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

Finding aid prepared by Stacy Wood, 2011; Sabrina Ponce, 2017; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

UCLA Library Special Collections

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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 This collections consists mostly of correspondence, but also includes unpublished novels, poetry, drawings, and interviews.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

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

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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

Processed by Stacy Wood, 2011. Description enhanced and further physical processing completed by Sabrina Ponce in 2017.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

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

money.

Ruth and Kent 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

Hyde, Kent -- Archives.
June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive at UCLA.
June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives.
Reid, Ruth, 1903-1981 -- Archives.
Authors, American--20th century--Archives.

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.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

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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*.

- 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
 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.
- 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.
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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.

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

Scope and Content

Contains Ruth "Rudy" Babcock's unpublished drawings, poetry, short stories, and other materials.

Organization and Arrangement

Materials arranged in chronological order with undated materials at the end.

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.

Box 2, Folder 10

Poetry and Journal Entries circa 1973-1977

Scope and Content

Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock's poetry and journal entries, unpublished.

Box 2, Folder 12

Short Stories undated

Scope and Content

Short stories by Ruth 'Rudy' Babcock, unpublished.

Series 4: Correspondence circa 1942 - 1975 March 25

Scope and Content

Contains photocopies of correspondence to and from Ruth Reid and Kent Hyde (therein addressed as Ruth and Kent) to their family, friends, and professional acquaintances. These letters document Ruth and Kent's relationship, Ruth's affair with Ruth "Rudy" Babcock, Kent's illness and death, and other significant events in their lives. Folder titles reflect the familiarity and affection with which Ruth and Kent addressed their family and friends.

Organization and Arrangement

Ruth and Kent wrote simultaneously to several friends, relatives, and professional acquaintances. The first file in this series consists of such letters interfiled chronologically. Subsequent files are separated by correspondent and arranged chronologically.

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:

Folder 1: circa 1942 - 1952 December 8 Folder 2: 1953 January 13 - 1954 December 22
Folder 3: 1955 January 5 - 1959 December 14 Folder 4: 1960 January 28 - 1975 March 25

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.

Folder 1: 1950 January 1 - 1956 January 25 Folder 2: 1955 March 31 - 1956 May 14 Folder 3: 1956 May 15 - 1956 December 10 Folder 4: 1956 January 2 - 1956 August 5 (annotations) Folder 5: 1956 August 5 - 1956 October 30 (annotations) Folder 6: 1956 November 4 - 1956 December 29 (annotations) Folder 7: 1957 January 22 - 1957 February 28 Folder 8: 1957 March 1 - 1957 April 30 Folder 9: 1957 May 1 - 1957 December 30 (annotations) Folder 10: 1957 May 1 - 1958 March 3

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.