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## Rice, Laban Lacy, 1870-1973 (MSS 605)

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

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 605     RICE, Laban Lacy, 1870-1973**

8 boxes. 111 folders. 2,162 items. 1887-1988. Originals, photocopies, photographs.

SC2017.28.1; 1982.118.1

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Laban Lacy Rice, son of Laban Marchbanks Rice and Martha Lacy and brother of the poet Cale Young Rice, was born in Dixon, Kentucky, on 14 October 1870. In 1879, his family moved to Evansville, Indiana, where his father dealt in tobacco. Rice received his A.B. in 1891, his M.A. in 1892, and his Ph.D. in Latin, Greek and Sanskrit in 1894, all from Cumberland University in Lebanon, Tennessee. At Cumberland, he and brother Cale were star baseball players (pitcher and catcher, respectively) and Rice co-founded the Theta chapter of the Kappa Sigma fraternity. Rice taught at Auburn Seminary in Auburn, Kentucky, then served as professor of English Language and Literature at Cumberland from 1894-1904 (with the exception of 1897-1899, when he was associate editor of *The Cumberland Presbyterian* in Nashville, Tennessee). In 1902, he founded *The Cumberland Presbyterian Quarterly*, a review of theology, philosophy and literature, and served as its editor until 1904.

In 1902, Rice helped to establish Castle Heights School in Lebanon, Tennessee. He served as its headmaster from 1904 until 1913, when he became sole owner and president of the school. In 1916, a plan to affiliate Castle Heights with Cumberland University and to combine the schools under a single management, with Rice as president, was abandoned. Rice converted Castle Heights into a military academy in 1917, earning for himself the honorific "Colonel," then sold the school in 1921. From 1920-1929 he was president of the Junior Military Academy at Bloomington Springs, Tennessee. From 1919-1922, he was owner and director of Camp Kawasawa for Boys on the Cumberland River near Lebanon, and from 1920-1947 he owned and operated Nakánawa Junior and Senior Camps for Girls on the eastern and western shores of Mayland Lake near Crossville, Tennessee. He was also part owner and associate director of Camp Sequoyah for Boys at Asheville, North Carolina from 1929-1936.

In May 1939, Rice was named associate president and chancellor of Cumberland University, where he directed an endowment drive for its law school. He resigned his office in June 1940, apparently due to conflicts over authority with President Ernest L. Stockton. In November 1941, however, Stockton resigned and Rice was appointed president. Upon retiring from the presidency in June 1946, Rice, an accomplished amateur astronomer, donated a building and equipment to establish the Rice Observatory at Cumberland. Over the years, he also donated artwork to various institutions and gave items from his extensive collection of

books and manuscripts to several libraries, including Cumberland and Western Kentucky University.

After his retirement, Rice vigorously pursued his interests in travel, writing and study. He lectured extensively and wrote books and articles on relativity, astronomy, cosmology, and the possibility of life on other planets. He made homes in Ware Neck, Virginia, where he constructed his own observatory, and in St. Petersburg and Orlando, Florida. He established the Rice Planetarium in St. Petersburg in October 1953 and operated it until June 1954; after an abortive attempt to reestablish it at Rollins College in Winter Park, he relocated it to Stetson University in Deland, Florida in 1956. He also presented a telescope to Orlando's Central Florida Museum in 1957.

Rice read widely, wrote poetry, fiction and memoirs, and was an energetic letter-writer to the editors of newspapers, popular magazines and scholarly journals. Politically, he was a staunch supporter of the Vietnam War (although he sympathized with Representative Eugene McCarthy's anti-war views in a 1968 letter to him), a foe of Communism and campus radicalism, and a critic of judicial decisions on school desegregation in the 1950s. Two of the more sensational incidents of his life occurred in 1953, when he shot a would-be suitor attempting to abduct his daughter Katherine from her home, accidentally wounding her in the process; and in 1961, when he used his expertise in classical literature and history to perpetrate a widely reported hoax in which a fictional archaeologist claimed to have discovered the tomb of King Orestes at Mycenae in Greece.

