Guide to the Robinson Jeffers / Frank H. Armstrong Collection

Processed by Special Collections staff
Department of Special Collections
Davidson Library
University of California, Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA 93106
Phone: (805) 893-3062
Fax: (805) 893-5749
Email: special@library.ucsb.edu
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Collection number: Mss 53

Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara

Contact Information:
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- Davidson Library
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Santa Barbara, CA 93106
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Date Completed:
- 04 March 2003

Encoded by:
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Robinson Jeffers / Frank H. Armstrong Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1926-1980
Collection number: Mss 53
Creator: Jeffers, Robinson, 1887-1962
Extent: 1.5 linear feet (2 oversize boxes and 1 record container)
Repository: University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Dept. of Special Collections
Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010
Physical location: Boxes 1-2 (Del Sur Oversize); Box 3 (Annex 2)
Language: English.
Access Restrictions
None.
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Preferred Citation
Robinson Jeffers / Frank H. Armstrong Collection. Mss 53. Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.
Acquisition Information
Biography
The poet Robinson Jeffers was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1887. His father, a Presbyterian minister, saw to it that the young Jeffers received a classical education, tutoring him in Greek and Latin at an early age. The family spent a good deal of time in Europe as well, and Jeffers attended several boarding schools in France and Switzerland. In 1903, the family...
settled in Los Angeles, California, where Jeffers would soon graduate from Occidental College. In school, Jeffers began submitting his poems to student publications, and would continue to do so after entering graduate school at the University of Southern California. After a year of studying literature, however, he returned to Switzerland to study philosophy at the University of Zurich.

Around this time, Jeffers met Una Kuster, a woman three years older and married to a prominent Los Angeles attorney. As their friendship deepened over the next few years, they would discover intellectual and emotional connections that led them to fall in love. Jeffers returned from Zurich to enter medical school at USC. He soon dropped out and enrolled in the forestry program at the University of Washington in Seattle. After a year, however, he abandoned this course as well and returned to Los Angeles and Una. Throughout, he had continued to write poetry, mainly derivative love poems to Una that he had privately printed in 1911 under the title Flagon and Apples. Finally, in 1913, Una was divorced from her husband and immediately married Jeffers. They moved to Carmel and started a family.

Robinson Jeffers’ first commercially published work, Californians, came in 1916, but his reputation did not begin to develop until he found his true voice in Tamar and Other Poems (1924). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Jeffers’ reputation grew as he explored the philosophy he termed “Inhumanism,” which held that humanity needed to recognize that it held little significance compared with the beauty of the universe. He began to fall from favor during World War II, and his career was in decline when Una died of cancer in 1950. Jeffers remained at “Tor House,” the rugged retreat on the California coast they had lived at for more than thirty years, until his death in 1962.

Frank H. Armstrong began to collect the works of Robinson Jeffers in 1930, when he was a sophomore at Yale, and within a decade had acquired most of what was available to the public. Hoping to find rare books or manuscript materials, he opened a correspondence with Una Jeffers in 1943. Born in 1910 in Winnetka, Illinois, Frank was the son of Horace Armstrong, chairman of the board of the giant Chicago canned goods corporation Reid-Murdock & Company. After graduating from Yale and attending the Sorbonne in Paris, Frank Armstrong received a law degree from Michigan Law School in 1936. He then moved to Los Angeles to work as an attorney for the firm of Mitchell, Silberberg, Roth & Knupp. After the United States entered World War II, Armstrong worked as a civilian assistant to the Army in Washington D.C., before moving back to Winnetka. Later, he returned to California, and settled in Palm Springs with his family. His mother moved to Santa Barbara, as did his sister Jean when she married book collector and author Edwin Corle. When he died in 1969, Frank Armstrong was buried in Santa Barbara Cemetery, and his mother and sister donated his Robinson Jeffers collection to UCSB.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection contains three portfolios, with correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, magazines, and various pieces of ephemera related to Robinson Jeffers, such as announcements, broadsides, flyers, and handbills, as well as three large matted photographic portraits. The bulk of the correspondence is between Una Jeffers and Frank Armstrong. Also included is a bust of Jeffers by Gordon Newell, an admirer and friend of Jeffers.

Signed, first editions by Jeffers, some also donated by Jean (Mrs. Edwin) Corle, have been cataloged separately and may be searched on Pegasus, the UCSB University Libraries online catalog. Included is a limited edition (no. 6 of 15) bibliography printed in 1933 by the Walpole Printing House. There also are fine press items such as Apology for Bad Dreams, printed on a hand press by Ward Ritchie in Paris, 1930, in a limited edition of only 30 copies.

Related Materials
At UCSB:
Dame Judith Anderson Collection (PA Mss 6), with material on Jeffers' translation of Medea, which he wrote specifically for the actress.

