

Finding Aid for Collection of letters to Kyle Crichton from leftist activists, screenwriters, novelists, literary critics, fans, etc., [1927]-1960.

Berg Coll m.b. (Crichton, K) A.l.s. to Kyle Crichton from activists and writers

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Descriptive Summary

Title

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Call Number

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Size

172 items.

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Biography

Kyle Crichton (1896-1960) was a noted fiction writer, playwright, and leftist political columnist and commentator whose career flourished from the late 1920s through the 1940s. He was an editor at Collier's, a magazine that featured short fiction and leftist political news analysis, and a columnist for The New

Masses, a Communist weekly. He also published biographies of the New Mexico sheriff Elfego Baca and of the Marx Brothers. He wrote his political articles under the pen name "Robert Forsythe."

Biographies of Contributors

Elfego Baca (1864-1945) was a famous member of the last generation of Old West gunfighters and sheriffs, a profession he initially adopted as a young man in the 1880s in order to protect the life and safety of Mexican-Americans in New Mexico. His reputation for bravery and relentlessness led to his election as sheriff of Socorro County, in which capacity he served 1919-1920. He later became a detective, prominent lawyer, and political figure in the state, serving as District Attorney for Socorro and Sierra counties 1905-1906, and running unsuccessfully for Governor in 1934. From 1913 to 1916, he served as the official representative in the U.S. of Victorio Huerta's Mexican revolutionary government. Kyle Crichton wrote an admiring biography of Baca, titled *Law and Order, Ltd.: The Rousing Life of Elfego Baca of New Mexico* (Santa Fe: New Mexican Publishing Co., [1928]).

Jacob Baker was Assistant Administrator for the Works Progress Administration.

Alvah Bessie was a screenwriter and novelist who was blacklisted in Hollywood during the purge of Communists and leftists in the 1950s.

George Boehm (1897-1938), a Croatian-born, Jewish immigrant to the U.S., was an artist, Spanish teacher, and interpreter. In February 1937, he sailed from New York to Spain in order to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a military unit composed of American volunteers who fought to preserve the Republican government against the Fascists during the Spanish Civil War. Boehm was killed at the Battle of Ebreo, July 20, 1938. His papers are housed in New York University's Tamiment Library.

John Malcolm Brinnin (1916-1998) was an American poet and literary critic.

Alistair Cooke (1908-2004) was a British-born journalist and television commentator, who became best known as host of PBS's *Masterpiece Theater*, 1971-1992. In 1936, he became the interpreter of British life to large American audiences through his weekly, fifteen-minute program, *London Letter*. The following year he moved to America, and in 1941 he became a U.S. citizen. In

1952, he became the host of CBS Television's Omnibus, the first commercial television program dedicated to the arts.

Belinda Jelliffe was one of ten children born into an impoverished family living on a North Carolina tobacco farm. She became a friend of famed novelist Thomas Wolfe in 1933, and herself became a short-story writer and the author of the semi-autobiographical novel *For Dear Life* (New York: Scribner's, 1936).

Horace McCoy wrote several novels set in the Great Depression, the most famous of which is *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (1935), about a marathon dance contest. In his letter to Crichton, McCoy complains that Crichton has wronged him in his book review by alleging that McCoy plagiarized the book's idea from James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934). McCoy states that he wrote his novel in 1931.

Elizabeth Nowell was the American novelist Thomas Wolfe's last editor.

George Seldes (1890-1995) was a leftist investigative journalist who wrote for United Press and the Chicago Tribune. Most of his career was spent as a freelance journalist, in which capacity he covered the Spanish Civil War. He also criticized the Roman Catholic Church for its alleged support of Fascist regimes.

Helen Seldes assisted her husband, George, in writing *Facts and Fascism* (1943).

Vincent Sheean was a writer for the *Daily News* (1920-1922), during which period he lived in Greenwich Village, where he became associated with prominent radical leftists. In the early 1920s, he became the foreign correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and settled in Paris, where he became a friend of the American novelist Ernest Hemingway. He was an ardent anti-Fascist and covered the Spanish Civil War for the New York Herald Tribune. At the beginning of the Second World War, he covered the Blitz, from London, for the Saturday Evening Post.

Lee Simonson (1888-1967) was an architect, painter, and set designer.

Robert Smeltzer was an aspiring writer whose letter to Crichton, accompanied by a short-story he wrote (not present) to which he refers, was posted from his U.S. Rangers unit in France, five weeks after D-Day.

Dudley Smith was a New Mexico cowboy and gunfighter who emigrated to England, where he became the Boy Scouts District Commissioner for South Herefordshire.

Donald Ogden Stewart (1894-1980) was an author and screenwriter who won an Academy Award for *The Philadelphia Story* (1940). He was also the model for "Bill Gorton," one of the chief characters in Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Blacklisted in 1950, Stewart and his wife, Ella Winter (widow of Lincoln Steffens, the leftist reforming journalist), moved to England.

