

# William Cowper Brann:

## An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator</b>	Brann, William Cowper, 1855-1898
<b>Title</b>	William Cowper Brann Papers
<b>Dates:</b>	1872-1922
<b>Extent</b>	3 boxes (1 linear foot)
<b>Abstract</b>	American author and newspaper editor William Cowper Brann worked a string of odd jobs, beginning when he was thirteen, before entering the newspaper field. A successful editor, Brann also wrote plays and published the <i>Iconoclast</i> , a monthly journal which expressed Brann's views on social, political, and religious subjects. Brann's papers are largely composed of manuscripts for his three plays and correspondence documenting his feuds with religious leaders and politicians, as well as letters of support from readers of the <i>Iconoclast</i> .
<b>RLIN Record #</b>	TXRC94-A1
<b>Language:</b>	English.
<b>Access</b>	Open for research

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### Administrative Information

<b>Acquisition</b>	Unknown
<b>Processed by</b>	Peggy McBride, Lars Meyer; Revised by David Hatfield Sparks, October 1993
<b>Repository:</b>	<a href="#">Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin</a>

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## Biographical Sketch

William Cowper Brann, born January 4, 1855, in Humboldt, Illinois, was an author, lecturer, and newspaper editor. Following his mother's death in 1857, he was placed by his father, Noble Brann, a Presbyterian minister, with William and Nancy Hawkins. At thirteen years of age Brann left his foster home to begin working at a series of jobs that included bellboy, printer, professional baseball pitcher, opera company manager, and, eventually, newspaper reporter. After settling in Rochelle Illinois, he married Carrie Belle Martin in 1877. They had three children: Inez, Grace Gertrude, and William Carlyle.

As a self-educated man, opinionated columnist, and successful editor, Brann worked during the years 1877-1890 for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *Houston Post*, and *The Galveston Daily News*. While in Galveston, around 1889, he wrote three plays that, although are now unknown, gained some degree of popularity and notoriety at the time. All three plays were copyrighted, but only *That American Woman* (1889) was later published in 1941 by the University of Texas Press. *Cleon* (1889) is a historical drama, while *Retribution* (1889) is a melodrama, and *That American Woman* (1889), a "modern" society play. Of these plays, only *Retribution* (1889) was probably performed. Twice revised, this play was presented at the San Antonio Grand Opera House in 1893.

Brann's caustic and vitriolic journalistic style made enemies that prompted frequent changes in his employment. In 1891 following disagreements with the editor-in-chief of the *Houston Post*, and the death and probable suicide of his first daughter Inez (age 13), he moved to Austin, Texas, where he launched his own publication, the *Austin Iconoclast*. Although renamed the *Texas Iconoclast* in 1892, neither volume was successful. In that same year Brann became editor of the *San Antonio Express*. In 1893, following other freelance editorships, Brann sold the Austin publication to William Sydney Porter ("O. Henry") who rechristened it *The Rolling Stone*.

In 1894 Brann moved to Waco, Texas, to work for the *Daily News*. He resumed publishing the *Iconoclast* in February, 1895, as a monthly journal. This publication was successful from the start and immediately gained a large readership. Expounding his views on a variety of social, political, and religious subjects, Brann continued to write and lecture in a typical caustic, vitriolic, and "yellow" journalistic style. Brann's repeated attacks on religious hypocrisy and intolerance, especially those aimed at Baylor University and the Baptists, sparked a bitter dispute leading to his abduction in 1897 by a "mob" of Baylor students. On April 1, 1898, most likely as a result of his growing notoriety and continuing assaults on the local political and religious elite, Brann was shot by Captain Tom. E. Davis. The following day both men died from the wounds received in the gun battle.

Brann remains best known for the *Iconoclast*, which at its height had an international circulation of 90,000. Most of his articles, speeches, and editorials were published in collections after his death in 1898. A collection of his writings, *The Writings of Brann the Iconoclast*, was later reissued in 1938.

