

The Filson Historical Society
Cawein, Madison Julius, 1865-1914
Additional papers, 1888-1996

For information regarding literary and copyright interest for these papers, see the Curator of Special Collections.

Size of Collection:
0.33 cubic feet

Location Number:
Mss. A C383d

Cawein, Madison Julius, 1865-1914
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Scope and Content Note

The Madison Julius Cawein additional papers document the life and literary career of a Louisville poet.

Correspondence, 1889-1995, includes a few letters from Madison Cawein to his wife Gertrude. Cawein writes about his love for Gertrude and his family, their financial difficulties, mutual friends, and life on St. James Court in Louisville. Also included are letters from Cawein's friends, especially fellow poet Henry Van Dyke. In 1914, letters from friends express condolences on the death of Madison Cawein. Subsequent correspondence relates primarily to obtaining permission to use lines from Cawein's poetry, including in a patriotic song composed during World War I.

Also present in the collection is a poetry journal, ca. 1940s, most likely belonging to Madison Cawein II; the will of Gertrude Cawein; poetry written by Madison and Gertrude Cawein, and bookplates from Cawein's personal library; newspaper clippings relating to Cawein's death and legacy; genealogical material; and miscellaneous documents, including calling cards for Madison Cawein and his associates, and a copy of a piece of sheet music with words written by Cawein. In addition, a few articles in the collection explore the connection between Madison Cawein's 1913 poem "Waste Land" and T. S. Eliot's 1922 poem of the same name.

Several photographs were transferred to the Filson's photo collection.

For additional Madison Cawein material, see:

Mss. A C383: Madison J. Cawein papers, 1886-1928.

Mss. A C383a: Madison Julius Cawein additional papers, 1888-1929.

Mss. A C383b: Madison Cawein poems. (5 vol. set of [The Poems of Madison Cawein](#).)

Mss. A C383c: Madison Julius Cawein added papers, 1893-1944 (bulk: 1893-1911).

Mss. C C: Madison Julius Cawein miscellaneous papers, 1889-1916.

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Biographical Note

Madison Cawein (1865-1914) was a poet from Louisville, Kentucky. Cawein was the son of William Cawein, an herbalist, and Christiana Stelsly. He spent his childhood years around Brownsboro, Kentucky and New Albany, Indiana where he spent much time in the outdoors. He was greatly influenced by Reuben Post Halleck, a teacher of literature and psychology at Louisville Male High School, who inspired him to be a poet. After graduating from Male High School in 1886, Cawein worked in a local poolroom. He spent his spare time roaming the neighboring woods and writing poetry.

His first book, "Blooms of the Berry" was published in 1887. Through careful saving and investing of his money, he freed his whole time for writing by 1892. Cawein published 36 volumes of poetry during his lifetime and found much of his inspiration from the landscapes of the Louisville area. Louisville's parks and the Indiana Knobs were the chief settings for many of his poems. Cawein's work "The Wasteland" (1913) likely influenced T.S. Elliot's poem of the same name (1922).

Cawein married Gertrude Foster McKelvey in 1903. They had a son, Preston Hamilton (b. 1904), whose name was changed to Madison Cawein II in 1917. Although he was a well-respected poet, Cawein found himself in dire financial straits just prior to World War I. The responsibility of a family, the expenses accrued by a lavish lifestyle, the mortgage on his elegant house on St. James Court, and his own poor health, all combined to contribute to his death in 1914. Cawein is buried in Cave Hill Cemetery.

From: The Encyclopedia of Louisville. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001.

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Folder List

- Folder 1: Correspondence, 1889-1915
- Folder 2: Correspondence, 1918-1995, undated
- Folder 3: Will of Gertrude Cawein, 1915
- Volume 4: Poetry journal, ca. 1940s, probably belonging to Madison Cawein II
- Folder 5: Poetry and other writings, 1888-1913, undated
- Folder 6: Newspaper clippings, ca. 1914-1995
- Folder 7: Genealogy
- Folder 8: Miscellaneous, 1921-1996, undated

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Subject Headings

American poetry.
Authors and publishers.
Cawein, Gertrude, 1873-1918.
Cawein, Madison, II, b. 1904.
Cawein family.
Children's art.
Children's stories.
Eliot, T. S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888-1965.
Finance – Personal.
Howells, William Dean, 1837-1920.
Love-letters.
Mental illness.
Poetry.
Poets, American – Kentucky – Correspondence.
Saint James Court (Louisville, Ky.)
Scollard, Clinton, 1860-1932.
Sheet music.
Van Dyke, Henry, 1852-1933.
World War, 1914-1918.
World War, 1914-1918 – Music and the war.