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Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 (MSS 645)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
Department of Library Special Collections
Western Kentucky University
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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 645 RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986

2 boxes. 29 folders. 600 items. 1890-2001

SC2018.78.1

See Also: [MSS 239](#)

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 NOTE

This collection reflects Elizabeth Richardson's almost 50-year involvement with quilts, quilting, and quilters. Box 1 contains correspondence with various quilt authorities, and the bulk of it consists of letters to Richardson from noted quilt authority Florence Peto. For more Peto letters to Richardson, see an earlier collection: MSS 239 RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth. Other noted quilting experts with which Richardson corresponded include: Blanche Bergquist, Shirley Conlon and Bets Ramsey. The letters from Peto, 1954 to 1968, 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 included fabric samples have not been numbered individually so that no ink would permanently stain them. The letters from other quilters include much of the same information, but are not as personal in nature.

Box 2 includes more information related to programs that Richardson gave about quilts and her associated research. Folder 1 includes notes for quilting presentations and Folder 2 includes bibliographic information about quilting sources. Folder 3 includes a large number of quilt graphics, some done on graph paper, as well as some lovely water color renditions of quilt squares. Folder 4 includes several quilt blocks and fabric swatches that Richardson used in her presentations and classes. Folder 5 houses a number of color and black & white photographs of quilts; it also includes several photos of Richardson in a quilted apron giving a presentation. Unfortunately, many of the quilts are not identified by provenance or by pattern name. Folder 6 includes a booklet compiled by Norma J. Dues and titled "Booklet of All the Small Black and White Sketches from 'American Quilts and Coverlets'" by Florence Peto. Folder 7 includes copies of articles from newspapers and magazines about quilts. The remaining folders (8-10) contain copies of printed quilt publications and miscellaneous material.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1		1934-2001	329 items
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Letters from Florence Peto	1953	19 items
Folder 3	Letters from Florence Peto	1954	22 items
Folder 4	Letters from Florence Peto	1955	30 items
Folder 5	Letters from Florence Peto	1956	26 items
Folder 6	Letters from Florence Peto	1957	22 items
Folder 7	Letters from Florence Peto	1958	26 items
Folder 8	Letters from Florence Peto	1959	25 items

Folder 9	Letters from Florence Peto	1960	19 items
Folder 10	Letters from Florence Peto	1961	14 items
Folder 11	Letters from Florence Peto	1962	9 items
Folder 12	Letters from Florence Peto	1963	10 items
Folder 13	Letters from Florence Peto	1964	5 items
Folder 14	Letters from Florence Peto	1965-1966	8 items
Folder 15	Letters from Florence Peto	1968; 1970	5 items
Folder 16	Letters from Blanche Bergquist	1974; 1992	7 items
Folder 17	Letters from Shirley Conlon	1974; n.d.	24 items
Folder 18	Letters from Betty June "Bets" (Miller) Ramsey	1993-1994; 1998	11 items
Folder 19	Letters from miscellaneous correspondents	1934-2001	46 items
BOX 2		1890-2001; n.d.	271 items
Folder 1	Notes for quilt classes	n.d.	5 items
Folder 2	Quilts and quilting – Bibliographies	1949-1980; n.d.	20 items
Folder 3	Quilt patterns	1890-1975; n.d.	34 items
Folder 4	Fabric swatches and quilt blocks	n.d.	18 items
Folder 5	Photographs	1960; n.d.	117 items
Folder 6	"Booklet of All the Small Black & White Sketches..." by Florence Peto	n.d.	2 items
Folder 7	News clippings related to quilts and quilting	1941-1992	35 items
Folder 8	Quilt publications – <i>Quilt Enthusiast</i> and <i>Nimble Needles Treasures</i>	1973-2001	6 items
Folder 9	Quilt publications – <i>Canada Quilts</i>	1974-1975	8 items

Folder 10 Miscellaneous 1922-2001; n.d. 26 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS RICHARDSON, Laura Elizabeth 1890-2001
 645 (Ferguson), 1908-1986

Letters, photographs, and research notes
 belonging to quilt collector Laura Elizabeth Richardson.
 Includes letters and research materials from noted quilt
 authority Florence Peto.
 2 boxes. 29 folders. 600 items.
 SC2018.78.1

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Bergquist, Blanche B1,F16
 Conlon, Shirley B1,F17
 Dunton, William Rush, 1868-1966 B1,F19
 McGuyer, June (Richardson) B1,F19
 Peto, Florence, 1884-1970
 Quilts and quilting
 Quilts and quilting – Photos B2,F
 Ramsey, Betty June “Bets” (Miller), b. 1923 B1,F18
 Richardson, Laura Elizabeth (Ferguson), 1908-1986 – Correspondence B1,F19
 Richardson, William Edwin, 1900-1971 B1,F19
 Stenge, Bertha, 1891-1957 – Relating to B1
 Sullivan, Margaret Ellen, 1916-2006 B1,F19
 Textiles

Jeffrey 08/15/2018