

Fred Gipson:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Gipson, Fred, 1908-1973.
Title	Fred Gipson Papers
Dates:	1920-1973
Extent:	34 boxes (14 linear feet), 1 oversize folder
Abstract:	The papers include manuscripts, drafts, correspondence, contracts, financial and legal documents, and photographs that documenting Gipson's life as one of the most prolific writers of the American Southwest.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-01622
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials. Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days' notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: reference@hrc.utexas.edu

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Gift 1965, Purchase, 1973
Processed by	Carla Ellard, Linda Peterson, Lisa Rush, and Tim Thompson, 1994; Revised, 1995 by David Hatfield Sparks
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Frederick Benjamin Gipson, journalist and author of western and children's literature, was born February 7, 1908, near Mason, Texas. As the son of cotton farmers, Gipson worked as a field laborer while attending Mason High School. After graduating in 1926, Gipson worked as a goat driver, mule skinner, and day laborer before enrolling as a journalism major at the University of Texas in 1933. That same year Gipson won a writing contest for which J. Frank Dobie, the Texas folklore writer, was a judge. Gipson's winning story, "Hard-Pressed Sam," was later published in the *Southwest Review*. He also wrote for the University's student paper, *The Daily Texan*. Gipson married Tommie Eloise Wynn in 1940 with whom he had two children; they were divorced in 1964. In 1967 Gipson was married to Angelina Torres.

Gipson's career as a newspaper reporter and columnist from 1937 to 1940 included work for the Corpus Christi *Caller-Times*, the *Denver Post*, the San Angelo *Standard-Times*, and the Paris, Texas *News*. In 1940 Gipson moved back to Mason, Texas, where he began writing a syndicated newspaper column, "Around Our Place," as well as fiction for pulp western publications. In 1943 Gipson sold his first story to *Colliers* magazine, followed by sales to other magazines such as *Reader's Digest*, *Look*, and *Liberty*. His first book, *Fabulous Empire: Colonel Zack Miller's Story*, was published in 1946. Other nonfiction works by Gipson include *Big Bend*, with J. Oscar Langford (1952), *Cowhand: the Story of a Working Cowboy* (1953), and *The Cow Killers: With the Aftosa Commission in Mexico* (1956).

Although he was successful as a writer of nonfiction, it was as a novelist that Gipson became best known. In 1945 Gipson met literary agent Maurice Crain, which led to a long-term association between the two Texans. Gipson's first best sellers, *Hound-Dog Man* (1949) and *The Home Place* (1950), were listed in the *New York Times* best seller list and were optioned for film rights by Twentieth Century-Fox. From 1953 to 1955 Gipson wrote for and served as associate editor of *True West*, a pulp magazine of nonfiction western stories founded by Joe A. Small. From the mid-1950s to early 1960s, Gipson published four more novels for young readers, *Trail Driving Rooster* (1955), *Recollection Creek* (1955), *Old Yeller* (1956), and *Savage Sam* (1962). Gipson wrote the screen adaptation of *Old Yeller* (1958) for Walt Disney Studios as well as the screen adaptations of *Hound-Dog Man* (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1959) and *Savage Sam* (Walt Disney Studios, 1963).

Gipson was the recipient of several literary awards including the William Allen White Children's Book Award, 1959 and the First Sequoyah Award, Oklahoma, 1959. In 1965 Gipson became president of the Texas Institute of Letters and was named a "Fellow" in 1970. Gipson died at his ranch in Mason County on August 17, 1973, and was, by special proclamation of the governor, buried in the State Cemetery in Austin, Texas. Two of his novels for young readers, *Little Arliss* (1978) and *Curley and the Wild Boar* (1980), were published posthumously.

For further information, see also

Cox, Mike. *Fred Gipson, Texas Storyteller*. Austin: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1980.

Henderson, Sam H. *Fred Gipson*. Austin: Steck-Vaughn, 1967.

Lich, Glen E. *Fred Gipson at Work*. College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1990.

Scope and Contents

The Fred Gipson Papers, 1920-1973 (34 boxes), include manuscripts, drafts, correspondence, contracts, financial and legal documents, and photographs that document his life as one of the most prolific writers of the American Southwest. The collection is arranged in five series: Works, 1942-1965 (11 boxes), Clippings and Printed Materials, 1935-1983 (3 boxes), Correspondence, 1920-1973 (17 boxes), Personal Papers, 1922-1972 (1.5 boxes), and Financial and Legal Documents, 1944-1973 (1.5 boxes).

The creative works consist of manuscripts (often including multiple annotated and corrected drafts) of short stories, novels, screenplays, speeches, and newspaper articles. While short story drafts and printed versions dominate the works series, also present are numerous story ideas or outlines, called “briefs” by Gipson. Gipson's most famous novel *Old Yeller* is not found in this collection, but several revised drafts of *Savage Sam* (both novel and screen adaptation) are present.

