Guide to the Idwal Jones Collection, 1920-1964

Collection number: Mss 55

Department of Special Collections

Davidson Library
University of California, Santa Barbara

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Idwal Jones Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1920-1964
Collection number: Mss 55
Creator: Jones, Idwal
Extent: 1 linear foot (2 boxes)
Repository: University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Dept. of Special Collections
Santa Barbara, CA 93106
Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.
Language: English.

Acquisition Information
Purchase, 1965

Restrictions
None.

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Biography
Idwal Jones was born on December 8, 1890 in Festiniog in northern Wales. His father was an engineer and geologist who in 1902 brought the family to the slate-quarrying region of Pennsylvania. He later became the Inspector of Mines for the State of New York. The younger Jones was not sent to school in Pennsylvania due to health concerns, but continued his education at home with tutors. He later studied mechanical engineering in New York and for a time worked as a mechanic for Charles Proteus Steinmetz, the famed electrical engineer whose theories regarding electrical current revolutionized the field. At other times in his life, Jones worked in slate quarries and factories and as a rancher and prospector in California.

In 1915 Jones began his career in journalism, writing book reviews for the San Francisco Chronicle. His first full-time job as a writer was with the San Francisco Daily News where he served as a drama critic. His preparation for this assignment had been his work with a small theater company where, among other things, he constructed background scenery. He also worked for the San Francisco Examiner where he wrote feature stories and editorials and covered the 1926 gold rush in Weepah, Nevada. Jones traveled extensively in Europe and Central America and lived in Rome and Paris where he worked as a foreign correspondent. In 1930 he returned to New York where he worked as an editor and columnist for the New York American while serving at the same time as a book critic for Life magazine.

In 1926 Jones published his first novel, The Splendid Shilling. Set in the days of the California Gold Rush, its central character's adventures take him from Wales to America. Like many of Jones' fictional works, its settings, locales and themes followed the varied experiences of the author's own life. China Boy and Other Stories (1936) first appeared in the American Mercury, edited by H. L. Mencken, who commented enthusiastically on Jones' work. A number of Jones' short stories have been reprinted in anthologies. Black Bayou (1941), set in the swamps of Louisiana, has an undercurrent rooted in the mysticism of Saint Teresa of Ávila and the struggle of the spirit in a world of turmoil. The Vineyard (1942 and reissued in 1997), is centered on the grape industry in northern California, and High Bonnet (1945) which humorously describes the world of a Parisian chef, demonstrate other areas of Jones' interest and expertise. An accomplished chef renowned for his cordon bleu cuisine and Epicurean knowledge, Jones was active in various food and wine societies. He maintained a lively correspondence with M. F. K. Fisher who first learned of Jones via one of his many magazine articles. She incorporated some of his suggestions regarding cookbooks and others things gastronomic into her own work. Jones' later works include Vermilion (1947), dealing with a California mercury mine, and Ark of Empire: San Francisco's Montgomery Block (1951), which portrayed post gold rush California through the microcosm of the famous edifice and the denizens whose lives intersected with it. These included Robert Louis Stevenson, Ambrose Bierce, and Jack London.

Jones continued to write numerous articles on California geology, folklore and viticulture and maintained an active interest in these areas throughout his life. He also was active in societies devoted to Gypsy lore and Welsh culture and maintained his life-long interest in wine and gastronomy both as a connoisseur and a writer. Jones died at his home in Laguna Beach, California on November 14, 1964.

Scope and Content

The collection contains the following series:

I. Writings
II. Correspondence
III. Ephemera
IV. Oversize

At UCSB

The manuscript materials are part of a larger collection, which formed Jones' library and which was purchased from him in 1965. The books have been cataloged separately and may be searched in Pegasus, the UCSB Library online catalog.

Title: Isaac Foot Collection

At other repositories

UCLA.

Title: Idwal Jones Papers,
1936-1950. 2 linear feet (4 boxes).
I. Writings

Monographs

Box 1, Folder 1
Bridges of Yesterday (typescript for Westways magazine article), 1964

Box 1, Folder 2
Man with Camera (typescript for Westways?), 1964

Box 1, Folder 3
Mr. Sheriff Hays (typescript for Westways? Subject is related to Jones’ Ark of Empire), n.d.

Box 1, Folder 4
Published Articles, 1938-1953

Box 1, Folder 5
Research Material (letters/notes pertaining to research projects including several related to a planned work on trade with Polynesia), 1949-1962, n.d.

II. Correspondence (all incoming except as noted)

Box 1, Folder 6
Beston, Henry-1 ALS, 7 June 1938

Box 1, Folder 7
Cleland, Robert G.-1 TLS, 28 Aug. 1947

Box 1, Folder 8
Crahan, Marc-2 TLS, 22 Apr. 1958 and 3 Mar. 1960

Box 1, Folder 9
Douglas, Norman-2 ALS, 19 Jan. 1928 and 28 July 1959; 1 AL, (partial), n.d., and miscellaneous clippings

Box 1, Folder 10
Field, Isobel-1 ANS, n.d.; also photograph of RLS and assorted items related to RLS

Box 1, Folder 11
Fisher, Mary Francis Kennedy (MFK)-1 ALS, 11 Jan. 1940; 10 TLS, 1940-1963; 1 TL, to MFK from Roy Alciatore, 23 Sept. 1941

Box 1, Folder 12
Huxley, Aldous-1 ALS, 19 Oct. 1937

Box 1, Folder 13
Jones, Dilys-1 TL to DJ from Patrice Manahan, 23 May 1950; 1 TLS, 31 Jan. 1956

Box 1, Folder 14
Lewis, Wyndham-1 ALS, n.d.

Box 1, Folder 15
Morley, S. Griswald-1 TLS, 3 July 1946; 1 ANS, (card postmarked 1 Aug. 1946)

Box 1, Folder 16
Rottleb, Ilse-1 ALS (in German), 23 Dec. 1956

Box 1, Folder 17
Sterling, George-1 ALS, 21 June 1920; 1 ADS (poem), n.d.

Box 1, Folder 18
Stewart, George R.-2 TLS, 2 July 1946 and 7 Sept. 1946

Box 1, Folder 19
Warde, Frederick (to Grace Frye)-1 ALS, 17 Jan. 1924 and 1ANS (card to all Fryes), 22 [Dec. ?] 1926

III. Ephemera

Box 1, Folder 20
Clippings (includes several reviews and articles by Jones, and other items relating to subjects of food and wine, California history, and Gypsies)

Box 1, Folder 21
"The Welsh Concert" - program from Carnegie Hall, 19 Nov. 1937

IV. Oversize

Box 2, Folder 1
Literary manuscripts [unidentified fragments]

Box 2, Folder 2
Daily Post Friday Supplement [In and About Wales], 1961

Box 2, Folder 3-4

Box 2, Folder 5
Photograph of George Sterling and Gustav Franign, taken by Jones, 1922