Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde Papers 1920-2001LSC.1945

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Online finding aid last updated 16 November 2017.
Title: Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde papers
Identifier/Call Number: LSC.1945
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 2.0 linear feet (5 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1920-2001
Abstract: Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde were both authors and lovers for over forty years. Their correspondence documents the changing political landscape of the twentieth century as well as their intellectual development and personal relationships. For most of their relationship Kent Hyde, a woman, passed as a man. This collections consists mostly of correspondence, but also includes unpublished novels, poetry, drawings, and interviews.
Language of Materials: Materials entirely in English.
Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.
Creator: Hyde, Kent
Creator: Reid, Ruth, 1903-1981
Conditions Governing Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde Papers (Collection 1945). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
Provenance/Source of Acquisition
Provenance unknown.
This collection is part of an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW) and the UCLA Library.
Sponsor
The June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive at UCLA is an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW) and the UCLA Library. These collections expand the pool of primary source materials available to researchers and to the community at large. This partnership was initiated by CSW and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to inventory, organize, preserve, and digitize more than eighty Mazer collections pertaining to lesbian and feminist activism and writings.
Processing Information
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UCLA Catalog Record ID: 6962909
Biography
Ruth Reid was born Ruth Hatch in Salem, Massachusetts in 1903. She was born to a conservative family and in her teenage years left to live with her half brother and his wife in Greenville, South Carolina. She attended the University of North Carolina to study literature. At the University of North Carolina she met a gentleman by the name of Edgar, a German Jewish professor of philosophy. They were married in 1926 and moved to Hamburg after Edgar secured a teaching position there. Ruth pursued her PhD but never finished. Edgar left Germany in 1933 as Hitler came to power, but Ruth stayed until 1934 and carried on an affair with a Jewish doctor named Dena.
Upon returning to the United States, Ruth began attending the Moody Bible Institute in North Carolina, eventually leaving to work as a missionary with Jewish immigrants in Cincinnati. After leaving missionary service she married a Mr. Reid and moved to Northern California with him and his sister in the late 1930's in order to take care of them. Shortly afterward she met Kent Hyde at Berkeley, where Hyde was working as a lab technician and Ruth was reading to blind students for extra
Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde lived in Berkeley, Santa Cruz, Fairfax, Oakland, and briefly in upstate New York. They had four years alone together before Kent’s mother moved in with them so that they could care for her. According to Ruth, Kent’s mother hated Ruth and refused to acknowledge their relationship as she was a Free Methodist. She lived with Ruth and Kent for fourteen years.

Despite the time period and location in which they lived, Ruth and Kent were not active participants in the gay movement. Ruth in fact has very few recollections of the time period related to gay activism or issues.

Kent Hyde identified as a communist for a brief time and so followed the activities of Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Throughout the 1950’s, Kent and Ruth owned and operated a weaving shop called Reid-Hyde Handweaving in San Francisco doing both piecework and wholesale bulk items. Ruth had learned weaving during her time in Germany and brought the skills to bear at a time when they were both out of work. Both Ruth and Kent wrote constantly. Kent was a poet, published as early as the 1920’s. Ruth never finished her novel.

In 1951, Kent had her first attack of rheumatoid arthritis, paralyzing her temporarily. She continued to suffer from it until her death in 1968. Ruth and Kent had been together for twenty nine years.

During Kent’s illness in the late 1950’s, Ruth began an affair with their close friend Ruth ‘Rudy’ Babcock, an occurrence which devastated Kent. Ruth and Rudy found an apartment together and Kent checked into a mental hospital in St. Helena. Upon her release, she moved in with Ruth and Rudy and shortly thereafter Ruth and Kent moved out again and found an apartment. The affair ended, but Rudy remained a friend to Ruth until her death in 1981. In her later years, Ruth became involved in the lesbian community. She worked on her writing in women’s writing groups and developed supportive circles in the Berkeley area. Although her work was never published in its entirety, her autobiography Dark Birth was published in excerpts in The Wild Iris, Gay Old Girls and In the Life. A version of Dark Birth, excerpted and with notes from Jacqueline Marie is available under the title Wife of a Lesbian.

1903 Ruth Reid born, Salem, MA.
1904 Kent Hyde born, Portland, OR.
1926 Ruth Reid moves to Hamburg.
1934 Ruth Reid returns to the United States, attends Moody Bible Institute.
1939 Kent Hyde and Ruth Reid meet in Berkeley.
1968 Kent Hyde dies.
1981 Ruth Reid dies.

