

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

MSS Finding Aids

Manuscripts

7-10-2015

Murton, Jessie Wilmore (Jones), 1886-1973 (MSS 439)

Manuscripts & Folklife Archives

Western Kentucky University, mssfa@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_mss_fin_aid



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Folklife Archives, Manuscripts &, "Murton, Jessie Wilmore (Jones), 1886-1973 (MSS 439)" (2015). *MSS Finding Aids*. Paper 4048.

https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_mss_fin_aid/4048

This Finding Aid is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in MSS Finding Aids by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
 Department of Library Special Collections
 Western Kentucky University
 Bowling Green, KY 42101-1092

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 439 MURTON, Jessie Wilmore (Jones), 1886-1973

11 boxes. 115 folders. 3,733 items. 1903-1992. Originals, photocopies, photographs.

1974.140.1

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jessie Wilmore Jones was born on 22 April 1886 in Kirksville, Madison County, Kentucky, the daughter of Rosalie “Rose” Catherine (Castlen) Jones (1859-1899) and Samuel Louis Jones (1852-1935). In 1890 her family relocated at Bowling Green, Kentucky, where Jessie attended public schools. Her mother died when she was thirteen, leaving Jessie to inherit many of the household responsibilities for her father and two brothers and two sisters. She attended the Southern Training School, a junior college in Graysville, Tennessee. She met her husband John Archibald Murton, a native of Canada, while they both worked for the Southern Publishing Company in Nashville; the couple married on 18 February 1907 in Nashville. They moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1911. During her years at Battle Creek, Jessie was employed at various times as a proofreader, receptionist, filing clerk, and private secretary in medical offices of the Battle Creek Sanitarium. Here she had the privilege of meeting many well-known writers and poets.

Murton credited her interest in poetry to her mother who collected, read and sang poems to her children. Jessie began constructing poems at around age 13, composing her own words to song tunes she knew. After poet Roselle Mercier Montgomery took an interest in her work, she began sending out poems for publication. From that point until two years before her death, 1971, Jessie Murton estimated that she had between 1500 and 2000 single poems published in hundreds of periodicals throughout the country—general, juvenile, women’s, religious, trade and poetry publications, and newspapers. Often using a ballad form, she was known for her use of historical contexts in her inspirational poems for children. Some of her collected works include, but are not limited to, *Frankincense and Myrrh* (1939), *The Shining Thread: Selected Poems* (1950), and *A Child’s Book of Verses* (1952). During her lifetime, she published over 30 works of poetry. She was also a freelance prose writer and gave presentations on poetry at poetry societies, social clubs, writers conferences, and off and on over the years conducted private poetry classes. Her most popular book *Christopher Cricket* was published in several other countries and languages.

In 1935, she was one of the founding members of the poetry group now known as the Poetry Society of Michigan, and she remained an Honorary Life Member until her death. She received that organization’s Michigan Minuteman Award in 1967. Murton also was given the Freedom Foundation Award, a gold medal from the Poetry Center of New York for the best

poem from Michigan submitted for display at the New York World of Tomorrow Exposition; the yearly award of the Poetry Society of Florida; several first prizes in literary contests of the National League of American Pen Women, of which she was a member; and she was the first poetry laureate of the Michigan appointed by the Federation of Women's Clubs. Her first prize-winning poem was published in the Battle Creek, Michigan *Enquirer and News* in 1927.

Murton's poetry appeared in the Scott Foresman *Readers*, Ted Malone's *Anthology*, Harper's *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, the *New York Times*, the *Detroit News*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Washington Evening Star*, the *Cincinnati Times*, the *Portland Oregonian*, the *Rotarian*, *Youth's Instructor*, and *Life and Health* magazine.