## Scope and Contents

The William Cowper Brann Papers, 1872-1922 (3 boxes), consist of correspondence, manuscripts, newspaper clippings, and scrapbooks of William Cowper Brann, the Brann family, as well as Brann's business associates. The bulk of this material dates from 1896 to 1998 and concerns his public battles in publishing and his tragic death. The W. C. Brann collection is arranged in three series: William Cowper Brann (1876-98), The Brann Family (1872-1922) and Miscellaneous (nd). The Brann series is subdivided into Manuscripts, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous. Among the manuscripts (1889, n.d.) are holograph copies of three plays, *Cleon*, *Retribution*, *That American Woman*, and a "challenge" written by Brann to the Baylor college "mob" who attacked him.

The majority of Brann's correspondence concerns his infamous arguments with Baylor University officials and students, organized religion, and local politicians. Other correspondence covers his abduction and murder. This correspondence, in general, reflects the diversity and loyalty of subscribers to the *Iconoclast* and of Brann's devotees. Brann's letters to Carrie Brann during their courtship and early marriage are found in the second series among Carrie Brann's correspondence. Also included in this series is a letter from William Jennings Bryan.

The correspondence found under the heading Editors of the *Iconoclast* contains condolences and memorials sent to H. W. Ward, Brann's business manager; Judge George B. Gerald, a friend of the Brann family; and William Marion Reedy, editor of the *St. Louis Mirror*, who contributed to the *Iconoclast* following Brann's death. Also included here are letters concerning the construction of a monument to Brann, as well as a poetic memorial by Mary Nolan entitled "A Schoolgirl's Tribute to W.C. Brann."

The miscellaneous subseries (1896-1898, n.d.) contains two scrapbooks of newspaper clippings which document W. C. Brann's career in publishing and lecturing, as well as his violent death. Also included is a broadside advertising a collection of Brann's works published posthumously by his wife, and the court report filed after the death of Brann and his assailant, Captain Tom Davis. Also found here are cancelled checks paid from Brann's bank account and numerous submissions to the *Iconoclast* editors for publication, including the poetry of E.H. Rydall and numerous memorials and eulogies to Brann.

The Brann family series is divided into two subseries, Correspondence and Miscellaneous. The numerous condolences, eulogies, and memorials to W.C. Brann that Carrie received in 1898 comprise the bulk of the material. Personal letters (six items) comprise the limited correspondence of Grace Brann. Other correspondence represents personal correspondence to the Brann family from Noble Brann, William and Mary Hawkins, and Sarah and David Savage Martin. The miscellaneous subseries (1890, nd.) primarily contains items relating to Inez Brann: letters from Inez to her father, one letter from her sister Grace (signed "Tot"), a poem by her grandfather, David Savage Martin, public school report cards, Inez's suicide note, obituary, and a burial receipt.

The third series is comprised of a set of index cards, creator and date unknown, that are alphabetized and dated and which summarize the content of the correspondence in this collection.

Significant correspondents include: William Jennings Bryan, Senator Thomas Gore [Oklahoma], and William Marion Reedy. A list of all correspondents in the Brann Papers is located at the end of this inventory.

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## **Related Material**

Related HRHRC holdings: William Marion Reedy.

Other holdings of the manuscripts material and publications of William Cowper Brann are found in the following collections:

- University of Texas, Center for American History
  - Baylor University, Waco Texas, The Texas Collection, William Cowper Brann Papers - 1890-1899.
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## **Index Terms**

### **Correspondents**

Bryan, William Jennings

Gore, Thomas P.

Reedy, William Marion

### **Subjects**

Authors, American--Texas--Waco--Biography

Baylor University--History

Brann Family

Editors--Texas--Waco--Biography

Journalists--Texas

### **Places**

Waco, Texas--History

### **Document Types**

Eulogies

Scrapbooks

Brann, William Cowper, 1855-1898

Scripts

**Titles**

*Iconoclast (Waco, Texas)*

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**Series I. W. C. Brann, 1876-1898**

Subseries A: Manuscripts, 1889, n.d.

<i>That American Woman</i> , 1889	<b>box 1 folder 1</b>
<i>Retribution</i> , 1889	<b>folder 2</b>
<i>Cleon</i> , 1889	<b>folder 3</b>
<i>Brann's Challenge</i> , n.d.	<b>folder 4</b>

Subseries B: Correspondence, 1876-1898, n.d.