Scope and Content
This collection includes the personal papers of three different individuals: Ruth Reid, Kent Hyde and Ruth ‘Rudy’ Babcock. Ruth Reid’s materials contain her unpublished manuscripts, letters, diary entries, and recordings of her readings and interviews. Kent Hyde’s materials include published work, unpublished work, and letters. Ruth ‘Rudy’ Babcock’s materials include letters, drawings, and unpublished collaborative work with Ruth Reid. The majority of the materials are photocopies.

Despite the time period and location in which they lived, Ruth and Kent were not active participants in the gay movement. Ruth in fact has very few recollections of the time period related to gay activism or issues. Included within the collection is a taped interview from 1981 conducted by the archivists at the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive. In it, Ruth states that Kent did not particularly like gays. She does recall two incidents in which Kent’s presentation drew attention to the couple, one in which they were confronted by the police and one in which their conservative neighbors had them under police surveillance. Much of the correspondence within the collection highlights political beliefs and exchanges over a range of topics, but never explicitly to do with gay and lesbian issues. Their consistent and rich correspondence with friends and family document their lives in detail including their tastes, opinions, political beliefs, and relationships with others.

Organization and Arrangement
This collection is organized in four series, primarily by type, therein chronologically:

Series 1: Ruth Reid: Works and Manuscripts
Series 2: Kent Hyde: Works and Manuscripts
Series 3: Ruth “Rudy” Babcock: Works and Manuscripts
Series 4: Correspondence

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. To review these audiovisual materials, you must notify the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk in advance of your visit.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Series 1: Ruth Reid: Works and Manuscripts circa 1934-1985

Scope and Content
Includes samples of Ruth Reid’s published and unpublished work including journal entries, poetry, and two copies of her unfinished novel *Dark Birth*. Also contains a recorded interview with Reid in which she discusses her relationship with Kent Hyde and her writing, among other topics.

Organization and Arrangement
Materials arranged by type and in chronological order therein, with undated materials at the end.

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Box 1, Folder 1  
*Women’s View of the Contemporary World* circa 1934-1973

Scope and Content
Journal entries spanning between 1934-1956 compiled into a work titled *Women's View of the Contemporary World*. Also includes photocopies of other short works handwritten and typed by Reid.

Box 1, Folder 2  
*Feminist Writers' Group* circa 1973

Scope and Content
Various of Reid’s writings from her time during the Feminist Writers’ Group. Includes short stories, poetry and notes.

Box 1, Folder 3  
"Kent and Ruth" 1985

Scope and Content
Published magazine article. Ruth’s story of the night she met Kent in Berkeley with photos, excerpted from Ruth Reid’s *Dark Birth* manuscript.

Box 1, Folders 4-5  
*Dark Birth* manuscript undated

Scope and Content
Ruth Reid’s unpublished *Dark Birth* manuscript. Marginal notes from the June L. Mazer collection suggest these photocopies were made in 1988.

Box 1, Folders 6-7  
*Dark Birth copy 2* undated

Scope and Content
Duplicate of Ruth Reid’s *Dark Birth* manuscript. This copy was created in 2001 according to marginal notes that accompany the June L. Mazer collection.

Box 1, Folder 8  
*Dark Birth Notes* undated

Scope and Content
Notes for *Dark Birth*. 
Series 1: Ruth Reid: Works and Manuscripts circa 1934-1985

Box 1, Folder 9
"Gertrude Stein: A Dialogue" undated
Scope and Content
Copy of an unpublished short story.

Box 2, Folders 1-2
Untitled manuscript undated
Scope and Content
Contains a photocopy of an annotated, untitled manuscript dedicated to Kent Hyde.

Box 2, Folder 3
Ruth Reid Interview 1981
Scope and Content
Two audio cassettes documenting an interview with Ruth Reid conducted by two
unnamed representatives of the June L. Mazer archive upon the donation of Ruth Reid's
materials.
General note
The interview covers much of Reid's time with Hyde including her own sense of gender
identity and the realities of "passing." It also covers her affair with Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock,
her excitement about new-found lesbian community in Berkeley, and her writing.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
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will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. To review these
audiovisual materials, you must notify the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference
Desk in advance of your visit.

Series 2: Kent Hyde: Works and Manuscripts circa 1926-1974
Scope and Content
Includes published and unpublished works by Kent Hyde, including a scrapbook, poetry, and
excerpts of her unfinished novel.
Organization and Arrangement
Materials arranged in chronological order with undated materials at the end.