Correspondence with friends, literary agents, and publishers, and fan mail comprise one half of the collection. This correspondence reflects Gipson's literary achievements and the influence his books had on young readers, whose letters dominate the fan mail subseries. The correspondence series also illuminates the problems and struggles Gipson endured in his personal life and writing career. Significant correspondents include: Walter Brennan, Bernard Brister, Maurice Crain, Margaret Cousins, J. F. Dobie, Samuel Goldwyn, Jr., John Henry Faulke, Lyndon B. Johnson, Tommy Kirk, Zack Miller, Fess Parker, Cactus Pryor, General Jesus Jaime Quiñones, J.A. Small, H. N. Swanson, Evan Thomas, Walter Prescott Webb, Annie Laurie Williams, and Chill Wills.

Additional series include printed material by and about Gipson and his works, personal papers, financial and legal documents. In the Personal Papers series are items such as address cards, school diplomas, birth certificates, maps, travel guides, and personal and publicity photographs. Other materials relating to Gipson's publishing and film writing career and general finances are found in the Financial and Legal Documents series.

The Gipson papers represent aspects of his work and life from his early childhood to his death in 1973. Beyond the study of Gipson and his writings during part of the most prolific times of his life, this collection also provides insight into the process of writing and publishing popular western and children's literature in the last half of the twentieth century.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Works, 1942-1965 (11 boxes)

The Works series consists of drafts (original and carbon copy), and proofs of short stories, screenplays, novels, newspaper and magazine articles, memoirs and speeches, as well as research notes. The manuscripts of short stories, which dominate the Works series, include numerous corrected and annotated versions and often include additional publication and financial information. These works have been arranged alphabetically by title. While Gipson's most famous novel *Old Yeller* is not found in this collection, several revised drafts of *Savage Sam* (both novel and screen adaptation) are present. Manuscripts of other novels include *Curly and the Wild Boar: An Adventure Tale for Boys*, nd; *Home Place*, nd; *Not all Strange Things Are Women*, nd; and *Recollection Creek*, nd as well as the proposals and/or outlines for "The Last Days of Honest John" and a "horse novel."

Manuscripts of screenplays or scripts (including outlines), besides the drafts of *Savage Sam*, include *The Big Bender*, nd; "Fort Mason," nd; *High Lonesome Place*, nd; "Old Man Lepley's Hound," nd; and *The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters* (screenplay, 1959, teleplay, 1962). Manuscripts of nonfiction works present include the research notes on William Barton, an early Texas frontiersman; "Cowhand: The Story of a Working Cowboy," nd; and a memoir entitled "Buried Treasure," nd. Also found here are several speeches, 1960-1965, including one entitled "Education of a Hill Country Writer." Gipson collected stories by other writers, including Bob Becker, Bernice Cosulich, Martha B. Darbyshire, L. Wingfield Hudgins, Ernest Lee, Harold Clay Pope, and David Newell.

Series II. Clippings and Printed Materials, 1935-1983 (3 boxes)

The Clippings and Printed Materials series contains three scrapbooks, 1935-1938, of Gipson's newspaper columns and articles that have been maintained as Gipson kept them. Also found here are miscellaneous loose clippings of reviews, critical articles written about Gipson's work, publicity materials, and copies of national, local, and international newspapers and magazines (such as *Reader's Digest*) in which Gipson published. While these clippings, spanning the years 1937 to 1983, are for the most part not alphabetically or chronologically arranged, one box consists of book and movie reviews organized by title of work and review date. In the folder for reviews of *The Home Place* (1950) is also found a serialized version published in the *Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin* in 1951.

Series III. Correspondence, 1920-1973 (17 boxes)

The Correspondence series consists of two subseries, General Correspondence, 1920-1973, and Fan Mail and Publicity, 1946-1973. The general correspondence (13 boxes) has been maintained in alphabetical order and uses Gipson's original folder titles, and is interspersed with a few subject files. While not numerous, some of Gipson's outgoing letters are interfiled with the correspondence. The majority of the correspondents include friends, literary contacts and agents, and family members. Significant correspondents include Walter Brennan, Bernard Brister, Maurice Crain, Margaret Cousins, J. Frank Dobie, Samuel Goldwyn, Jr.; John Henry Faulk, Lyndon B. Johnson, Zack Miller, Fess Parker, Cactus Pryor, General Jesus Jaime Quiñones, H. N. Swanson, Fess Parker, Joe Austell Small, H.N. Swanson, Evan Thomas, Walter Prescott Webb, Annie Laurie Williams, and Chill Wills. Much of the correspondence with the literary agents, such as Maurice Crain and H.N. Swanson provides insight into the process of writing and publishing Gipson's works. The letters of Gipson's first wife, Tommie Eloise Wynn, are of a more intimate nature.