1876, 1895, 1896, Jan. - Sept., 1897	<b>box 1 folder 5</b>
Oct. 3-7, 1897	<b>folder 6</b>
Oct. 8-15, Dec. 1897	<b>folder 7</b>
1898, n.d.	<b>folder 8</b>
Apr. 3 - Jun. 15, 1898 Editors of the <i>Iconoclast</i>	<b>folder 9</b>
May 22, 1898 and Jun. 12, 1898 Judge George B. Gerald	<b>folder 10</b>
Dec. 24, 1897 and April 3, 9, 1898 William H. Ward	<b>folder 11</b>

Subseries C: Miscellaneous, 1896-1898, n.d.

Cancelled checks, 1896	<b>box 2 folder 1</b>
Scrapbook #1, 1897-1898	<b>folder 2</b>
Scrapbook #2, 1897-1898	<b>folder 3</b>
Court report, 1898	<b>folder 4</b>
Memorial and poetry, E. H. Rydall, ca. 1898	<b>folder 5</b>
Broadside, n.d.	<b>folder 6</b>

## Series II. Brann Family, 1872-1922

### Subseries A: Correspondence, 1872-1922

**box 3**

Brann, Carrie Belle Martin

1872 - 1883

**box 3 folder 1**

April 1-2, 1898

**folder 2**

April 3, 1898

**folder 3**

April 4, 1898

**folder 4**

April 5-8, 1898

**folder 5**

April 9 - Jun. 13, 1898

**folder 6**

July 1898-1922

**folder 7**

Brann, Grace Gertrude ("Tot")

1890, 1900, 1902, n.d.

**box 3 folder 8**

Miscellaneous. Correspondence

1881-83, 1888, 1896, n.d.

**box 3 folder 9**

### Subseries B: Miscellaneous, 1890, n.d.

Brann, Inez Martin ("Dottie"), 1890, n.d.

**box 3 folder  
10**

Suicide note, report cards, burial receipt, photocopied newspaper clippings, and letters (3 items)

Martin, David Savage

"In Thy Young Life," printed poem and holograph manuscript (two items)

Small packet of "evergreen from Lincoln's tomb," in an unsigned envelope

Brann, William Cowper, 1855-1898

**Series III. Miscellaneous, nd.**

Index Cards - creator unknown, summary of correspondence contents, dated, and alphabetized by author.

**box 2**  
**folder**  
7

## William Cowper Brann Papers--Index of Correspondents

- Agee, George O.--3.2
- Andrews, H.--1.5
- Baker, Mary Mills--3.8
- Baker, Walter M.--3.8
- Baldwin, Jeanette (Mrs. M. R.)--3.5
- Barlow, E.--1.11
- Barlow, Frank J --1.6
- Barnds, Kemp ( *The Sweet Springs Herald*)--3.5
- Bell, Ralcy H. ( *Magazine of Medicine*)--1.6
- Bennett, A. B.--3.3
- Birkman, Edward E.--3.5
- Bishops, Julia Truitt--1.7
- Black, C. B.--3.5
- Black, W. M.--3.8
- Bleulens, H. J.--3.6
- Boaz, T. J.--1.7
- Bottler, Eugene (Mrs.)--3.5
- Boudurant, Jerome A.--1.6
- Brann, Grace Gertrude (Tot)--3.8, 3.10
- Brann, Inez Martin (Dottie)--3.10
- Brann, Noble J.--3.9
- Brann, William Cowper (Will, Harry)--3.1, 3.8
- Brannan, P. F.--3.6
- Brightwell, J. C.--1.7
- Britton, R.--3.6
- Brooks, B. A. (Mrs.)--3.8
- Brown, Paul--1.9
- Brown, Peyton--1.5
- Brown, S. M.--1.9
- Bryan, William Jennings--1.5
- Buckhart, Simon--1.7
- Burleigh, Alice (Mrs.)
- Burnett, Harold--1.7
- Byerts, W. H.--3.5
- Caldwell, Jas.--1.9
- Campbell, Charles--3.3
- Carrington, C. M.--1.5
- Catell, S.W.--3.5
- Christian, Eugene--1.6
- Christie, Mary E.--3.2
- Clancy, Lawrence--1.6
- Claridge, R.R. ( *Claridge's Stock-Farmer Monthly*)--3.8
- Clarke, Proctor K.--1.6
- Clifford, Eleanor E. (Mrs.)--1.7
- Closz, Herriet M.--3.4
- Coleman, H. L.--1.7
- Coleman, J. C.--1.7, 3.3
- Conn, S. Jack--3.5
- Conrardy, L. L.--1.5

