

THE CHARLES FAULKNER BRYAN COLLECTION

Arranged and described by Molly Dohrmann

Autumn 2007

MSS # 058

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Jean and Alexander Heard Library

Vanderbilt University

419 21st. Avenue South

Nashville, Tennessee 37240

Telephone: (615) 322-2807

Biographical Note

Charles Faulkner Bryan was born in McMinnville, Tennessee on July 26, 1911. He became one of Tennessee's most important musicians, composers, and collectors of folk music, and he had a career as a music educator most notably at Tennessee Polytechnic Institute and at George Peabody College for Teachers. While at Peabody he and George Pullen Jackson co-authored a textbook for the teaching of music in the schools. In 1946 Bryan studied with Paul Hindemith at Yale on a Guggenheim Fellowship. There he began and completed his famous work *The Bell Witch Cantata* which had its premier at Carnegie Hall in 1947 under the direction of Robert Shaw. Bryan incorporated black spirituals, white spirituals, and Appalachian folk tunes masterfully in his work, and he is known especially for *The White Spiritual Symphony* (1942) and the folk opera *Singin' Billy* (1952) On this he worked with Fugitive poet and Agrarian and Vanderbilt professor Donald Davidson, and much of the correspondence in this collection relates to this cooperative venture between Bryan and Davidson. In the last years of his life he was Master of Music at Indian Springs School in Alabama. He died suddenly on July 7, 1955 at the age of 43 leaving an important legacy of understanding of American folk lore and culture through his work as a musician and teacher. He was married to Edith Hillis in 1935, and they had two children, Betty Lynn and Charles, Jr. In Warren County Tennessee in the park in front of the courthouse there is an historical marker which honors Bryan's achievements and reads:

"A native of Warren County, Bryan was a pioneer in the study of American folk music. Through his talented efforts this distinctively American form of musical expression gained worldwide fame and appreciation. He worked closely with the people of the Southern mountains and coves in the study of this music, but his work earned a permanent place of honor and distinction in the highest ranks of academic and scholarly achievement. Presented in his memory by a grateful community."

Scope and Content Note

This collection is .42 linear feet, one Hollinger box, of materials relating to Charles Faulkner Bryan and it includes photocopies of correspondence between Bryan and Donald Davidson, with whom he collaborated on the musical *Singin' Billy*. Also in this collection is sheet music of pieces by Bryan and includes the *Songs for Children Series*, the *Bell Witch Secular Folk Cantata*, *Tennessee Folk Songs* and other music by Bryan. There are two 8 x 10 photographs of Bryan in this small collection.

File Listing

BOX 1

Photocopies of Correspondence

1. Outgoing - September 28, 1948 - September 5, 1953
2. Outgoing - September 21, 1953 - December 7, 1953
3. Outgoing - January 9, 1954 - June 14, 1955

Photocopies of Correspondence with Donald Davidson

4. Incoming - October 14, 1950 - November 8, 1951
5. Incoming - June 4, 1952 - July 13, 1952
6. Incoming - August 15, 1952 - December 14, 1952
7. Incoming - January 4, 1953 - March 29, 1953
8. Incoming - April 2, 1953 - May 27, 1953
9. Incoming - June 2, 1953 - August 25, 1953
10. Incoming - September 4, 1953 - December 13, 1953
11. Incoming - January 8, 1954 - August 30, 1954
12. Incoming - September 13, 1954 - December 20, 1954
13. Incoming - December 27, 1954 - December 8, 1955

Sheet Music

14. "The Area of a Regular Polygon"
15. "Arma Virumque Cano" words from Vergil's Aeneid
16. *The Bell Witch - Secular Folk Cantata*

BOX 2

Sheet Music

17. "Down the Road"; "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day"; "Longing"; "To a Hall"
18. "Flower in the Crannied Wall" words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
19. "The Hawthorn Tree"
20. "The Low Country" from *Singin' Billy*
21. *Songs for Children*
 - a. "About Buttons"
 - b. "The Circus Parade"
 - c. "The Doctor"
22. *Songs for Children*
 - d. "Fireflies"
 - e. "Gas Station Man"
 - f. "Go to Sleep"
23. *Songs for Children*
 - g. "Hippity Hop"
 - h. "If a Pig Wore a Wig"
 - i. "Mary Middling"
 - j. "Mary Middling #2"

24. *Songs for Children*
 - k. "The Postman"
 - l. "Rain"
 - m. "Snow"
 - n. "The Tractor"
25. "East Gospel" and "Peace in the Valley" from *Strangers in this World* words by Brainard Cheney and music by C.F. Bryan
26. *Tennessee Folk Songs* collected by George Boswell; arranged by Charles F. Bryan for use in the Tennessee public schools, 1950
27. "Then" by William Stafford and C.F. Bryan
28. "These are the Times" by Thomas Paine and C.F. Bryan
29. "These are the Times" by Thomas Paine and C.F. Bryan

Other

30. Libretto for *Singin' Billy: An Opera in Two Acts* by Charles F. Bryan and Donald Davidson for a performance at George Peabody College August 9, 10, 1951
31. Program - Dedication Ceremony - Bryan Fine Arts Building, Nov. 14, 1981, Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee
32. Article - "Falconhurst: A Legend of Place and People" in *Tennessee Magazine*, September 1983 with an accompanying letter from Mrs. Bryan, September 15, 1983
33. Photograph - Charles Faulkner Bryan
34. Photograph - Robert Shaw congratulating Charles F. Bryan at rehearsal of the *Bell Witch Cantata* in Carnegie Hall, 1947