

The Filson Historical Society

**Mathis, Wallace G., 1904-1981
Cartoons, 1933-1941**

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

Size of Collection:

2 cubic feet (1188 items)

Location Number:

Mss. A M431

**Mathis, Wallace G., 1904-1981
Cartoons, 1933-1941**

Scope and Content Note

Collection contains 1187 original pen and ink cartoons drawn by Wallace G. Mathis, a cartoonist for Louisville's *Courier-Journal* newspaper from 1933-1941. Cartoons are single-paneled and feature a character named "Rollin' Stone." Rollin' Stone is a wandering vagabond who provides social commentary about local happenings. Mathis conveys humor through Rollin' Stone's witty and proverbial sayings. Rollin' Stone has a colloquial manner of speech and is fond of puns. Besides Rollin' Stone, the cartoons contain a few other recurring characters, including "Miss Gabby," a busybodied gossip, and "Ol' Titus," an elderly miser. The cartoons cover a range of subjects: marriage and relationships, small town gossip, poverty, shirking at work, distrust of the political process and politicians, and other topics. Mathis's drawings and style are reminiscent of Fontaine Fox's popular *Toonerville Folks* cartoons.

Cartoons have been arranged by subject. A few are dated; most are undated. The drawings are roughly 5 x 11 inches each. In addition to the originals, the collection also contains one clipping from the newspaper of published Rollin' Stone cartoons.

It is unlikely that this collection contains the complete set of Rollin' Stone cartoons published in the *Courier-Journal*.

This collection is a transfer from the Filson's museum collection and was formerly accession number 1987.29.

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Biographical Note

Wallace G. Mathis was born in 1904 in Collierville Tennessee to Col. Clark M. and Adaline Mathis. Mathis pursued a number of careers over the course of his life: teacher, cartoonist, banker, and lawyer.

Both of Mathis' parents were involved in education, a career path that he would also follow. Mathis's father, Col. Clark Mathis, was the president of Bellevue Female College in Collierville, Tennessee and of Castle Heights Military Academy in Lebanon, Tennessee. In 1925, the family relocated to Louisville, Kentucky where Col. Clark became the founder and president of Rugby University School, a private preparatory school for boys. Mathis's mother, Adaline, was a music teacher. Mathis also pursued a teaching career; he taught at Rugby University School for 18 years.

Mathis's interest in cartoons dates to his college years when he drew cartoons for Vanderbilt University's humor magazine and yearbook. In 1933, Mathis began publishing daily cartoons in Louisville's *Courier-Journal* newspaper. His single-panel cartoons depicted a character named "Rollin' Stone," who was described as a "philosophical tramp who commented on small-town happenings." The cartoons ran in the newspaper until 1941.

Mathis was also vice president and trust officer for Louisville's Citizens Fidelity Bank and Trust Co. He retired from this position in 1969 with the plan to take up the practice of law.

References: "Cartoonist-Banker may take up law." *Courier-Journal & Times*, 28 September 1969.

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Folder List

Box 1

- Folders 1-2: Cartoons about drinking, alcoholism, and whisky. (Items 1-30)
- Folder 3: Cartoons about money and business. (Items 31-53)
- Folders 4-5: Cartoons about crime, the law, and the judicial system. (Items 54-78)
- Folder 6: Cartoons about obesity. (Items 79-92)
- Folder 7: Cartoons about troubles with relatives. (Items 93-105)
- Folders 8-11: Cartoons about laziness, procrastination, and shirking at work. (Items 106-178)
- Folders 12-13: Cartoons about gossip, primarily by busy-bodied old women. (Items 179-211)
- Folders 14-15: Cartoons about politicians, politics, and elections. (Items 212-239)
- Folder 16: Cartoons about horseracing and the Kentucky derby. (Items 240-254)
- Folder 17: Cartoons about war/foreign relations. (Items 255-266)
- Folder 18: Cartoons about disciplining children. (Items 267-271)
- Folders 19-22: Cartoons about the Christmas & New Year's holidays. (Items 272-333)
- Folder 23: Cartoons about fighting and arguments. (Items 334-345)
- Folder 24: Cartoons about cigarette smoking. (Items 346-352)
- Folder 25: Cartoons about success and the rewards of hard work. (Items 353-360)
- Folder 26: Cartoons about bills, loans, and debt. (Items 361-380)
- Folder 27: Cartoons about pride and conceit. (Items 381-395)
- Folder 28: Cartoons about foolishness and stupidity. (Items 396-411)
- Folders 29-30: Cartoons about lying and deceitfulness. (Items 412-441)
- Folders 31-32: Cartoons about stinginess, frugality, and thriftiness. (Items 442-462)
- Folder 33: Cartoons about the 1937 flood. (Items 463-466)
- Folder 34: Cartoons about baldness. (Items 467-470)
- Folders 35-36: Cartoons about friendship. (Items 471-502)
- Folder 37: Cartoons about business and sales. (Items 503-511)
- Folders 38-39: Cartoons about poverty and money problems. (Items 512-545)
- Folder 40: Cartoons about the "good old days" and modern problems. (Items 546-559)
- Folders 41-42: Cartoons about teaching, education, and college. (Items 560-587)
- Folder 43: Cartoons about taxes. (Items 588-595)
- Folders 44-45: Cartoons about wealth, high society, and ancestry. (Items 596-626)

Box 2

- Folders 46-57: Cartoons about women, marriage, and relationships. (Items 627-814)
- Folders 58-76: Miscellaneous cartoons. (Items 815-1187)
- Folder 77: Newspaper clipping of published Rollin' Stone cartoons. (Item 1188)

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Subject Headings

Alcoholism – Caricatures and cartoons.
Caricatures and cartoons – Kentucky – Louisville.
Cartooning – Kentucky.
Christmas – Caricatures and cartoons.
Cigarettes in art.
Crime – Caricatures and cartoons.
Depressions – 1929.
Education – Caricatures and cartoons.
Floods – Kentucky – Louisville – 20th century.
Gossip – Caricatures and cartoons.
Heredity – Caricatures and cartoons.
Horse racing – Caricatures and cartoons.
Kentucky – Politics and government – 20th century.
Labor – Caricatures and cartoons.
Louisville (Ky.) – Wit and humor.
Marriage – Caricatures and cartoons.
Nostalgia – Caricatures and cartoons.
Obesity – Caricatures and cartoons.
Political cartoons.
Politicians – Caricatures and cartoons.
Poverty – Caricatures and cartoons.
Taxation – Caricatures and cartoons.
Thriftiness – Caricatures and cartoons.
United States – Politics and government – 1901-1953 – Caricatures and cartoons.
United States – Social life and customs – 20th century.