The second subseries, Fan Mail and Publicity, 1946-1973 (3.5 boxes) includes fan mail, correspondents' photographs (mostly from young readers), as well as photocopies of Gipson's responses interfiled with letters from publishers, and copies of publicity materials including his biography and photograph. Although the majority of this subseries is chronologically arranged, a final series of folders is alphabetically arranged by location (home state) of correspondent.

Series IV. Personal Papers, 1922-1972 (1.5 boxes)

This series includes copies of Gipson's birth certificate, diploma, personal notebooks, school papers, address cards, brochures, maps, travel documents, and several documents related to his son, Thomas. Other materials include photographs, ca. 1957, of the publicity stunts for the premiere of Disney's version of *Old Yeller*. A few personal photographs of Gipson and friends as well as movie stills from *Return of the Texan* are also present. Other printed materials include catalogs for agriculture and gardening, and picture catalogs of mail order brides.

Series V. Financial and Legal Documents, 1944-1973 (1.5 boxes)

Other materials relating to Gipson's publishing and film writing career and general finances are found in the Financial and Legal Documents series, 1944-1973. This series contains business documents such as movie and book contracts, royalty statements, and correspondence that document the financial, legal and business aspects of his writing career. Some of Gipson's business papers, however, may be found in the General Correspondence subseries, such as correspondence with Harper & Brothers, Maurice Crain, Disney Productions, H.N. Swanson, Evan Thomas, and Annie Laurie Williams. This series also contains general business documents dealing with insurance, land, Gipson's ranch, taxes, and social security. These materials help document Gipson's enthusiasm for ranching and agriculture, especially the growing of native Texas grasses and raising livestock.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Brennan, Walter, 1894-1974.
Brister, Bernard.
Crain, Maurice.
Cousins, Margaret, 1905- .
Dobie, J. Frank (James Frank), 1888-1964.
Goldwyn, Samuel, 1926- .
Faulk, John Henry.
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973.
Miller, Zack, b. 1878.
Parker, Fess.
Pryor, Cactus.
Quinones, Jesus Jaime, General.
Small, Joe Austell.
Swanson, H. N.
Thomas, Evan.
Webb, Walter Prescott, 1888-1963.
Williams, Annie Laurie.
Wills, Chill, 1902-1978.

Subjects

Authors, American--West (U.S.)--20th century.

Document Types

First drafts.
Galley proofs.
Legal documents.
Scripts.

Series I. Works, 1942-1965

"Angels Work Overtime," [short story] nd, 2 copies	box 1 folder 1
"The Anger of Anton Jabosky," [short story] nd	folder 2
"Another Day in the Saddle," [short story] nd	folder 3
"Bad Day," [short story] nd	folder 4
"Bad Hog," [short story] nd	folder 5
"Bad Man," [short story] nd	folder 6
"The Banana Snitchers," [short story] nd, 2 copies	folder 7
Barton, William, 1782-1840 [research notes] nd	folder 8
<i>The Big Bender</i> , [screenplay] nd	folder 9
"The Big Goat Deal," [short story] nd	folder 10
<i>Bigfoot Wallace</i> , [screenplay] nd	folder 11
"Bird Woman," [short story] nd	folder 12
"Black Cat Bachelors," [short story] nd	folder 13
"Bobcat," [short story] nd	folder 14
Book Reviews for the <i>New York Times</i> , 1965-66	folder 15
"Bounty Hunter," [short story] nd	folder 16
"Bounty Hunter from Hell," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
"Boy and Horse Story," [short story] nd	box 1 folder 17

"Bright Red Calico Shirt," [short story] nd	folder 18
"Bronc Riders Are Made," [short story] nd	folder 19
"Brush Roper," [short story] nd, 2 versions	folder 20
<i>Brush Roper</i> , [screenplay] nd	folder 21
"Brush-wild Cow," [short story] nd	folder 22
"Buckskin Stepson," [short story] nd	folder 23
"Buffalo Rider," [short story] nd	folder 24
Buried Treasure, [memoir] nd	folder 25
"Chinchy Professor," [short story] nd	folder 26
"Chum," [short story] nd	folder 27
"The Circle A Invasion," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
"A Cowboy for to Be," [short story] nd	box 1 folder 28
"Cowhand: The Story of a Working Cowboy," [nonfiction] nd	folder 29-30
"Cowpen Reveries," [short story, 1947]	box 2 folder 1
"The Cu-Ne-Va Ghost," [short story] nd	folder 2
<i>Curly and the Wild Boar: An Adventure Tale for Boys</i> , [fiction] nd	folder 3
"Cyclone Ropers," [nonfiction] nd	folder 4
"A Damn Bad Man!" 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	

