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## Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 (MSS 239)

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Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 239      RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986**

5 boxes. 24 folders. 464 items. 1890-1995

2008.241.42-48

**See also:** MSS 645

***BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE***

Laura Elizabeth Ferguson was born 2 September 1908 in Learned, Hinds County, Mississippi. After she graduated from Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi, she married William Edwin Richardson, also a Mississippi native, in 1933 and moved with him to Louisville, Kentucky where he completed his doctor of philosophy degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Richardson began quilting while her husband was serving small churches in rural Kentucky. Quilting parties were the community social events for women and, as the minister's wife, she wanted to take part. She later began to do research on the history of quilt making and its development into an American folk art form. She purchased the first quilt for her collection in 1940 in Maury County, Tennessee where her husband was a minister. Richardson spent most of her married life in Tennessee and Kentucky where her husband pastored churches and eventually became involved in higher education. He was president of Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee, and Bethel College in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and was on the faculty of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Richardson also served on the staff of Bethel College teaching art appreciation and running the dining room for the students that lived on campus. Wherever she was living, Richardson continued to study, collect, and make quilts. She gave lectures, talks and interviews to share her knowledge and achieved a regional reputation as a collector and a quilter. She maintained a lengthy correspondence with noted quilt experts and authors Florence Peto of New Jersey and Dr. W. R. Dunton of Maryland. Peto often advised Richardson on purchases for her collection and the two women exchanged diagrams of patterns and swatches of material.

The Richardsons had two daughters, Jane, who was born in 1935 and died in 2004, and June, born 1937. Elizabeth Richardson, who had been a widow for fifteen years, died 3 March 1986 in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

## **COLLECTION**

This collection reflects Elizabeth Richardson's almost 50 year involvement with quilts, quilting, and quilters. The bulk of the collection consists of letters to Richardson from noted quilt authorities Florence Peto and Dr. William Rush Dunton. The letters from Peto, 1939 to 1950, reveal the women's shared enthusiasm and growing friendship. In addition to the exchange of purely "quilt" information, Peto offers details about her home, family, and travels. Many of the letters had fabric samples attached that have been preserved in acid-free Mylar sleeves. They have not been numbered individually as no ink has been applied to the fabrics. There are fewer letters from Dunton; however, the collection includes many of his research notes, pattern diagrams, and quilt photographs. Also featured are six scrapbooks kept by Richardson that contain pictures and articles from newspapers and magazines related to quilts and textiles. Additionally, there are eleven display boards covered with fabric swatches that she probably utilized while giving her lectures.

## **SHELF LIST**

| <b>BOX 1</b> |                            | <b>1890-1995</b> | <b>323 items</b> |
|--------------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Folder 1     | Inventory                  |                  | 1 item           |
| Folder 2     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1939-1940        | 17 items         |
| Folder 3     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1941-1942        | 41 items         |
| Folder 4     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1943-1945        | 36 items         |
| Folder 5     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1946-1947        | 31 items         |
| Folder 6     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1948             | 17 items         |
| Folder 7     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1949             | 29 items         |
| Folder 8     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1950             | 30 items         |
| Folder 9     | Letters from Florence Peto | 1951             | 40 items         |
| Folder 10    | Letters from Florence Peto | 1952             | 39 items         |
| Folder 11    | Miscellaneous              | 1890-1995        | 36 items         |

|                           |   |                  |                  |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|------------------|
| Folder 12<br>C1-D15<br>F3 | Wallpaper samples   | n.d.             | 5 items          |
| Folder 13                 | Inventory of items purchased by Richardson or gifts                 | 1932-1975        | 1 item           |
| <b>Box 2</b>              |   | <b>1939-1951</b> | <b>124 items</b> |
| Folder 1                  | Letters from Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr.                                   | 1939-1951        | 48 items         |
| Folder 2                  | Dr. Dunton's Quilt Dictionary - letter "K" only                     | n.d.             | 1 item           |
| Folder 3                  | Miscellaneous notes of Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr.                         | n.d.             | 11 items         |
| Folder 4                  | Quilt photographs from Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr. with notes attached     | n.d.             | 15 items         |
| Folder 5                  | Quilt photographs from Dr. W.R. Dunton, Jr. – no documents attached | n.d.             | 49 items         |
| <b>Box 3</b>              |   |                  | <b>13 items</b>  |
| Folder 1                  | Scrapbook   | n.d.             | 1 item           |
| Folder 2                  | Scrapbook   | n.d.             | 1 item           |
| Folder 3                  | Display boards with fabric swatches                                 | n.d.             | 11 items         |
| <b>Box 4</b>              |   |                  | <b>2 items</b>   |
| Folder 1                  | Scrapbook   | n.d.             | 1 item           |
| Folder 2                  | Scrapbook   | n.d.             | 1 item           |
| <b>Box 5</b>              |   |                  | <b>2 items</b>   |
| Folder 1                  | Scrapbook   | n.d.             | 1 item           |
| Folder 2                  | Scrapbook   | n.d.             | 1 item           |

## **BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth 1890-1995  
239 (Ferguson), 1908-1986

Letters, photographs and scrapbooks  
belonging to quilt collector Richardson. Includes letters  
and research materials from noted authorities Florence  
Peto and William Rush Dunton.

5 boxes. 24 folders. 464 items.  
2008.241.42-48 K/18

## **SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Christmas cards B1  
Dunton, William Rush, 1868-1966 B2  
Dunton, William Rush, 1868-1966 – Relating to B1,F11  
Peto, Florence, 1884-1970 B1  
Peto, Marjorie, 1904-1969 – Relating to B1  
Quilts and quilting  
Quilts and quilting – Photos B1,F5; B2,F4&5  
Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 – Letter from, 15 June 1942 B1,F3  
Richardson, William Edwin, 1900-1971 – Relating to B1,F11  
Scrapbooks – Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 B3-5  
Stenge, Bertha, 1891-1957 – Relating to B1  
Textiles

Lile/Jeffrey 01/29/2009