At other institutions:
Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr. 5, 1938.</td>
<td>1 ALS, Ward Ritchie to Frank Armstrong, describing &quot;The Apology for Bad Dreams.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 9, 1939.</td>
<td>1 TLS, Lawrence Clark Powell to Jake Zeitlin, discussing Jeffers' poems &quot;The Cloud&quot; and &quot;Pelicans.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 16, 1943.</td>
<td>1 ALS, Una Jeffer to Mr. Abramson, offering &quot;Rock and Hawk&quot; and &quot;One Sundown&quot; [&quot;Winter Sundown&quot;] for a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract: [Gives the history of &quot;Rock and Hawk.&quot; Makes an offer of seven other items. The poet is writing; she doesn't know what. Remarks on the troubled times and his difficulty in writing steadily.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 31, 1943.</td>
<td>1 TL, Frank Armstrong to Una Jeffer, suggesting a price for the offered books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug. 4, 1943.</td>
<td>1 ALS, Una Jeffer to Frank Armstrong, commenting on manuscript of &quot;Winter Sundown&quot; poem. Going to San Francisco for the first time in nine months (before went &quot;at least once a month&quot;).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug. 13, 1943.</td>
<td>1 ALS, Una Jeffer to Frank Armstrong, regarding sale of further items.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract: [Mentions a &quot;box of things&quot; upstairs. Maurice Evans has called Garth in the Pacific for Judith Anderson. Melba Bennett, biographer, has a house nearby for month; Jeffer disinterested. Una traces family back to 1636. Prefers careful, if colorless record, for biography.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug. 30, 1943.</td>
<td>[Frank Armstrong] to Una Jeffer, commenting on Jeffer items, support for biography, and trip to Ireland where he visited Cuala press and met Yeats' sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. 10, 1943.</td>
<td>1 ALS, Una Jeffer to Frank Armstrong, writing of trip to Ireland.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract: [No manuscripts available at present. RJ keeps manuscripts of books intact. Whitney has RS, WPS, C, DJ, and TL through Ruder, a New York bookseller. They still have <em>Solstice</em> (151 pages), <em>Such Counsels</em>, and <em>Be Angry at the Sun</em>, valued at $500 each. <em>Cruel Falcon</em> and <em>Distant Rainfall</em> lent to exhibit and stolen. <em>Give Your Heart</em> misplaced. Two blimps constantly over today. Landing boats practicing in front of Tor House.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[1943].</td>
<td>1 TLS, Frank Armstrong to Una Jeffer, referring to Jeffer books he received from her.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract: [Says he started collecting husband's books in 1930, when he was a college sophmore. Will send a portrait (side view) of the Jeffer bust by Archie Garner.]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jeffer next to Davidson bronze bust, n.d.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>With Una in boat, Co. Mayo, Ireland, 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yeats' tower, Co. Galway, Ireland, July 1937.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 newscipping &quot;Columbia to Film Two Jeffer Poems,&quot; namely &quot;Roan Stallion&quot; and &quot;Thurso's Landing.&quot; N.p., n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Box 1: 2</td>
<td>Red Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abstract: [Various ephemera relating to Jeffer, arranged chronologically]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Announcement in <em>Southern California Daily Trojan</em> (USC) that Robinson Jeffer to be present at the Phi Beta Kappa initiation ceremonies, Apr. 25, 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Material laid in Jeffer books (mainly clippings of reviews), 1940-1948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 1: 3  

**Green Portfolio**  
Abstract: [Mainly whole issues of magazines and newspapers in which Jeffers items appeared, arranged chronologically]

Box  
Jeffers, Robinson - "Noon" (poem), *The New Republic*, July 21, 1926  
Box  
Harrowed Marrow (cover story, review of Jeffers' book *Thurso's Landing*), *Time*, April 4, 1931  
Box  
Robinson Jeffers Honored by College from which He Graduated 30 Years Ago (article on commemoration at Occidental College), *The Carmel Pine Cone*, May 3, 1935  
Box  
Masters, Marcia - "From the hands of World-Famed Poet" (cover story on Jeffers and Tor House), *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday Home Magazine, Feb. 2, 1947  
Box  
Older, Mrs. Fremont - "He Built Her a Tower" (article on Jeffers and his wife Una), *American Weekly*, February 25, 1951  
Box  
look only: seclusion (article on Jeffers and Tor House), *Los Angeles Times*, Sunday Home Section, July 20, 1958  

Series 2  

**Oversize**  

Box 2: 1  
1 b/w photograph of Robinson Jeffers (inscription on back to Dame Judith Anderson, from Cole Weston; notes negative by Edward Weston and print by Cole Weston), 1933  
Box 2: 2  
2 b/w photographs of Robinson Jeffers, by Leigh A. Wiener (gift of Dame Judith Anderson)  
Box 3  
Bust of Robinson Jeffers, by Gordon Newell, n.d.  

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