Herbert Bayard Swope was a three-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Reporting, and a member of the New York literary circle the Algonquin Round Table, which gathered at the Algonquin Hotel. He spent most of his career at the *New York World*.

500: **Robert Lewis Taylor** (1912-1998) was a novelist and *New Yorker* profiles writer who won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1959 for his 1958 novel *The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters*. He wrote as well for the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader's Digest*.

Ella Winter (nee Wertheimer), widow of Donald Ogden Stewart, married Lincoln Steffens (1866-1936), a leftist reforming journalist who wrote for the *New York Evening Post* and became an editor of McClure's magazine. He specialized in investigative journalism, exposing political corruption in city governments across the U.S. After covering the Mexican Revolution in 1910, he became an advocate of revolution as the means for achieving social justice and became a Communist; by 1931 he had left the Party. Winter edited his letters and was herself an author and novelist.

Art Young (1866-1943) was an American Socialist cartoonist and writer and long-time resident of Greenwich Village. He is best known for the cartoons he drew for the Socialist paper *The Masses*, the predecessor of *The New Masses*, for which Kyle Crichton was a columnist.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of autograph and typescript correspondence sent to Kyle Crichton by various leftist activists, screenwriters, novelists, literary critics, fans, etc., between 1927 and 1960. The collection also contains various typescripts, clippings, and offprints of one of Crichton's pamphlets.

Incoming Correspondence

- Albee, George Sumner ALS to Crichton: Hollywood, [n.d.], 2 p. (1 leaf)
- Baca, Elfego TLS to Crichton: Albuquerque, NM, May 2, 1933, 1 p.

With: ALS from Eugene M. Rhodes to Crichton: Albuquerque, NM, May 14, [1928], 1 p., with stamped, uncanceled envelope
Typed blurb by Rhodes, with autograph instruction, for dust jacket of Crichton's biography (Law and Order) of Baca, 1 p.
2 ALS from Rhodes to Crichton's editor, "Miss Ferguson": Albuquerque, NM, May 8, 1928, and May 14, [1928], 1 p. each
Typescript, "One of Elfego Baca's Sarcastic Tricks," unsigned and undated, 3 p.
- Baker, Jacob TLS to Crichton: Washington, D.C., July 18, 1935, 1 p.
TLS to Crichton: Washington, D.C., July 29, 1935, 1 p.
- Bessie, Alvah Cecil 79 TLS, 2 ALS to Crichton: mainly from Londonderry, VT, Dec. 13, 1932-1938, with one postage-cancelled envelope from Feb. 18, 1933
- Boehm, George ALS to Crichton: Barcelona, Jan. 17, [1937?], 2 p. (1 leaf)
- Brinnin, John Malcolm TLS to Crichton: Detroit, Aug. 6, 1935, 1 p.
- Byus, George A. TLS to Crichton: Gallup, NM, July 29, 1928, 2 p. (1 leaf)
- Cooke, Alistair TLS to Crichton: London, Oct. 22, 1936, 1 p.
- Crawford, Frances E. ALS to Crichton: [n.p.], Jan. 27, 1932, 2 p. (1 leaf)

Edith [no last name]	TLS to Crichton: [n.p.], June 28, 1933, 3 p. (2 leaves)
Endore, S. Guy	ALS to Crichton: [n.p.], Aug. 6, 1933, 2 p.
Etis, Ray	TLS to Crichton: New York, July 29, 1935, 1 p., on Curtis Brown stationery With: Publishing editor's typescript evaluation of Crichton's play, <i>Marriage or Else</i> , 2 p. (1 leaf)
Fitzgerald, Edward S.	TLS to Crichton: Bridgewater, CT, [mid 1930s?], 2 p. (1 leaf)
Fuchs, Daniel	TLS to Crichton: "I don't know where I am," Apr. 20, 1937, 1 p.
Gilman, Mildred Evans	TLS to Crichton: "Friday," [mid-1930s?], 2 p.
Gold, Michael	TLS to Crichton: Los Angeles, [n.d.], 2 p. (1 leaf) TLS to Crichton: Los Angeles, [n.d.], 2 p. (1 leaf) TLS to Crichton: Santa Fe, NM, [July 13, mid 1930s], 2 p. (1 leaf)
Gould, Joe	TLS to Crichton: New York, Aug. 11, 1936, 1 p. ALS to Crichton: New York, Aug. 6, 1943, 2 p. (1 leaf), with typed transcription
Horgan, Paul	TLS to Crichton: Roswell, [NM], Aug. 4, 1933, 1 p.
Hubbard, Wynant Davis	ALS to Crichton: Namwala, Northern Rhodesia [Zambia], Feb. 5, 1933, 8 p. (4 leaves) ALS to Crichton: Namwala, Northern Rhodesia [Zambia], Jan. 23, 1934, 5 p. (3 leaves)
Jelliffe, Belinda	TLS to Crichton: Huletts Landing, NY, Sept. 3, [1936?], 1 p.