As he grew older, Rice received regular invitations and recognition from Castle Heights and from Cumberland University as a popular speaker, benefactor, former president and its oldest living graduate. Cumberland created the Rice Medal in Astronomy in 1957, and its law school awarded Rice a Doctor of Letters degree in 1959. On his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1968, he spoke to students for more than an hour, and spoke for 90 minutes on his one-hundredth birthday in 1970, when he was fêted at Cumberland with celebrations that included "Laban Lacy Rice Day" in Lebanon. In 1971, Castle Heights honored him with one of its inaugural "Lux et Veritas" Awards for outstanding contributions to education.

Rice died on 14 February 1973 in St. Petersburg, Florida, and was buried there at Cedar Grove Cemetery. He was predeceased by his wife Blanche Alexander Buchanan (1871-1937), who he married on 23 November 1892. They were the parents of two daughters, Katherine (Rice) Shaw and Anne Hays (Rice) O'Neil.

## **COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection consists of correspondence, writings (fiction, non-fiction, autobiographical, scientific), poems, clippings, genealogy, and miscellaneous papers of Laban Lacy Rice. His scientific writing is principally on astronomy, cosmology and relativity. Also included are correspondence and papers relating to Rice's brother, poet and dramatist Cale Young Rice, and his sister-in-law, author Alice Hegan Rice.

Box 1 contains clippings (Folders 2-6), chiefly from local newspapers, chronicling Rice's life and career. Included are lecture announcements, reviews of his books, news of his gifts of books and astronomical equipment, and retrospectives published when he reached his 100<sup>th</sup> year and beyond. Materials relating to the 1974 dedication of a historical marker at the Dixon,

Kentucky home of Rice and his brother Cale (Folder 7) include clippings and the ceremony program.

The remainder of Box 1 (Folders 8-15) and Boxes 2 and 3 contain Rice's general correspondence. Much of the correspondence relates to his literary and scientific pursuits and is frequently with persons distinguished in their fields. Included are authors' acknowledgements of notices in the *Cumberland Presbyterian*; letters of thanks from recipients of Rice's books; exchanges with scientists and other scholars about their work and ideas; responses to Rice's submission of manuscripts for publication and to his solicitation of endowments for Cumberland University; greetings, invitations and reminiscences from alumni and administrators of Cumberland and Castle Heights; letters of appreciation from patrons of Nakánawa Camps for Girls, especially after Rice's 1947 announcement that he would sell the camp, and in observance of his 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday in 1972; correspondence regarding lecture arrangements, the relocation of his Florida planetarium, his telescope gift to the Central Florida Museum, and other gifts; his letters to politicians commenting on national issues; letters (genuine and fabricated) relating to his "Mycenae hoax"; and cards and letters of tribute on his 100<sup>th</sup> and subsequent birthdays. Of interest is a copy (the original is at Cumberland University) of a letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower (Box 2, Folder 10) responding to Rice's request for comment on Confederate tactics at the Battle of Gettysburg. Also included throughout the correspondence are letters to newspapers and journals such as *Time*, *Life*, *Harper's*, *The American Scholar*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *The Atlantic* and the *Saturday Review* in which Rice responds to articles on literary, religious, historical, scientific and political subjects or points out errors in English usage. A separate folder (Box 6, Folder 4) contains Rice's editorializing on race. In letters to the editor and opinion pieces, he reacts to articles on civil rights activism and race relations and criticizes 1950s U.S. Supreme Court decisions on school desegregation.

Box 3 also includes separate folders of Rice's correspondence with Albert Einstein (Folder 9) about his theory of relativity and other ideas, as well as correspondence detailing Rice's gifts of books, manuscripts and artifacts made over a period of years to Western Kentucky University (Folders 10, 11). The correspondence with WKU relates to Rice's gifts of his own papers and to those of his brother and sister-in-law, Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice (see MSS 47 RICE Collection).

Box 4 contains correspondence, photographs and other papers relating to Rice's brother and sister-in-law, Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice. Cale's letters to Rice (Folder 1) concern family matters, his and Alice's literary work and health, and their travel to New York, London, Paris and Maine. He also writes of his despondency following Alice's death in 1942. Condolences to Rice following Cale's suicide in January 1943 (Folder 2) include reminiscences and a *Louisville Times* obituary and editorial. Letters from Alice Hegan Rice (Folder 5) concern her and Cale's literary work, travel and family matters, Nakánawa Camp, her reading, and her praise for Rice's books, *Sonnets to B.B.R.* and *A Mountain Idyll* (the latter dedicated to Alice). Other materials include Alice's social calendar for 1941-1942 (Folder 7), her journal of quotes and epigrams (Folder 9) and remarks on short story writing (Folder 10). Rice's essay, "Alice Hegan Rice—Home Maker" and short anecdotes (Folder 8) demonstrate his personal regard for her. Rice's correspondence relating to Alice and Cale after their deaths (Folder 11) concern recordings of Cale's poems made for the blind, acknowledgements from recipients of Cale's books, acknowledgements of Rice's solicitations to publish his writing about Cale and Alice, copyright permissions, a proposal from a Louisville friend to write a novel about Cale and Alice,