The Murtons were very active members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and many of Jessie's poems were published in that denomination's periodicals. Mr. Murton died in 1966. The couple had no children. Jessie died on 18 May 1973 after a long illness, and she was interred beside her husband in Bedford Cemetery, Bedford, Michigan.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection documents the life and work of Jessie Wilmore Murton, a poet from Kentucky, who spent most of her adult life in Battle Creek, Michigan. Box 1 includes biographical and genealogical information about Murton (Folder 2) and the Jones family, her father's kin (Folder 3). The rest of the box includes business and personal correspondence. Many of the correspondents include poems for Murton's perusal and comments. Chief correspondents are noted in the Subject Analytics at the end of this document. Much of the correspondence relates to submission and acceptance or rejection of submitted poetry by publishers, however it also includes plenty of fan mail. Perhaps her most frequent correspondent in this box is with her friend Margaret Abbott. Folder 12 includes various letters written by Murton to local papers on various topics such as alcoholism, parochial schools, and smoking. Folder 13 contains correspondence with and biographical information related to Alma Robison Higbee, a writer who was also very involved in the leadership of the National League of American Pen Women. Folder 14 contains perhaps the most provocative items in the entire collection; it includes correspondence (1948-1949) with various individuals related to the purported communistic writings and leanings of African American poet Langston Hughes. This correspondence provides an interesting perspective on current events in the late-1940s.

The correspondence in Box 2 is chiefly with publishers, mostly of magazines and trade journals, and includes many letters of acceptance and note the fees paid for Murton's verse. A few of the folders deal with a single publishing project such as "Let's Write a Poem" in Folder 2, "The Stable Boy's Story" in Folder 3, or with a single publisher such as The Review Herald Publishing Association in Folder 10. The folder headings in the shelf list below will be helpful in determining contents as will the subject analytics at the end of the finding aid. Of particular interest is a Braille edition of Murton's *Christopher Cricket* in Folder 8.

Box 3, Folder 1 is a continuation of the type of correspondence found in Box 2. Most of it is correspondence with publishers. This folder contains a good historical overview of the Poetry Society of Michigan and the history of Michigan Poetry Week. Folder 2 contains autographs of fellow poets and writers. Folder 3 includes numerous news clippings either written by or about JWM or information about the Poetry Society of Michigan. Folder 4 contains printed items such as programs, invitations and sundry other items related to events sponsored by writing or poetry

societies, chiefly in Michigan. The same folder holds some poetry published by Murton and ephemera such as place cards used at special writing events. Folder 5 contains JWM's membership cards in the Arizona, Kentucky and Michigan state poetry societies as well as a medal for the National Poetry Center and her League of American Pen Women pin.

Box 4 includes photographs in Folder 1 of family members, including a photo of JWM's maternal grandfather, and quite a large number of snapshots from various writing events that Murton attended. A significant number of the photographs are unidentified. The folder includes three tinted photos of parks in Battle Creek, Michigan as well as Battle Creek Sanitarium. Folder 2 includes a guest book given to JWM by a friend which the poet kept at her home from April 1952 to November 1954. Folder 3 holds a bound book titled "For Each a Star" by B. Y. Williams that contains birthday entries for JWM's friends and family.

Box 5 includes six scrapbooks into which JWM pasted her published verse as well as information about events she attended or at which she spoke. Folder 7 contains some published sheet music with lyrics by JWM. Box 6 includes more loose poems, including arrangements of several anthologies. Folder 2-5 include poems written as potential lyrics for songs or actual published music with lyrics by JWM. JWM's first volume of poetry, "Poems," is found in Folder 8. Murton's husband, John Archibald Murton, compiled this bound typescript of Jessie's poems in 1907. All of JWM's entries in the periodical *Peninsula Poets* can be found in Folder 10. The manuscript for "Muggsy" found in Folder 14 is the narrative for a children's book about a lion.

Box 7 contains folders of loose poems. The only folders with any distinction are Folder 1 marked by JWM "Religious and Patriotic Poems," Folder 5 marked "Rough Poems," Folder 6 marked "Purely Personal, Nonsense and Light Verse & Greeting." The poems are not in any particular order within these folders.

