

**The Filson Historical Society**

**Cogshall, Ruth Wilson, 1899-1988**

**Watercolor portraits, circa 1973**

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 C677

**Cogshall, Ruth Wilson, 1899-1988**  
**Watercolor portraits, circa 1973**

**Scope and Content Note**

This collection documents the artistic work of Ruth Wilson Cogshall, and provides a glimpse into Louisville's art scene in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection is comprised of 45 original watercolor portraits of Kentucky women created by Cogshall. Cogshall created this series, entitled "Women Who Helped to make Kentucky Famous," in honor of Kentucky's 1974 bicentennial (as well as the 1976 national bicentennial). Inspired by the story of Jane Todd Crawford, the woman who underwent the first successful abdominal surgery in 1809, Cogshall decided to create the series to promote recognition of the contributions women have made to Kentucky's history.

The women portrayed in the series were leaders in a variety of fields. Cogshall painted women who were writers, religious leaders, educators, physicians and health care professionals, social workers, actresses, and artists. In many cases, the women are depicted along with the accoutrements of their trade. As with her other bicentennial series ("Women of the White House"), Cogshall likely created many of her drawings after referring to portraits and existing images of the women. Others she may have created from only a description of the individual.

Paintings have been arranged alphabetically by last name. The paintings have been matted and measure roughly 8½ x 11 inches.

This collection is a transfer from the Filson's museum collection and was formerly accession number 1993.37.

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**Biographical Note**

Ruth Truman Wilson Cogshall was an artist, actress, secretary, and teacher. She was born in 1899 in Louisville, Kentucky to Perry Truman Wilson and Sophia Lou DeAubrey Arterburn. At a young age she was given art lessons because a teacher believed she had “remarkable talent.” In 1906, Ruth Wilson’s father died and the family moved to Owensboro, Kentucky. It was during this time that she won first prize for a pencil drawing she entered at the Daviess County Fair. In 1915, the family returned to Louisville, where she attended Louisville Girls’ High School for her senior year.

In 1916, Ruth Wilson enrolled at the University of Louisville (U of L), where she became active in the university’s theatrical department. As a member of the U of L Players, Wilson appeared in a number of performances and was president of the organization during her senior year of college. Wilson also drew many illustrations for the *Kentucky Cardinal* and *Thoroughbreds*, the U of L student newspaper and yearbook, respectively. She continued to participate in U of L theatrical productions after graduating in 1922 with a master’s degree in English.

After graduation, Wilson worked for 18 years as a secretary to three U of L presidents. She also taught business English in the university’s night school for 15 years. In 1938, Wilson resigned from her position at the University to marry Wilbur B. Cogshall, the assistant managing editor of Louisville’s *Courier-Journal* newspaper.

As a married woman, Ruth Wilson Cogshall continued her theatrical and artistic pursuits. She became involved in the Little Theater Company and was elected its president in 1944. She also became a member of the Woman’s Club of Louisville, where she designed the club’s seal and many of its Christmas cards, and also submitted drawings to the Club’s Bulletin. In the early 1970s, Cogshall began working on two watercolor series in preparation for Kentucky’s 1974 bicentennial and the 1976 national bicentennial. “Women of the White House” was a series of some 40 watercolor drawings which featured the First Ladies. The second series of watercolors, “Women Who Helped to make Kentucky Famous,” are the drawings that comprise this collection.

References: “Artist prepares for Bicentennials,” by Joan Kay. *Courier-Journal & Times*, 19 August 1973.  
Cogshall, Ruth Wilson, Some Famous Kentucky Women. Sibling Press, 1986.  
Wilson, Elizabeth A., Postscript I. 1987.