"A Day of Retrospect," [short story] nd	box 2 folder 5
"The Devil to Pay," [fiction] nd	folder 6-7
"The Dinner Bucket," [short story] nd, 2 versions	folder 8
"Dog in the Meal Barrell," [short story] nd	folder 9
"Dog Swap," [short story] nd	folder 10
"Education of a Hill Country Writer," [speech] 1965	folder 11
"Fisherman's Luck," [short story] nd	folder 12
"The Fishermen Got Away!" [short story] nd	folder 13
"Fishing Is a Man's Business," [short story] 1955, 3 copies	folder 14
"Fort Mason," [script] nd	folder 15
"Fox in the Ditch," [short story] nd	folder 16
"Gift Dog," [short story] nd, 2 copies	folder 17
"Gift Horse," [short story] nd, 2 copies	folder 18
"Give a Cowhand Enough Rope," [short story] nd	folder 19
"Good-Neighbor Policy," [short story] 1947	folder 20
"Graveyard Gobbler," [short story] nd	folder 21
"Gun Waif," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
"Herd Dog," [short story] nd	box 2 folder 22

"High Lonesome Place," [short story] nd, 2 versions	folder 23
<i>High Lonesome Place</i> , [screenplay] nd	folder 24
"High Ride," [short story] nd	folder 25
<i>Home Place</i> , [novel, nd]	folder 26-27
Horse novel outline, [proposed novel] nd	box 3 folder 1
"Hound Dog Men Are Born," [short story] 1948, 2 copies	folder 2
"I Hate Snakes," [short story] nd	folder 3
"It Sure Beats Me," [short story] nd	folder 4
"Jay Wouldn't Listen," [short story] nd	folder 5
<i>Jesse Gentry</i> , [novel] nd	folder 6
"King of the Wild Country," [short story] nd, 2 versions	folder 7
"Lady Jack-Whacker," [short story] nd	folder 8
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"Like Hell You're Dead!" [short story] nd	folder 11
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"Minnie McCormack's Find," [short story] nd	folder 18
"Misery," [short story notes] nd	folder 19
"Monty's Turkeys and the Rattlesnake," [short story] nd	folder 20
"Mule Talk," [short story] nd	folder 21
"My Kind of Man," [short story] nd	folder 22
"Natural-born Hunter," [short story] nd, 2 versions	folder 23
"Ned and the Bobwite," [short story] nd	folder 24
"Nesters Ain't Wanted!" 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
Newspaper column drafts, A-I, nd	box 4 folder 1
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"Outlaw Treasure," [short story] nd	box 4 folder 7
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"Possum Money Comes Easy," [short story] nd	box 4 folder 9

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<i>The Return of Old Sancho</i> , [screenplay] 1957	folder 4
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"The Rock Thrower of Bosque County," [short story] nd	folder 7
"Rudy Walters and the Fiddler Crabs," [short story] nd	folder 8
"The Ruination of Restless Solomon," [short story] nd	folder 9
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"Sermon in Stones," [short story] nd, [also see Short Stories Scrapbook]	box 9 folder 1
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"Signed on at Murder Camp," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
"Sixgun, Salvation-and Sin!" 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
"Soft Touch," [short story] nd	box 9 folder 5
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"Timid Soul," [short story] nd	box 9 folder 11
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"Town of Beer and Sorrow," [short story] nd	box 9 folder 13
<i>Trail-Driving Rooster</i> , [short story] nd	folder 14
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<i>The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters, A One Hour Television Series</i> , [teleplay] 1962	folder 18
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"Visit with Peter Hurd," [nonfiction] nd	folder 2
"Valley of Missing Herds," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]	
"We Used to Go Fishing," [short story] nd	box 10 folder 3
"Wee Willy Rides Again," [short story] nd	folder 4
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High Ride, I Remember Uncle Firth, [character story idea] nd	
A Man of Honor, [novel brief] nd	
Song Maker, [novel brief] nd	
<i>The Story of the Texas Tangers</i> , by Walter Prescott Webb (1957), [synopsis] nd	
<i>The Trail-Driving Rooster</i> , [novel brief] nd	
Mule story, [story brief] nd	
Yo-Yo and His Wants, [story brief] nd	
Miscellaneous untitled typescripts, briefs, and research notes, 1961, nd	box 10 folder 14

Series II. Clippings and Printed Materials, 1935-1983

Miscellaneous clippings and printed materials, 1937-1983	box 11 folder 1-16
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<i>Fabulous Empire: Colonel Zack Miller's Story</i> , 1946-1948	folder 3
<i>The Home Place</i> , 1950-1952	folder 4
<i>Hound Dog Man</i> , 1948-1949	folder 5-6
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Series III. Correspondence, 1920-1973

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