Box 8 contains more loose verse. Folder 1 includes "Ballads and Miscellaneous Poems" divided into categories, such as Religious, Patriotic, etc. Folders 2-21 contain poems in alphabetical order by title. Folder 22 contains a list of poems that JWM was considering for an anthology titled "Turnport." Folders 1-3 of Box 9 also contain loose poems with Folder 1 marked "Mostly Seasonal" and Folder 3 marked "Greeting Card Verses." Folder 4 includes correspondence and news clippings related to various prizes won by JWM. A certificate of honor awarded to JWM by the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge can be found in Folder 5. Folder 6 includes correspondence with JWM about applying for copyright for her books and music. Folder 7 houses some correspondence and newsletters with the League for Sanity in Poetry.

Box 10 includes prose, both fiction and non-fiction, written by JWM; this is found in Folders 1-5. Folder 6 includes photocopies of autographs and inscriptions found in books from JWM's personal library. Folder 7 includes photocopies of items published by JWM that were in her personal library. Folders 8 and 9 include book reviews, advertisements, or catalogs in which JWM's books are mentioned. Folder 10 houses poems found in *Ideals* publications, and Folder 11 includes some mock ups of poems accompanied with illustrations prepared by JWM

Box 11 includes notes for a series of lectures on writing poetry in Folder 1. Folder 2 houses lists of royalty payments to JWM for nearly three decades from the Review and Herald Publishing Association, the publishing arm of the Seventh Day Adventist church. Folders 3-5 contain information about vanity presses and commercial contests for writers and poets. JWM was a frequent contestant in these jingle and limerick contests. These folders also include

numerous winner's notifications that were sent to JWM for winning or placing in contests. Folder 6 includes over 100 Burma Shave jingles created by JWM.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1920-1992	490 items
Folder 1	Inventory	1992	6 items
Folder 2	Biographical data	1935-1975	19 items
Folder 3	Jones family genealogy	1937-1940	4 items
Folder 4	Correspondence with Kentucky Library staff	1939-1970	13 items
Folder 5	Letters from Cara Smith Gould and her son Ormond	1933-1945	7 items
Folder 6	Letters from Mary Beth Smith and poem JWM wrote as tribute to Smith	1947-48	4 items
Folder 7	Jessie Wilmore Morton	1920s-1930s	46 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1940s	78 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1950s	82 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1960-1967	77 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	1967-1974	75 items
Folder 12	Letters (cc) to the editor and photocopies of letters published in the newspaper	1963-1969	24 items
Folder 13	Letters from Alma Robinson Higbee and data about her	1945-1969	21 items
Folder 14	Correspondence about Langston Hughes and his supposedly communistic views	1948-1953	29 items
Folder 15	Letter, 1967, and poems from Constance Adele Henning	1965-1969	5 items

BOX 2	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1932-1990	639 items
Folder 1	Correspondence with publishers	1932-1949	87 items
Folder 2	Correspondence about <i>Let's Write a Poem</i>	1942-1956	53 items
Folder 3	Incoming letters about <i>The Stable Boy's Story</i> Photographs and copies of book	1952-1953	71 items
Folder 4	Correspondence with publishers	1950-1974	112 items
Folder 5	Comments and orders for Jessie's book	1952-1955	68 items
Folder 6	Permission to publish requests	1953-1961	18 items
Folder 7	Correspondence with Warner Press	1953-1965	23 items
Folder 8	Poem <i>Christopher Cricket</i> published in Braille journal, braille version and copy	1955-1956	3 items
Folder 9	Correspondence with Ideal Publishing Company	1961-1971	33 items
Folder 10	Correspondence with <i>Review and Herald Publishing Association</i>	1964-1971	100 items
Folder 11	Murton's letter accompanying a copy Of <i>The Youth's Instructor</i>	1969	7 items
Folder 12	Correspondence of Elizabeth Ingle	1973-1990	47 items
Folder 13	Correspondence of Elizabeth Ingle with Kentucky Building personnel	1973-1974	22 items
BOX 3	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1932-1985	299 items
Folder 1	Correspondence	n.d.	64 items
Folder 2	Autographs	1932-1970	18 items
Folder 3	Newspaper clippings (photocopied)	1932-1985	135 items
Folder 4	Printed items	1928-1963	72 items
Folder 5	Membership cards, Poetry Center Medal	1968-1972	10 items