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**Folder List**

Box 1

- Folder 1: Anderson, Mary, 1859-1940. (Actress)
- Folder 2: Avery, Susan Look. (Founder of Louisville Woman's Club)
- Folder 3: Benedict, Jennie C., 1860-1928. (Caterer)
- Folder 4: Blanding, Sarah G., 1898-1985. (Educator)
- Folder 5: Boone, Rebecca, 1739-1813. (Pioneer, wife of Daniel Boone.)
- Folder 6: Breckinridge, Mary, 1881-1965. (Health advocate, founder of Frontier Nursing Service.)
- Folder 7: Breckinridge, Sophonisba, 1866-1948. (Social work pioneer)
- Folder 8: Brown, Margaretta M., 1772-1838. (Founder of first protestant Sunday school)
- Folder 9: Calloway, Elizabeth. (First bride in Kentucky)
- Folder 10: Casseday, Jennie, 1840-1893. (Established Rest Home for Working Women and Girls.)
- Folder 11: Clay, Laura, 1849-1941. (Political activist)
- Folder 12: Clement, Emma C. (National mother of the year, 1946)
- Folder 13: Crabtree, Lotta, 1847-1924. (Actress)
- Folder 14: Crawford, Jane Todd, 1763-1842. (Pioneer abdominal surgery patient)
- Folder 15: Desha, Mary, 1855-1911. (Founder of the D.A.R.)
- Folder 16: Downs, Sally Ward, 1827-1896. (Southern belle)
- Folder 17: Duncan, Fannie Casseday, 1844-1936. (Historian)
- Folder 18: Gratz, Marie Gist, 1797-1841. (Wife of Ben Gratz, early settler of Lexington)
- Folder 19: Gratz, Rebecca, 1781-1869. (Established first Hebrew Sunday school and Jewish foster home.)
- Folder 20: Hill, Mildred & Patty. (Educators and composers of "Happy Birthday" song)
- Folder 21: Ingram, Frances, 1875-1954. (Social worker, head resident of Neighborhood House settlement)
- Folder 22: Johnston, Annie Fellows, 1863-1931. (Author of "Little Colonel" series)
- Folder 23: Lincoln, Mary Todd, 1818-1882. (Wife of Abraham Lincoln)
- Folder 24: Lloyd, Alice, 1876-1962. (Educator)
- Folder 25: Marshall, Louise, 1888-1978. (Founder, Cabbage Patch Settlement House)
- Folder 26: Merritt, Mary, 1881-1953. (Nurse and social worker, Red Cross Hospital)
- Folder 27: Nation, Carry, 1846-1911. (Temperance advocate)
- Folder 28: Neville, Linda, 1873-1961. (Appalachian health crusader)
- Folder 29: Pickett, Alice, 1878-1971. (Physician, instructor at University of Louisville Medical School)
- Folder 30: Rice, Alice Hegan, 1870-1942. (Author, "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch.")
- Folder 31: Roberts, Elizabeth M., 1881-1941. (Author, "The Great Meadow.")

- Folder 32: Semple, Ellen Churchill, 1863-1933. (Anthropo-geographer)
- Folder 33: Semple, Patty Blackburn, 1853-1923. (Educator, founding member of the Woman's Club of Louisville.)
- Folder 34: Settle, Anna Hubbuch, 1888-1951. (Lawyer)
- Folder 35: Settle, Mary, 1836-1923. (Last surviving member of Pleasant Hill Shaker Colony)
- Folder 36: Shelby, Susannah Hart, 1761-1833. (Wife of first governor of Kentucky)
- Folder 37: Spaulding, Catherine, 1793-1858. (Founder, Sisters of Charity of Nazareth)
- Folder 38: Speed, Hattie Bishop, 1858-1942. (Art patron, philanthropist, founder of J. B. Speed Art Museum)
- Folder 39: Stewart, Cora Wilson, 1875-1958. (Educator, organizer of Kentucky's Moonlight Schools.)
- Folder 40: Tevis, Julia A., 1799-1880. (Educator, founder of Science Hill School for Girls.)
- Folder 41: Veech, Annie S. (Physician and child welfare advocate)
- Folder 42: Verhoeff, Carolyn, 1876-1975. (Founder of Humane Society)
- Folder 43: Wiley, Jenny, 1760-1831. (Pioneer heroine)
- Folder 44: Woerner, Emma J. (Educator)
- Folder 45: Yandell, Enid, 1870-1934. (Sculptor)

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**Subject Headings**

Actresses in art.  
African American women.  
African Americans in art.  
Art, American – 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Artists – Kentucky.  
Clothing and dress – Kentucky.  
Kentucky – Centennial celebrations, etc.  
Kentucky – History – 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Kentucky – History – 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Kentucky – History – 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Nurses in art.  
Painters – Kentucky.  
Painting – 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Physicians in art.  
Portrait painting – 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Women artists – Kentucky.  
Women in art.  
Women – Social life and customs.  
Women's clothing.