

The Filson Historical Society

Cawein, Madison Julius, 1865-1914
Added papers, 1893-1944 (bulk: 1893-1911)

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

Size of Collection:
1 Cubic Foot

Location Number:
Mss. A C383c

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Scope and Content Note

The Madison Julius Cawein added papers document the life and literary career of a Louisville poet. Correspondence in the collection documents the friendship and collaboration between Madison Cawein and Eric Pape, who often illustrated Cawein's poetic work. Details about the business side of poetry, especially the interaction between Cawein, his agents, and the publishing industry are also present in the collection. There are frequent references to difficulties the pair faced in the publication of their work, in particular the publication of "Ode". Cawein's personal struggles with his finances and depression are also documented. Cawein's family life is detailed in his correspondence, as well as the letters of his wife, Gertrude, who writes about her social life, travel plans, and her own artistic pursuits. Additional correspondence includes letters Cawein received from other noted literary figures of the time, which he gifted to Pape. Also included are manuscripts of Cawein's "Kentucky Poems" that were given by Cawein to Eric Pape. Manuscripts of other works are also present, including several written while he was visiting Pape in Annisquam, Massachusetts. The remainder of the collection includes a few literary works by some of Cawein's contemporaries, a copy of a poem written by Gertrude Cawein, and miscellaneous material.

Folders 1-2 contain correspondence from Madison Cawein to Eric Pape from 1905-1914. The letters document their collaboration on the publication of Cawein's poems (often illustrated by Pape's artwork), and the difficulties the pair faced in getting works published or selling those that were printed. Pape's artistic works are mentioned, including a portrait Pape did of Gertrude Cawein (part of The Filson's portrait collection, 1988.9). Cawein's correspondence also touches on the lives and social circles of their families. There are references to Cawein's financial difficulties and his personal and business travel. After the 1912 stock market crash, Cawein's letters communicate his despair with his finances and his struggles with depression. He threatens suicide multiple times.

Folder 3 contains correspondence from Gertrude Cawein to Eric Pape and his wife, Alice Monroe Pape. Gertrude corresponds about her social life, her trip to Europe, her own writings, and her plans to organize a pageant in Louisville.

Folders 4-5 consist of correspondence written to Madison and Gertrude Cawein. Many letters in these folders consist of compliments to Cawein on his recent works, comments and criticism of his poetry, and the exchange of works. Correspondents include other noted poets and writers of the time, including Bliss Carman, Edgar Fawcett, William Dean Howells, Harrison Smith Morris, James Whitcomb Riley, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Henry Van Dyke, and Charles Dudley Warner among others.

Folder 6 contains correspondence from the 1940s regarding this collection of Cawein papers in the possession of Pape.

Folders 7-26 contain the writings of Cawein and others. There are manuscripts for Cawein's *Kentucky Poems* as well as several of his other works. There are also a few literary works by some of Cawein's contemporaries and a copy of a poem written by Gertrude Cawein.

Folder 27 contains miscellaneous materials and newspaper clippings. Clippings relate to the unveiling of the bust of Madison Cawein at the Louisville Free Public Library and a biographical account of his life. There is also a program featuring some of Cawein's works, and a list of his publications.

Books acquired with this manuscript collection have been separated and added to the Filson library; many were inscribed by the author to Cawein, and then re-inscribed by Cawein to Eric Pape.

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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

Box 1

Correspondence

- Folder 1: Correspondence, Madison Cawein to Eric Pape, 1905-1908
- Folder 2: Correspondence, Madison Cawein to Eric Pape, 1909-1914
- Folder 3: Correspondence, Gertrude Cawein to Eric & Alice Pape, 1908-1917
- Folder 4: Correspondence to Madison Cawein, 1893-1903
- Folder 5: Correspondence to Madison & Gertrude Cawein, 1905-1911
- Folder 6: Correspondence regarding Pape collection on Cawein, 1943-1944

Writings

- Folder 7: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902, 1911
- Folder 8: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902

Box 2

- Folder 9: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902
- Folder 10: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902
- Folder 11: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902
- Folder 12: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902
- Folder 13: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902
- Folder 14: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902
- Folder 15: Kentucky Poems manuscripts, 1902

Box 3

- Folder 16: *The Poems of Madison Cawein, Of Harp and Pipe*, Volume 5 typescript for Pape, circa 1904
- Folder 17: Index to *Poems of Madison Cawein*, alphabetical, circa 1907
- Folder 18: *Ode* (Gloucester Memorial Monument Dedication) by Madison Cawein, 1907
- Folder 19: *Annisquam Poems* by Madison Cawein, 1908
- Folder 20: *The Garden of Shadows* [The Shadow Garden], 1909
- Folder 21: *The Witch: A Miracle* manuscript by Madison Cawein, 1909
- Folder 22: Dedications to Alice Monroe Pape by Madison Cawein, 1911
- Folder 23: *Whatever the Path*, by Madison Cawein, 1913
- Folder 24: Gertrude Cawein poetry, (*Beloved, If Tonight-*), 1908
- Folder 25: Poetry by Others [Anne Abbott, Henry Van Dyke], 1908-1911, undated.
- Folder 26: *The House of Rimmon*, play by Henry Van Dyke.

Miscellaneous

- Folder 27: News clippings and miscellaneous, 1909, 1913, circa 1917/1918, 1921, 1929.

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Subject Headings

American poetry
Artists
Authors and publishers
Booksellers and bookselling
Carman, Bliss, 1861-1929
Cawein, Gertrude, 1873-1918
Clothing and dress – Kentucky
Europe – Description and travel
Fawcett, Edgar, 1847-1904
Finance – Personal
Greeting cards
Howells, William Dean, 1837-1920
Kentucky – Description and travel
Louisville (Ky.) – Social life and customs
Literary agents
Marital conflict
Mental illness
Morris, Harrison S. (Harrison Smith), 1856-1948
Monuments – Massachusetts
New York – Description and travel
Pape, Alice Monroe, d. 1911
Pape, Eric, b. 1870
Poetry
Poets, American – Kentucky – Correspondence
Riley, James Whitcomb, 1849-1916
Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 1833-1908
Suicide
Van Dyke, Henry, 1852-1933
Warner, Charles Dudley, 1829-1900
Woman's Club of Louisville (Louisville, Ky.)
Women – Societies and clubs
Women poets