and Rice's proposals to establish a writing award at Cumberland University in memory of Alice and Cale.

Box 5 contains miscellaneous personal papers of Rice and his autobiographical writing and reminiscences. Materials relating to Castle Heights Military Academy and Cumberland University include certificates and citations (Folder 1), his grade records from Cumberland (Folder 4) and addresses, reminiscences, and programs in connection with recognitions of Rice by both schools (Folder 5). Papers relating to his membership in the Kappa Sigma fraternity (Folder 6) include correspondence, reviews of his books and articles written for the fraternity magazine, the *Caduceus*, Rice's "ode" read at the 1957 Grand Conclave, greetings and reminiscences sent to other conclaves, and a profile of Rice published in the August 1971 *Caduceus*. Personal and autobiographical writing of Rice's (Folder 9) includes memories of Lebanon, Tennessee and Evansville, Indiana as well as recollections of his childhood, school days and family, and a lengthier reflection, "A Backward Look at Eighty" (Folder 10). Although they contain some autobiographical content, the book-length *Reflections and Recollections*, published in 1961 (Folder 11), and *Obiter Dicta of a Post-Centenarian* (Folders 12 and 13) are more notable as chronicles of Rice's philosophical and intellectual development. Shorter writings (Folder 14) reflect on old age and death.

Box 6 contains mostly Rice genealogy material and Rice's miscellaneous notes, lectures and writing, much of it on scientific subjects. Genealogical data (Folder 1) includes letters with information from other Rice family members, many in response to a 1969 article by Rice in the Providence, Kentucky *Journal-Enterprise*, as well as a copy of Charles Elmer Rice's *By the Name of Rice* (Folder 2). A journal kept over a few months in 1967 (Folder 3) contains Rice's reflections on various topics.

Box 7 contains Rice's writing, mostly fiction—stories, a novel, a script for television, and humorous pieces. Also included (Folder 1) is a series he wrote on American poets for the *Cumberland Presbyterian*.

Box 8 contains Rice's poems, collected epigrams, photographs, and miscellaneous items. Poems (Folders 1 and 2) are arranged alphabetically by title, with a few published versions included. Oversized items (Folder 10) consist of Rice's 1959 Doctor of Letters diploma and his Kentucky Colonel and Tennessee Colonel certificates. Also included are photographs of Rice (Folders 11 and 12), his parents (Folder 18), Rice's homes and observatories (Folders 13-16), and his Doctor of Laws degree ceremony (Folder 17).

## **SHELF LIST**

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Biographical &amp; Correspondence</b>	<b>1890-1973</b>	<b>508 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory and separation records		6 items
Folder 2	Clippings on life and career	1890-1949	48 items
Folder 3	Clippings on life and career	1950-1960	54 items
Folder 4	Clippings on life and career	1961-1969	54 items

Folder 5	Clippings on life and career	1971-1973	29 items
Folder 6	Clippings on life and career	n.d.	11 items
Folder 7	Rice brothers historical marker – Dixon, Kentucky	1974	5 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1897-1939	50 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1940-1945	26 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1946-1947	50 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	1948-1949	35 items
Folder 12	Correspondence	1950	52 items
Folder 13	Correspondence	1951	30 items
Folder 14	Correspondence	1952-1953	23 items
Folder 15	Correspondence	1954	35 items
<b>BOX 2</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Correspondence</b>	<b>1955-1968</b>	<b>481 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	1955	32 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	1956	44 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1957	64 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1958-1959	62 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1960	24 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	1961	63 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	1962	29 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	1963-1964	49 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	1965-1966	31 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	1967	36 items