BOX 4	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1942-1954	77 items
Folder 1	Photographs	n.d.	75 items
Folder 2	Guest book	1952-1954	1 item
Folder 3	<i>For Each a Star</i> – Birthdays listed of family and friends	1942	1 item
BOX 5	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1930-1970	36 items
Folder 1	Published verse – Scrapbook I (pt. 1)	1930-1958	1 item (p.1-50)
Folder 2	Published verse – Scrapbook I (pt. 2)	1931-1950	1 item (p. 51-102)
Folder 3	Published verse – Scrapbook 2	1931-1960	1 item (84 p.)
Folder 4	Published verse – Scrapbook 3	1931-1959	1 item (98 p.)
Folder 5	Published verse – Scrapbook 4	1931-1955	1 item (83 p.)
Folder 6	Published verse – Scrapbook 5	1950-1964	1 item (31 p.)
Folder 7	Published verse – Scrapbook 6	1952-1970	31 items
BOX 6	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1903-1978	229 items
Folder 1	“Song in the Wild” compilation of poems	n. d.	1 item
Folder 2	Poems written especially for use as sacred songs	n.d.	132 items
Folder 3	Published music by Donald Haynes	1931-1967	30 items
Folder 4	Published music by Noah E. Paulin with words by JWM	1961	10 items
Folder 5	Published music by different writers with words by JWM	1962-1966	6 items
Folder 6	Song “Homeland”	n.d.	1 item

Folder 7	Notebook containing chiefly religious notations and language notes.	1903	4 item
Folder 8	Poems (earliest work)	1907	1 item
Folder 9	A selection of poems	1939	1 item
Folder 10	Entries (photocopies) of JWM in <i>Peninsula Poets</i>	1946-1978	28 items
Folder 11	Various issues of different journals and directories of poetry societies	1964-1975	10 items
Folder 12	“Lest We Forget” (manuscript)	1969	1 item
Folder 13	“By Every Lovely Thing” (manuscript)	n.d.	1 item
Folder 14	“Muggsy” (manuscript)	n.d.	2 items
Folder 15	“Mary’s Son” (manuscript)	n.d.	1 item
BOX 7	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1932-1957	773 items
Folder 1	Religious and patriotic poems	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Poems	n.d.	123 items
Folder 3	Poems	n.d.	124 items
Folder 4	Poems	n.d.	183 items
Folder 5	Poems (Rough Copies)	1932-1957	137 items
Folder 6	Poems – Purely personal, nonsense, & light verse & greetings	n.d.	70 items
Folder 7	Poems	n.d.	135 items
BOX 8	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1971	400 items
Folder 1	Ballads and miscellaneous long poems	n.d.	1 item
Folder 2	Miscellaneous typed poems -A-	n.d.	24 items

Folder 3	Miscellaneous typed poems -B-	n.d.	24 items
Folder 4	Miscellaneous typed poems -C-	n.d.	14 items
Folder 5	Typed poems about Christmas	n.d.	10 items
Folder 6	Miscellaneous typed poems	n.d.	11 items
Folder 7	Miscellaneous typed poems -E-	n.d.	6 items
Folder 8	Miscellaneous typed poems -F-	n.d.	19 items
Folder 9	Miscellaneous typed poems -G-	n.d.	4 items
Folder 10	“How Christmas Came” last poem written by Jessie Wilmore Murton while in American Legion Hospital	1971	6 items
Folder 11	Miscellaneous typed poems -H-J-	n.d.	27 items
Folder 12	Miscellaneous typed poems -K-L-	n.d.	10 items
Folder 13	Miscellaneous typed poems -M-	n.d.	17 items
Folder 14	Miscellaneous typed poems -N-	n.d.	9 items
Folder 15	Miscellaneous typed poems -O-	n.d.	8 items
Folder 16	Miscellaneous typed poems -P-Q-	n.d.	15 items
Folder 17	Miscellaneous typed poems -R-	n.d.	6 items
Folder 18	Miscellaneous typed poems -S-	n.d.	36 items
Folder 19	Miscellaneous typed poems -T-	n.d.	26 items
Folder 20	Miscellaneous typed poems -U-V-	n.d.	3 items
Folder 21	Miscellaneous typed poems -W-Y	n.d.	15 items
Folder 22	“Turnport” – listing of poems	n.d.	1 item
Folder 23	Poems, miscellaneous	n.d.	105 items
Folder 24	Poems, miscellaneous	n.d.	1 item