- Cooper, W. C. ( *The Medical Gleaner*)--1.6
- Cooper, W. H.--3.2
- Coplin, T. L.--1.6
- Corey, Horace W.--3.6
- Cornelius, A. R.--3.2
- Costa, W. S.--3.4
- Cramer, Steward--3.3
- Crawford, M. P.--3.3
- Daly, Joseph J.--3.6
- Daniel, Joe--3.2
- Danner, George--3.9
- Dart, E. Clarence--3.6
- Davidson, M. D.--3.6
- Davis, Bettie--1.7
- DeLacey, William C.--3.6
- Dick, C. J. ( *The Battle Ax*)--3.3
- Dillard, A.--1.11
- Dodd, J. H.--1.7, 3.2
- Dreyfus, Jules--1.7
- Dugan, G. S. (Mr. and Mrs.)--3.6
- Dumas, B. H.--3.3
- Earnest, Frank B.--3.2
- Edwards, Charles A.--1.5
- Einfalt, J. M. (Mrs.)--3.5
- Ellis, H. E.--1.6
- Emmons, Rollin--1.11
- Etheridge, S. G.--1.5
- Ewor, N. H.--1.9
- Fall, Philip H.--3.3
- Ferguson, James S.--1.6
- Flavin, Thomas--1.6
- Ford, Patrick--1.7
- Furay, Charles E.--1.6
- Galletly, John--1.7
- Gay, R. C.--3.4
- George, Henry--1.5
- George, R. F.--3.2
- Glass, T. C.--1.7, 3.3
- Gordon, Cosmo--3.6
- Gore, Thomas P.--3.8
- Graves, Alice V.--3.8
- Gray and Smith, Grocers--3.4
- Griffin, E. M.--1.6
- Guice, Edwin T.--3.2
- Gwin, M. R. ( *The Barr County Graphic*)--3.4
- Haddam, Elias ( *Dowagiac Daily News*)--3.6
- Hairgrove, William N.--1.9
- Hall, E. J.--3.6
- Hand, T. J.--1.6
- Hannon, M.--1.7
- Hawkins, Nancy--3.8, 3.9

- Hawthorne, Will V.--1.8
- Hayles, C. L.--3.5
- Hector, William--3.4
- Hendry, G. W.--1.6
- Hern, F. E.--3.6
- Holmes, Florence L.--3.2
- Hornsby, Charles--1.7
- Hoss, G. S.--3.4
- Hunt, Lon L.--3.6
- Hyatt, J. W.--1.11
- Keller, G. M.--1.7
- Kennedy, William--1.6
- Jackson, Andrew H.--3.2
- Jackson, T. T.--3.4
- Jackson, William Thomas--3.4
- J. B. Naylor and Company--1.5
- Jennings, J. G.--3.5
- J. L. Holmes, et. al.--1.6
- Johnson, J. M.--1.5
- Johnstone, Anna Florence--3.3
- Jones, H. B.--3.2
- Jones, L.--1.6
- Keathly, J. B.--1.6, 3.4
- Knewton, K.--1.8
- Knoules, Abigail S.--3.6
- Krause, Bywaters, and Rammie--1.6
- Lancaster, H. H. (Mrs.)--3.5
- Law, James D.--3.6
- Lewis, W. W.--1.6
- Litton, P. M.--3.6
- Lunsford, Charles W.--3.3
- Marsh, Neil C.--1.7
- Marshall, Albert--3.3
- Marshall, Mary--3.4
- Marshall, R. H.--3.2
- Martin, Carrie Belle (Mrs. William Cowper Brann)--1.5
- Martin, David Savage--3.9
- Martin, David Savage (Mrs.) (Mother Sell)--3.9
- Mason, Hastings--1.7
- Mayfield, W. D. (Mr. and Mrs.)--3.8
- McBrien, John--3.2
- McCollum, A. R.--3.2
- McCollum, R. M. ( *The Journal*)--3.4
- Miles, J. R.--1.11
- Miller, S. S.--1.7
- Mistrot, Henry Bertrand (Mrs.)--3.8
- Moody, Edward C.--3.5
- Moody, W. E.--1.7
- Moon, C. E.--3.5
- Morris, H. H.--1.7
- Morrow, Robert W.--1.6