Box 2, Folder 4
Poetry and Translations circa 1926-1974
Scope and Content
Assorted drafts and final incarnations of poetry as well as translations of others' work by
Kent Hyde.

Box 2, Folder 5
Works as Miss Elizabeth Hyde circa 1928-1935
Scope and Content
Contained is a newspaper article documenting Miss Elizabeth Hyde (Kent) and her
job as a teenager, shoe shiner, and poet. Also contained are published poems under both
the names Elizabeth and Kent Hyde.

Box 2, Folder 6
"Stranger from the North" 1933 May 14
Scope and Content
"Stranger from the North" and other poems, unpublished by Kent Hyde.

Box 2, Folder 7
Conceived in Liberty 1961
Scope and Content
Poetry collection titled Conceived in Liberty by Kent Hyde.

Box 2, Folder 8
In the Presence of Mine Enemies undated
Scope and Content
Excerpts from unfinished and unpublished novel In the Presence of Mine Enemies by Kent
Hyde.
**Series 2: Kent Hyde: Works and Manuscripts circa 1926-1974**

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**Box 2, Folder 9**

**Miracle of Time undated**

**Scope and Content**

Collection of poetry all aggregated under the title *Miracle of Time* by Kent Hyde.

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**Series 3: Ruth "Rudy" Babcock: Works and Manuscripts circa 1971-1977**

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**Box 2, Folder 11**

**Drawings circa 1971-1973**

**Scope and Content**

Included here are Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock's drawings made for Ruth Reid, some containing notes and letters.

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**Box 2, Folder 10**

**Poetry and Journal Entries circa 1973-1977**

**Scope and Content**

Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock's poetry and journal entries, unpublished.

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**Box 2, Folder 12**

**Short Stories undated**

**Scope and Content**

Short stories by Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock, unpublished.

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**Series 4: Correspondence circa 1942 - 1975 March 25**

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**Box 3, Folders 1-4**

**Correspondence: Assorted letters circa 1942 - 1975 March 25**

**Scope and Content**

Assorted materials, mostly correspondence to and from Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde and relatives, friends, and professional acquaintances. Also includes copies of letters between third parties, newspaper articles, a script written for Ruth "Rudy" Babcock and Betty "Biber," and poems, among other documents. Materials are arranged in chronological order, with undated materials at the end.

Correspondents include friends "Evelyn and Clayton," "Phyllis," "Marie," "Bernice," "Minnie," "Gertrude," "Blanche," "Adelaide," and "Toni," (last names unknown) as well as other friends and some business owners. The contents are separated into four folders as follows:

| Box 3, Folder 5 | **Correspondence: Kent and Ruth to Thelma and Otto Bulk, 1951-1955 1946 December 13 - 1958 January 2**  
Scope and Content  
Letters from Kent and Ruth to Thelma and Otto |
| Box 4, Box 3, Folders 6-8, Box 5, Folder 1 | **Correspondence: Kent and Ruth to Rudy and Biber 1950 January 1 - 1958 March 3**  
Scope and Content  
Correspondence between Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde and Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock and Betty 'Biber.' Letters from and to Ruth and Kent are interfiled in chronological order with undated materials at the end, Rudy and Biber's letters distinguished by cursive font.  
| Box 5, Folder 2 | **Correspondence: Kent to Milly 1951 July 16 - 1962 May 23**  
Scope and Content  
Letters from Kent to her cousin Millicent (referred to as Milly). |
| Box 5, Folders 3-4 | **Correspondence: Kent and Ruth to Flo 1948 July 26 - 1962 December 13**  
Scope and Content  
Letters to Flo from Kent Hyde and Ruth Reid. |
| Box 5, Folders 5-7 | **Correspondence: Kent and Ruth to Tommy and Paul 1951 January 30 - 1969 July 24**  
Scope and Content  
Letters from Ruth and Kent (written mostly by Kent) to friends Tommy and Paul who lived in Germany. Also includes translations of replies from Paul. The majority of these letters are addressed to either Tommy or Paul and were written concurrently. Correspondence is in chronological order, with letters to Tommy and Paul interfiled to reflect Ruth and Kent's concurrent correspondence with each. |
| Box 5, Folder 8 | **Correspondence: Ruth to Ivy Bulk, 1951-1955 1951 March 5 - 1973 April 20**  
Scope and Content  
Letters from Ruth to her friend Ivy. |