BOX 9	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1927-1970	355 items
Folder 1	Poems, mostly seasonal	n.d.	72 items
Folder 2	Poems	n.d.	109 items
Folder 3	Greeting card verses	n.d.	33 items
Folder 4	Literary prizes won by James Wilmore Murton	1927-1970	100 items
Folder 5	Certificate of honor awarded to James Murton by the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge, etc.	1951-1970	5 items
Folder 6	Copyright correspondence	1942-1959	20 items
Folder 7	League for Sanity in poetry	1945-1946	16 items
BOX 10	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1927-1985	242 items
Folder 1	Prose published	1929-1972	12 items
Folder 2	Religious prose	n.d.	16 items
Folder 3	Articles published in religious magazines	1940-1970	33 items
Folder 4	Published articles about a mission and Associated items	1961-1968	6 items
Folder 5	Articles	1962	13 items
Folder 6	Photocopies of inscriptions from books in her Personal library	1929-1963	28 items
Folder 7	Photocopies of Murton's published works from Books in her personal library	1927-1971	33 items
Folder 8	Book reviews, book advertisements, etc.	1949-1968	54 items
Folder 9	List of publications in catalogs	1962-1980	2 items
Folder 10	Photocopies of Murton's poems published in <i>Ideals</i> publications	1961-1985	25 items

Folder 11	Records of publications (some items good for display)	n.d.	20 items
BOX 11	Jessie Wilmore Murton	1932-1969	435 items
Folder 1	Poetry class material	1962	1 item
Folder 2	Royalty payments – Review and Herald Publishing Association	1940-1969	116 items
Folder 3	Vanity publications	1941-1950	34 items
Folder 4	Commercial contests and prize winners	1932-1960	103 items
Folder 5	Townsend Contest Bulletin and other aids in submitting contest entries	1938-1951	16 items
Folder 6	Burma Shave jingles	1939-1953	143 items
Folder 7	American Writers Association	1946-1950	19 items
Folder 8 Oversized C1-D5,#1	Oversized items	1928-1970	3 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS MURTON, Jessie Wilmore (Jones), 1903-1992
439 1886-1973

Correspondence, writings, scrapbooks, and financial records of Kentucky native and poet Jessie Wilmore Murton. Although born and raised in Kentucky, she spent most of her adult life in Battle Creek, Michigan. Her poetry and prose was published in several solo books and anthologies and appeared extensively in religious publications of the mid-twentieth century.

11 boxes. 114 folders. 3,733 items. Originals, photocopies, scrapbooks, photos.
1974.140.1