- Munro, W. G.--3.2
- Murray, J. A.--1.6
- Neester, P.--1.6
- Newberry, Samuel--1.9
- Nolan, Mary Blanche--1.11
- Norword, T. M.--1.6
- Nuhn, Joseph E.--1.6
- O'Conner, I. M.--1.7
- Oldham, Will P.--3.4
- Oleary, Pearse--1.6
- Olinger, W. L., et. al.--3.2
- Olson, M. O.--3.8
- Parker, H. J.--1.7
- Patterson, Annie
- Perkins, Eli--1.10
- Pierce, Mel (*The City Recorder*)--1.6
- Pitchford, Laura, E. (Mrs.)--3.6
- Poor, H. W.--1.6
- Poland, S. E.--1.5
- Quinn, Robert--3.8
- Ramber, O. A.--1.6
- Read, B. T.--1.5
- Redwine, M. H.--3.4
- Reedy, William Marion--1.8
- Roach, S. F.--3.3
- Roe, Emma--3.1
- Robbins, E. B.--1.6
- Roberts, F. H.--1.7
- Rogers, M. B.--1.11
- Rohleder, J. F.--1.6
- Rooch, J. K.--3.6
- Rulon, C. E.--3.8
- Schindler, John F.--1.7
- Schlesinger, J. Albert--3.5
- Scott, C. S.--1.9
- Shaw, Ella D.--3.8
- Shine, Francis (*Rocky Mountain News*)--3.4
- Siegel, H. (Mrs.)--3.5
- Simpson, Will--3.6
- Skues, R. A.--1.7
- Sleanfield, H. (*Press Club of Chicago*)--3.5
- Slemaker, G. B.--3.5
- Small, John C.--1.7
- Smith, E.--1.8
- Smith, James J. M.--1.10
- Smith, W. A.--1.7
- Songley, Mary Y.--3.8
- Spalding, B. F. (Mrs.)--3.4
- Stafford, Jennie E.--3.6
- Stanley, Easlea (Mrs.)--3.3
- Stanley, James--3.4

- Stanbery, John F.--1.6
- Sterle, J. G. (Mrs.)--3.6
- Stewart, C. E.--1.6
- Stokes, J. M.--3.4
- Stone, J. C.--3.5
- Steright, T. E.--3.5
- Sturges, Frank--3.2
- Strugis, W. E.--1.11
- Swan, Joseph W.--3.2
- Taylor, J. E.--3.8
- Teagarden, W. B.--1.5
- Thomas, Cullen F. (Mrs.)--3.5
- Thorndyke, Agnes W.--3.5
- Tobias, Tom A.--1.11, 3.6
- Tolls, C. H.--3.5
- Toweny, John--1.6
- Trainum, W. H.--3.3
- Travell, J. M.--1.7
- Vandegaer, Leo--3.6
- Van Zandt, C. W.--1.6, 1.9
- Vaughan, S. W.--1.7
- Vea, W. W. M.--1.6
- Walworth, E.--1.8
- Whedon, Milford D.--1.6
- White, J. W.--3.4
- Williams, H. W.--1.6
- Willrich, George--3.5
- Wilkinson, Lee--3.4
- Wilson, D. W.--1.8
- Wilson, H. A.--1.7
- Wineman, Parker--3.3
- Winston, Dave--1.6
- Witt, James C.--3.3
- Wright, W. C.--1.11
- Wright, W. J.--1.7