling records, notes, and stories	undated
6 33	Typed notes and stories from Russia	1922
8 8	Unidentified 'confession'	undated

## [Guide to the Ruth Epperson Kennell papers](#)

### Names and Subjects

#### **Subject Terms :**

Children's literature, American--Authorship  
 Socialists--Correspondence  
 Women authors, American--20th century  
 Women socialists--United States--Biography

#### **Personal Names :**

Buck, Pearl S. (Pearl Sydenstricker), 1892-1973  
 Dreiser, Theodore, 1871-1945  
 Mencken, H. L. (Henry Louis), 1880-1956

#### **Geographical Names :**

Soviet Union--Description and travel

#### **Form or Genre Terms :**

Manuscripts for publication  
 Motion picture plays  
 Screenplays

Processing staff  
 2006



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