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Abbott, Margaret B1,F7-9
 Alcoholism – Comments about B1,F12
 American Writers Association B11,F7
 Arizona State Poetry Society B3,F5
 Authors – Michigan
 Autographs B3,F2
 Battle Creek Sanitarium – Battle Creek, Michigan – Photos B4,F1
 Braille – Relating to B2,8
 Burma Shave – Relating to B11,F6
 Carver, Gayle Raymond, 1913-2005 B1,F4
 Castlen, Robert C., d. 1973 B1,F11
 Cats – Photos B4,F1
 Certificates B11,F8
 Children's books B6,F14
Christopher Cricket – Relating to B2,F8
 Communism – Relating to B1,F14
 Coombs, Elizabeth Robertson, 1893-1988 B1,F4
 Dart, Archa Otis, 1903-2003 – Correspondence B1,F8,11
 Demonstrations – Battle Creek, Michigan, 1969 B1,F12
 Dickinson, Luren Dudley, 1859-1943 – Correspondence B1,F7
 Education – Battle Creek, Michigan – Comments about B1,F12
 Freedoms Foundation – Valley Forge, Pennsylvania – Relating to B9,F5
 Gould, Cora Smith, 1855-1945 B1,F5
 Gould, Ormond, 1892-1962 B1,F5
 Grainger, Ella Viola (Strom), 1889-1979 B1,F7
 Grainger, Percy Aldridge, 1882-1961 – Relating to B1,F7
 Hafemeister, John H., 1917-1994 – Correspondence B2,F9
 Handrich, Gretchen, 1911-1985 B2,F9
 Handy, Riley Dean, 1941-2010 B2,F13
 Henning, Constance Adele B1,F15; B2,F4
 Higbee, Alma Robison, 1893-1969 – Comments about, 1947 B1,F4
 Higbee, Alma Robison, 1893-1969 – Correspondence B1,F13; B3,F1
 Hughes, James Mercer Langston, 1902-1967 – Relating to B1,F14
 Ideals Publishing Company – Milwaukee, Wisconsin – Relating to B2,F9
 Ingle, Elizabeth B2,F4; B2,F12-13
 Jones, Edgar, d. 1955 – Comments about B1,F4
 Jones family B1,F3
 Kentucky Library – Western Kentucky University – Relating to B1,F4
 Kentucky State Poetry Society – Relating to B1,F10-11
 Kiser, Thelma Scott B1,F10-11; B2,F4
 League for Sanity in Poetry – Relating to B9,F7
 League of American Pen Women – Pins B3,F5
Let's Write a Poem B2,F2
 Letterheads – Battle Creek Sanitarium – Battle Creek, Michigan B3,F1

Letters to the editor B1,F12
 Lorraine, Lilith, 1894-1967 – Correspondence B9,F7
 Malone, Ted, 1908-1989 B1,F7-8; B3,F1
 Medals – National Poetry Center B3,F5
 Membership cards – Arizona State Poetry Society B3,F5
 Membership cards – Kentucky State Poetry Society B3,F5
 Membership cards – Poetry Society of Michigan B3,F5
 Michigan Poetry Week – History B3,F1
 Montgomery, Roselle (Mercier) B1,F7; B3,F1
 Moore, Mary (Taylor) Leiper, 1885-1973 – Correspondence B1,F4,7
 Murton, Jessie Wilmore (Jones), 1886-1973 – Photos B4,F1
 Music B5,F7; B6,F2-5
 National Poetry Center – Medal B3,F5
 Neal, Mary Julia, 1905-1995 B1,F4
 Nevins, Dorothy Lillian, d. 2012 B2,F9
 Owen, Loren A., 1913-1994 – Correspondence B2,F7
 Parks – Battle Creek, Michigan – Photos B4,F1
 Patriotism B6,F12; B7,F1
 Pease, Jessie L., 1859-1908 B1,F7
Peninsula Poets – Relating to B3,F1; B6,F10
 Pins – League of American Pen Women B3,F5
 Poetry
 Poetry Society of Michigan B3,F1,3-5
 Poets – Michigan
 Publishers and publishing
 Race relations – Comments about B1,F14
 Religion – Relating to B7,F1
 Review and Herald Publishing Association – Washington, D.C. – Relating to B2,F10
 Schools, Parochial – Comments about B1,F12
Stable Boy's Story, The B2,F3
Stable Boy's Story, The - Photos B2,F3
 Thompson, Lawrence Sidney, 1916-1986 – Correspondence B1,F10
 Tippet, Harry M., 1891-1974 – Correspondence B2,F10
 Turnquist, Knute F. B1,F7
 Utt, Richard H. – Correspondence B1,F11
 Warner Press – Anderson, Indiana – Relating to B2,F7
 Young, Ethel – Correspondence B1,F11; B2,F4
Youth's Instructor – Relating to B2,F11
 Zisk, Geraldine, 1920-2004 B2,F9-10

SEE and SEE ALSO

Russell, Frank Alden, 1908-1989

See:

Malone, Ted, 1908-1989

Jeffrey 07/10/2015