Folder 11	Correspondence	1968	47 items
<b>BOX 3</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Correspondence</b>	<b>1969-1988</b>	<b>494 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	1969	81 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	Jan.-Sept. 1970	44 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	Oct.-Dec. 1970	57 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	Jan.-Sept. 1971	22 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	Oct.-Dec. 1971	44 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	Jan.-Sept. 1972	30 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	Oct.-Dec. 1972	30 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	n.d.	24 items
Folder 9	Correspondence with Albert Einstein; associated article	1942-1952, 1988	8 items
Folder 10	Correspondence with WKU and Special Collections Library regarding Rice collections	1943-1956	52 items
Folder 11	Correspondence with WKU and Special Collections Library regarding Rice collections	1956-1971	92 items
Folder 12	Letters to editors and publications	n.d.	10 items
<b>BOX 4</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Cale Young Rice &amp; Alice Hegan Rice</b>	<b>1896-1979</b>	<b>135 items</b>
Folder 1	Letters from Cale Young Rice to Laban Lacy Rice	1901-1943	37 items
Folder 2	Letters to Laban Lacy Rice regarding death of Cale Young Rice	1943	33 items

Folder 3	Cale Young Rice – Photograph	n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	Cumberland Sports Hall of Fame citation for Cale Young Rice	1979	1 item
Folder 5	Letters from Alice Hegan Rice to Laban Lacy Rice and Blanche Rice	1906-1941	25 items
Folder 6	Alice Hegan Rice – Photograph	n.d.	1 item
Folder 7	List of Alice Hegan Rice social engagements	1941-1942	1 item
Folder 8	“Alice Hegan Rice – Home Maker”; anecdotes about Alice Hegan Rice	n.d.	4 items
Folder 9	Alice Hegan Rice journal of quotes and epigrams	n.d.	1 item
Folder 10	Alice Hegan Rice remarks on short story writing	n.d.	1 item
Folder 11	Letters, etc. regarding Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice	1896-1970	28 items
Folder 12	“The Poetry and Prose of Cale Young Rice” and “Cale Young Rice and Alice Hegan Rice: The Story of Their Books,” published by Century Co.	n.d.	2 items
<b>BOX 5</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Miscellaneous; Castle Heights Military Academy and Cumberland University; Autobiographical and personal writing</b>	<b>1887-1979</b>	<b>141 items</b>
Folder 1	Certificates, citations	1950-1979	20 items
Folder 2	Passports, vaccination certificate	1927-1961	7 items
Folder 3	Nakánawa Camps for Girls	1945	2 items
Folder 4	Grade records from Cumberland University	1887-1891	13 items
Folder 5	Castle Heights Military Academy and Cumberland University – Reminiscences, addresses, programs	1946-1972, n.d.	28 items
Folder 6	Kappa Sigma – Correspondence, publications, etc.	1949-1972	45 items



Folder 7	Cumberland College Math Club – Guest book	1967	1 item
Folder 8	Rice Observatory, Cumberland University	n.d.	1 item
Folder 9	Miscellaneous writing – Personal and autobiographical	1961-1970, n.d.	14 items
Folder 10	“A Backward Look at Eighty”	[1950]	1 item
Folder 11	<i>Reflections and Recollections</i> manuscript	1961	1 item
Folder 12	<i>Obiter Dicta of a Post-Centenarian</i> typescript	[1971]	1 item
Folder 13	<i>Obiter Dicta of a Post-Centenarian</i> manuscript and partial printed copy	[1971]	2 items
Folder 14	Writings on old age	1967-1970	5 items
<b>Box 6</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Genealogy; Writing</b>	<b>1897-1969</b>	<b>128 items</b>
Folder 1	Rice genealogy – Correspondence, etc.	1915-1972	33 items
Folder 2	<i>By the Name of Rice</i> – Historical sketch of Deacon Edmund Rice and his descendants, by Charles Elmer Rice	1911	1 item
Folder 3	Journal of Laban Lacy Rice	1967	1 item
Folder 4	Writing on race relations	1951-1970	23 items
Folder 5	Writing and data on ancient Greece	n.d.	8 items
Folder 6	Writing and notes on Mars, planets, stars	1957-1958	20 items
Folder 7	Writing and notes on extraterrestrial life	1962, n.d.	9 items
Folder 8	“What to Know About Relativity” and notes	n.d.	5 items
Folder 9	Writing on cosmogony	n.d.	5 items
Folder 10	<i>The Universe: Its Origin, Nature and Destiny</i>	1951	1 item
Folder 11	Notes and drafts for lectures “Our Puzzling Universe” and “Origin and Destiny of the Universe”	n.d.	13 items