Keating, Fred	TLS to Crichton: Hollywood, “Wed.” [mid 1930s], 3 p. (2 leaves)
Kober, Arthur	TLS to Crichton: New York, Oct. 15, 1935, 1 p.
Lewis, Isabel F.	TLS to Crichton: [n.p.], Oct. 10, [1935], 1 p.
McCoy, Horace	TLS to Crichton: Hollywood, “Wednesday” [1935], 1 p.
McKenna, Edward L.	ALS to Crichton: [n.p.], Aug. 11, 1935, 1 p.
MacLeish, Archibald	TLS to Crichton: New York, Oct. 18, 1935, 1 p.
Malling, Agnes Bright	TLS to Ted Shane, book reviewer for <i>Judge</i> magazine: Pasadena, CA, Oct. 22, 1935, 2 p. (2 leaves)
Malraux, André	TLS to Crichton: Paris, [1935?], 2 p. (1 leaf) TLS to Crichton: Paris, Apr. 21, [1960?], 1 p. With: TLS from M. Brandin, Malraux’s secretary, to Crichton: Paris, Feb. 1, 1960, 1 p.
Nowell, Elizabeth	TLS to Crichton: New Bedford, [CT], Wednesday [Sept. 1938?], 1 p.
Pense, Arthur	TLS to Crichton: Bronx, NY, Oct. 15, 1935, 1 p.
Rice, Elmer	TLS to Crichton: New York, Nov. 20, 1934, 1 p. TLS to Crichton: New York, Oct. 26, 1935, 1 p. on MGM stationery
Schuster, M. Lincoln	TLS to Crichton: New York, July 30, 1935, 1 p.
Searle, Ronald	Autograph note to May and Kyle Crichton: [London, n.d.], in printed Christmas card with printed drawing by Searle, 1 card

Seldes, Helen	8 TLS and 1 ALS to Crichton: London and Paris, Dec. 25, 1936-Apr. 17, 1937, most letters addressed to “Kyle and May” from “George and Helen”
Sheean, Vincent	10 TLS to Crichton: Naples, Salerno, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Toulon, Geneva, etc., Nov. 6, [1935]-Oct. 4 [1936?]
Sherwood, Robert E.	ALS to Crichton: [n.p.], Apr. 14, 1930, 1 p.
Simonson, Lee	ALS to Crichton: New York, May 21, 1935, 2 p. (1 leaf) ALS to Crichton: Westport, NY, June 30, 1935, 1 p.
Smeltzer, Robert	TLS to Crichton: [n.p.], July 18, 1944, 1 p.
Smith, Dudley	ALS to Crichton: South Herefordshire, Nov. 27, 1928, 6 p. (3 leaves), regarding Elfego Baca
Stewart, Donald Ogden	Telegram to Crichton: Culver City, CA, Nov. 5, 1935, 1 p., annotated and signed TLS to Crichton: Culver City, CA, Apr. 12, 1937, 1 p.
Stewart, Mary	ALS to Crichton: New Britain, CT, Oct. 3, [1927?], 2 p. (1 leaf) With: Typed tribute to John Lammey Stewart from the June, 1927 bulletin (“The Nudge”) of his college class, University of Pennsylvania 1889, 1 p.
Swope, Herbert Bayard	TLS to Crichton: New York, July 31, 1935, 1 p.
Sullivan, Frank	TLS to Crichton: Saratoga, NY, Aug. 13, [mid-1930s], 1 p.
Taylor, Robert Lewis	TLS to Crichton: Ridgefield, CT, [late 1940s?], 2 p. (1 leaf)

- Winter, Ella 4 TLS and 1 ALS: Carmel, CA, Nov. 9, [1935]-Aug. 21, [1936], with final letter signed "Peter," Winter's son
- Young, Art ALS to Crichton: Bethel, CT, Aug. 27, 1935, 1 p.
ALS to Crichton: Bethel, CT, Jan. 25, 1938, 1 p.
ALS to Crichton: Mount Pocono, PA, Dec. 28, 1939, 1 p., with two caricatures of young woman in profile wearing slouch hat, and with *NY Times* obituary of Art Young

Additional Materials

Unsigned typescript of humorously insulting poem, "For Kyle Crichton," with occasional manuscript corrections in pen and pencil

Clippings, including Sunday Gazette and Telegraph (Colorado Springs), Apr. 29, 1928, article attacking Kyle Crichton for recent article of General Zebulon Montgomery Pike in Scribner's Magazine; and a group of clippings on Kyle Crichton in postage cancelled envelope (July 12, 1935) from Herb Klein of the New Theatre

3 copies of offprint of Kyle Crichton's (written under his pen name, Robert Forsythe), pamphlet *The World Gone Mad* (New York: New Masses, 1936)