Overview of the Collection

Creator
Ernst, Alice Henson, 1880-1980

Title
Alice Henson Ernst papers

Dates
1900-1976 (inclusive)
1900 1976

Quantity
21 linear feet, (40 containers)

Collection Number
Coll 039

Summary
Alice Henson Ernst was an American author, playwright, and teacher, at University of Washington, 1920-1923, and University of Oregon, 1924-1950, who had special interests in the history of the early theater of the Pacific Northwest and masked ritual dances of Northwest Coast tribes. Collection comprises correspondence, including letters from Franz Boas; manuscripts of books, plays, essays, and poems; diaries and notebooks, 1909-1964; playbills; broadsides; and photographs, most relating to Native American masks.

Repository
University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives.

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

Sponsor
Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

Alice Henson Ernst, playwright, teacher, freelance writer, and reporter, was born September 3, 1880 in Washburne, Maine.

She received her B.A. degree, magna cum laude, from the University of Washington in 1912 and her M.A. in 1913. She also did graduate work at Radcliffe College and Yale University. From 1920 to 1923 she was an Associate Professor in English at the University of Washington and from 1924 to 1950 served as Associate Professor of English at the University of Oregon.
Ernst received recognition chiefly as a playwright of one-act plays, some of which were collected in High Country and Backstage in Xanadu. Her "Spring Sluicing" in High Country, for example, was a prize-winning play in the National Drama League contest, and was produced by the Portland Civic Theatre and other groups. In connection with her playwriting, Ernst became interested in the history of the early theater of the Pacific Northwest resulting in the book Trouping in the Oregon Country. Her interest in primitive theater led her to study the masked ritual dances of Northwest Coast tribes and to the publication of several articles. She also published a major work, The Wolf Ritual of the Northwest Coast, which received recognition from critics and anthropologists in the United States and Europe. Alice Ernst died February 12, 1980.

Content Description

The collection largely contains correspondence; manuscripts of books, plays, short stories and poetry; diaries; scrapbooks; and photographs.

The correspondence is arranged chronologically from 1900 to 1976. The majority of the correspondence pertains to her writing endeavors and to family matters. Within this collection are several letters written to Ernst from the anthropologist Franz Boas (March 15, 1937, April 27, 1938, Jan. 12, 1939, Jan. 22, 1939, Jan. 2, 1940, and Dec. 29, 1933).

The book manuscript section covers Ernst's non-fictional efforts. The manuscripts of her books Trouping in the Oregon Country and The Wolf Ritual of the Northwest Coast are included. Also among the unfinished and unpublished works is a manuscript on the masks of the Indians of the Northwest Coast, an unfinished biography of Joaquin Miller, and an unpublished ethnography of the Quileute. The remainder of the manuscript series includes a section containing her plays which include, among others, Way Out There, Barriers, Cloistered Calm, Out Trail, and The Wooden Wife. These are followed by a small poetry section in which the poems are arranged alphabetically by title. Also included in the collection are diaries and notebooks from 1909 to 1964 and one volume, A Time for Reflexion by Jean Henson. Broadsides include playbills and posters mostly related to theater productions.

Most photographs concern early theater in Oregon and masks of the Northwest Coast tribes; some are of a personal nature. Approximately three cubic feet of theater playbills have been separated to the Subject File Series.

Administrative Information

Detailed Description of the Collection

Guides to the Collection:

Guide to the Alice Henson Ernst papers

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms:

Alice Henson Ernst papers, 1900-1976
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv59872
American literature--Authorship
Indian dance--Northwest, Pacific
Indian masks--Northwest Coast of North America--Photographs
Theater--Oregon--History
Theater--Oregon--Photographs
Wolf ritual
Women authors, American--20th century

Personal Names :
Boas, Franz, 1858-1942

Form or Genre Terms :
Negatives
Photographic prints
Postcards
Snapshots

Finding aid prepared by Manuscripts Processor
2007

http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

About Creative Commons Licenses in Archives West:
http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/cc-zero.shtml