Folder 12	Scrapbook on Rice Planetarium	1953-1954	1 item
Folder 13	L. L. Rice Planetarium, Stetson University – Report	1962	1 item
Folder 14	Miscellaneous writing – Scientific	1897-1950	6 items
Folder 15	“Behind the Veil,” by Frank Logan Goodwin	1957	1 item
<b>Box 7</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Writing</b>	<b>1895-1970</b>	<b>54 items</b>
Folder 1	“America’s Poetic Pleiad” articles for <i>Cumberland Presbyterian</i>	1896	1 item
Folder 2	“The Man From Tellereve” and other stories	n.d.	1 item
Folder 3	“Dead Hands”	n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	<i>Gunsmoke</i> scripts	n.d.	3 items
Folder 5	“Our Town U.S.A.”	1965	3 items
Folder 6	Film treatment for “I Wonder What Next?” or “Our Town U.S.A.”	n.d.	3 items
Folder 7	“The Wheel Quiz”	n.d.	1 item
Folder 8	Notes and drafts for “The Wheel Quiz”	n.d.	6 items
Folder 9	“The Bell Witch”	n.d.	1 item
Folder 10	Song lyrics	n.d.	6 items
Folder 11	Miscellaneous writing – Fiction, humor	n.d.	10 items
Folder 12	Miscellaneous writing	1895-1965	15 items
Folder 13	Book jackets	[1946-1956]	3 items
<b>Box 8</b>	<b>Laban Lacy Rice – Poems; Epigrams; Photographs</b>	<b>1890-1971</b>	<b>221 items</b>
Folder 1	Poems (A-M)	n.d.	70 items
Folder 2	Poems (N-W)	n.d.	57 items

Folder 3	Poems and short essays	n.d.	1 item
Folder 4	<i>A Sheaf of Epigrams</i> – manuscript drafts	1963	2 items
Folder 5	Notebook of collected quotations	n.d.	1 item
Folder 6	Collected quotations	n.d.	1 item
Folder 7	Printed items (poems, prayers, programs)	1913-1961	16 items
Folder 8	Discussion questions regarding women	n.d.	1 item
Folder 9	Miscellaneous clippings of interest to Rice	n.d.	1 item
Folder 10	Oversized items list (C1,D6,#4)	1959, 1970, n.d.	4 items
Folder 11	Laban Lacy Rice – Photographs	1890-1971	9 items
Folder 12	Laban Lacy Rice – Photographs	1935-1971	10 items
Folder 13	Laban Lacy Rice homes – Photographs	n.d.	20 items
Folder 14	Rice Planetarium, St. Petersburg, Florida; Telescope, Central Florida Museum – Photographs	1957, n.d. n.d.	2 items
Folder 15	Observatory, Ware Neck, Virginia – Photographs	1947-1953	3 items
Folder 16	Rice Observatory, Cumberland University – Photographs	1946-1957, n.d.	11 items
Folder 17	Doctor of Letters, Cumberland Law School – Photographs	1959	5 items
Folder 18	Laban Marchbanks Rice & Martha Lacy Rice – Photographs	1891, n.d.	4 items
Folder 19	Miscellaneous photographs	1946, n.d.	3 items

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS RICE, Laban Lacy, 1887-1988  
605 1870-1973

Correspondence, writings, photographs, clippings, and papers of Laban Lacy Rice, a Webster, County, Kentucky native, educator, author, lecturer, poet, and president of Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee. Includes his scientific writing, principally on astronomy, relativity and cosmology, as well as fiction, poetry, and autobiographical writing. Also includes some correspondence and papers relating to his brother, poet and dramatist Cale Young Rice, and sister-in-law, author Alice Hegan Rice.

8 boxes. 111 folders. 2,162 items. Originals, photocopies, photographs.

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    See also:  
        Castle Heights Military Academy

Choi, John A., 1912-2008  
    See also:  
        Jae-seon, John A. Choi

Cumberland College – Lebanon, Tennessee  
    See also:  
        Cumberland University

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