



Kansas City Quill Club Records (K0509)

Collection Number: K0509

Collection Title: Kansas City Quill Club Records

Dates: 1876-1979, no date

Creator: Kansas City Quill Club

Abstract: The Kansas City Quill Club Records contains a variety of materials from the longstanding writer's club in Kansas City, including member information cards, club rosters, dues and other financial records, meeting minutes, notes, news, and events. It also contains writings from a significant number of club members, some of it dating from before the club's founding, much of it published in publications across the country.

Collection Size: 5.6 cubic feet
(145 folders, 1 oversize item)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City](http://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at kansascity@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Kansas City Quill Club Records* (K0509); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Kansas City].

Donor Information: The records were donated to the University of Missouri by Louise W. Tierney on October 30, 1980 (Accession No. KA0055). An addition was made on October 6, 2006 (Accession No. KA1484).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Kansas City Quill Club Records can be found in the following collections:

Louise Wilder Smith Tierney Papers (K0032)

Helen Faye Smither Papers (K0073)

Westport Branch/National League of Pen Women Records (K0308)

National League of American Pen Women, Kansas City-Westport Branch Records (K0437)

Ione Alexander Papers (K0726)

John Milton Smither Papers (K0819)

Missouri Writers' Guild Records (CA2692)

Missouri Writers' Guild Papers (C3657)

Processed by: Processed by intern Hallie Allan, March 2023

Historical Note:

The Kansas City Quill Club was established on May 20, 1914, when seven people with interests in creative writing and music met at the home of Lelia Miller at 4125 Oak Street. It was a reorganization of the Author's and Writer's Club, founded in 1888, and the treasurer of the old organization, J.R. Devilbiss, was elected as the first president of the new. At that meeting, all officers were elected, and a constitution and by-laws were drafted.

In 1918, a revised constitution and by-laws were adopted, membership fees began to be charged, monthly programs began to be issued, and annual spring banquets began to be held. In 1920, the program was given the name "The Quill Pusher" by the year's president LeRoy H. Kelsey (which did not last), and the club established various committees to coordinate its efforts, as it had grown significantly. In 1922, the club began holding regular meetings at the Hotel Baltimore, and in 1923, the club sponsored its first poetry contest.

By 1925, the Quill Club was firmly regarded as a significant cultural organization of Kansas City. Due to the popularity of the content of monthly meetings and poetry contests sponsored by the club, membership almost doubled. Around the end of this year or the beginning of the next, it established its three Round Tables, which were devoted to short stories, poetry, and music. The Quill Club became the largest organization of its kind in Missouri in 1926, with 250 names noted on the roster. Around 1927, the club began to split into round tables, Poets', Story Writers', and Musicians', due to both its size and the great variance within the work of members. Each Round Table began hosting some of the monthly general meetings to showcase their work. As the club continued to grow, many guest writers, speakers, and musicians of local or interstate significance were invited to participate in the meetings.

Due to lack of funds during the Great Depression, the monthly meetings began to be held at the Athenaeum at Linwood and Campbell Streets in 1933, and continued to be held there until 1935, at which point, the club decided upon the Brookside Hotel as a more suitable meeting place. Four years later, the Quill Club held its twenty-second annual banquet, which was its Silver Jubilee, celebrating twenty-five years of club activity.

Annual Poetry Week programs began to take place in approximately 1942. In early 1943, the Brookside Hotel was taken over by the United States Government for the use of the Army, and the Musicians' Round Table monthly meetings were discontinued due to a relative lack of interest, not resuming until 1946. The following December, after a little over 30 years in operation, the Quill Club elected its first female president, Ione Alexander, a prolific story writer, to serve in 1945, paving the way for many other women to serve in the position. She was

reelected for 1946 and 1947, and also served in several other capacities throughout the club's history. She would go on to serve as president again in later years.

The Quill Club continued developing new activities in the late 1940s and 1950s, with the renaming and reorganization of the Musicians' Round Table as the Music and Drama Round Table, and initiations of August picnics (at least for a time), as well as annual Autumn Teas. The club was active through at least the late 1970s.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following 12 series:

- Membership
- Corresponding Secretary's Records
- Recording Secretary's Records
- Historian's Records
- President's Records
- Treasurer's Records
- Story Writers' Round Table
- Poets' Round Table
- Musicians'/Music and Drama Round Table
- Events
- Correspondence
- Writing

Scope and Content Note:

Membership

This series contains member information cards; club rosters; applications; member biographies, autobiographies, and photographs; two versions of the club's history, written in the 1930s and 1950s; several copies of the club's constitutions, showing revisions through the years; and examples of membership cards and club letterheads. Many members have more than one information card, reflecting continued membership, and there are multiple copies of club rosters for some years, reflecting changes to membership and contact information of members. This series is arranged by material type, with member information cards arranged alphabetically and other materials arranged by date.

Corresponding Secretary's Records

This series is made up of annual reports, lists, membership accounts, and monthly dues statements. There are also monthly special assessments from throughout the 1930s and 1940s. This series is arranged by material type, then by date.

Recording Secretary's Records

This series consists of general club meeting minutes. Some programs have been glued into spaces by their corresponding meetings. Other programs were removed and transferred to the Events series. This series is arranged by date.

Historian's Records

This series contains some reports. The majority of the material originally classified as Historian's Records was transferred to other series, such as Events and Writing. This series is arranged by date.

President's Records

This series is made up of annual messages given at the last meeting of the year, mostly spanning the 1930s, with some from the 1940s and 1950s. It also contains some notes and reports from the 1960s. This series is arranged by material type, then by date.

Treasurer's Records

This series consists of a wide variety of materials showing patterns of general club expenses. These include invoices, canceled checks, deposits, reports, and account statements. This series is arranged by material type, then by date.

Story Writers' Round Table

This series contains meeting minutes of this club subgroup, along with attendance and assignment records, as well as short story contest and annual reports, receipts, and an oversize poster accompanying the annual report from 1941. There are a couple of gaps in the records, spanning several years each. This series is arranged by material type, then by date.

Poets' Round Table

This series is made up of meeting minutes of this club subgroup, along with agendas and annual reports. There are significant gaps in the records. This series is arranged by material type, then by date.

Musicians'/Music and Drama Round Table

This series contains meeting minutes of this club subgroup, as well as annual reports, agendas, assignments, and attendance reports. There are a few gaps in the records, spanning a few years each. This series is arranged by material type, then by date.

Events

This series consists of general meeting programs and spring banquet programs; announcements and programs for autumn teas from the 1950s through the 1970s; events put on by the Round Tables, mostly in the 1930s and 1940s; and club news and other events spanning almost five decades. There are gaps in the records for 1920s general meeting programs, occasional gaps for spring banquet programs, and significant gaps in the Round Table records, in particular the Poets' Round Table. This series is arranged by position and material type, then by date.

Correspondence

This series is made up of letters to, from, and about the various leadership positions in the club and the three Round Tables, as well as many members and events. There are significant gaps within several positions. This series is arranged by position, then by date.

Writing

This series contains poems and articles, as well as stories, plays, and songs, from many members of the club, often published in local publications such as the *Kansas City Star* and *Kansas City Times*. These include issues of *The Lantern* from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, a poetry magazine in which several members' poems were published, along with scripts from 1949 and 1950 from *Moonbeams*, a biweekly radio program that frequently featured club members' poetry. Also in this series are poems by LeRoy H. Kelsey from the mid-1920s; and poems, monologues, plays, stories, articles, and manuscripts from Caryl DeVoe (Wright), a charter member of the Quill Club, some of which date from before the club's founding. This series is arranged by material type and author, then by date.

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