Davidson, Benjamin Gideon, III, 1914-1998 (MSS 559)

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Biographical Note

Benjamin Gideon “B. G.” Davidson, III, the son of Benjamin Gideon Davidson, II and James Katherine (Depp) Davidson, was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky on 7 December 1914. He graduated from Bowling Green High School in 1933 and from Centre College in Danville, Kentucky in 1937 with a bachelor’s degree in economics. While at Centre, he played football and was a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity.

Davidson attended the Jefferson School of Law, Louisville, Kentucky and served in the U.S. Navy. He also served as prosecuting attorney for the City of Bowling Green and as Warren County Attorney, and represented the 22nd District in the Kentucky General Assembly. He and his wife Dixie Russell (1919-2004), who he married on 21 February 1950, were the parents of four sons.

Collection Note

This collection consists primarily of letters to B. G. Davidson from friends, mostly female, written to him while he was a student at Bowling Green High School and Centre College. After Davidson graduated from high school and enrolled at Centre, he maintained contact with his hometown friends, some of whom attended Western Kentucky State College (WKU) and the Bowling Green Business University. Also included are a few letters from his mother, miscellaneous papers, and photographs. An inventory is in Folder 1, along with data on Davidson’s summer employment during his law studies.

Folder 2 contains letters from friends keeping Davidson up to date on their activities, gossiping, and making arrangements to meet in Danville or Bowling Green. A few identify themselves only by first names or nicknames: “Scottie,” “Baggy,” “Carol,” “Helen.” The letters focus heavily on youthful hijinks and leisure activities, principally dances and football games, but also discuss studies and grades. Among Davidson’s several female admirers is Ann Beasley, two years behind him in high school. She becomes especially enamored of him and writes anguished letters when a rival for his affections enters the picture. A male friend, Leonard Rabold, writes of his work operating the Goal Post, a popular WKU student hangout.
Folder 3 contains letters to Davidson from Ann’s romantic rival Hildegarde “Hildy” Massey, who is equally effusive in her expressions of both affection and jealousy. Together, the letters of Ann and Hildy present a vivid picture of a youthful 1930s love triangle. A few letters from Davidson to Hildy are also included.

Folder 4 contains letters to Davidson from his mother, written while he was a student at Centre College and at law school in Louisville. Davidson and his mother, who had been a widow since 1918, retained stock in Davidson and Brothers, Inc., a family grocery firm in Glasgow, and the letters make reference to a legal action involving the firm, Davidson’s father’s estate, and the elder Davidson’s brother Glenn Price Davidson. Mrs. Davidson also writes to her son in 1941 regarding his draft status.

Folder 5 contains lively and affectionate letters to Davidson from a female friend (and possibly cousin), Mary Pauline Scherer of Denver, Colorado.

Folder 6 contains a 1915 letter to Davidson’s mother from his father, who writes from North Carolina and alludes to his poor health. A second 1933 letter from a faculty member at Centre College informs her of the football coach’s wish to interview her son about playing for the school.

Folder 7 contains miscellaneous papers of B. G. Davidson. Included are notes and receipts relating to his financial indebtedness to Centre College; a report card from fall 1934; a notice of a meeting of stockholders of Davidson Brothers, Inc.; his 1943 letter to the Jefferson School of Law advising that Navy service will interrupt his nearly completed law studies and asking for consideration in obtaining his degree early; and a 1947 campaign card advertising his candidacy in the Democratic primary as state representative for Warren County.

Folder 8 contains unidentified photographs of a child, young women (one on horseback), and a young man (possibly Davidson) on horseback.

SHELF LIST

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<td>Inventory and biographical data</td>
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<td>B. G. Davidson – Miscellaneous papers</td>
<td>1933-1947</td>
<td>9 items</td>
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</table>
Folder 8  Miscellaneous unidentified photographs  n.d.  10 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS  DAVIDSON, Benjamin Gideon, III, 1915-1947
559  1914-1998

Letters to B. G. Davidson, Bowling Green, Kentucky, written primarily by female friends when he was a student at Bowling Green High School and Centre College, Danville, Kentucky. Includes some letters from his mother and miscellaneous papers.

½ box.  8 folders.  132 items.  Originals, photographs.
SC2015.2.215

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

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Baker, Hildegard (Massey), 1916-2011 – Relating to  B1,F2
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Bowling Green Country Club, Inc.  B1,F7
Bowling Green High School – Student life, 1931-1933  B1,F2,3
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Centre College – Danville – Relating to  B1,F6,7
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Deavours, Ann Ellen (Beasley), 1917-2010 – Relating to  B1,F3
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