Fred Gipson:
An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Title Fred Gipson Papers 1920-1973
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.
Language English
Access Open for research

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, 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


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.

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**Index Terms**

**Correspondents**

- Brister, Bernard.
- Crain, Maurice.
- Cousins, Margaret, 1905-.
- Dobie, J. Frank (James Frank), 1888-1964.
- Goldwyn, Samuel, 1926-.
- Faulk, John Henry.
- Miller, Zack, b. 1878.
- Parker, Fess.
- Pryor, Cactus.

- Quinones, Jesus Jaime, General.
- Small, Joe Austell.
- Swanson, H. N.
- Thomas, Evan.
- 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


"Another Day in the Saddle," [short story] nd

"Bad Day," [short story] nd

"Bad Hog," [short story] nd

"Bad Man," [short story] nd

"The Banana Snitches," [short story] nd, 2 copies

Barton, William, 1782-1840 [research notes] nd

The Big Bender, [screenplay] nd

"The Big Goat Deal," [short story] nd

Bigfoot Wallace, [screenplay] nd

"Bird Woman," [short story] nd

"Black Cat Bachelors," [short story] nd

"Bobcat," [short story] nd


"Bounty Hunter," [short story] nd

"Bounty Hunter from Hell," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]

"Boy and Horse Story," [short story] nd
"Bright Red Calico Shirt," [short story] nd

"Brone Riders Are Made," [short story] nd

"Brush Roper," [short story] nd, 2 versions

Brush Roper, [screenplay] nd

"Brush-wild Cow," [short story] nd

"Buckskin Stepson," [short story] nd

"Buffalo Rider," [short story] nd

Buried Treasure, [memoir] nd

"Chinchy Professor," [short story] nd

"Chum," [short story] nd

"The Circle A Invasion," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]

"A Cowboy for to Be," [short story] nd


"Cowpen Reveries," [short story, 1947]


Curly and the Wild Boar: An Adventure Tale for Boys, [fiction] nd

"Cyclone Ropers," [nonfiction] nd

"A Damn Bad Man!" 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]
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"Misery," [short story notes] nd
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Newspaper column drafts, J-Z, nd
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"Nobody's Dog," [short story] nd, 2 copies
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Not All Strange Things Are Women, [novel] nd
folder 4

Old Man Lepley's Hound, [screenplay outline] nd
folder 5

One Thing and then Another, [column] nd
folder 6

"Outlaw Till Sunset," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]
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"Outlaw Treasure," [short story] nd
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"Paycheck in Hell," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]
box 4

"Possum Money Comes Easy," [short story] nd
folder 9

"Pranking Man," [short story] nd

"Rabbit Hound," [short story] nd, 2 versions

Recollection Creek, [novel] nd, 2 versions

Recollection Creek, [novel] nd, page proofs

"The Retirement of Pearl Jackson," [short story] nd

The Return of Old Sancho, [screenplay] 1957

The Road Leads West, [draft] nd

"The Rock Thrower of Bosque County," [short story] nd

"Rudy Walters and the Fiddler Crabs," [short story] nd


"Sad Sam," [short story] nd

Savage Sam, [screenplay] 1961-62, nd

Brief, nd

First Beginning, nd

Treatment, 1961

Revised treatment, 1962

First draft, 1962

Savage Sam [novel, 1962] nd

First complete draft w/editing, nd

Second draft, nd
Second draft, nd  
Third draft, nd  
Fourth draft, nd  
Fourth draft w/editing, nd  
Fourth draft w/editing, nd  
Unedited fifth draft, nd  
Fifth draft, nd  
Fifth draft suggestions, nd  
Sixth draft, nd  

"Sermon in Stones," [short story] nd, [also see Short Stories Scrapbook]  

"A Sheriff for to Be," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]  

Short Stories Scrapbook, 1941-1942  

"Show-off Roper," [short story] nd  

"Signed on at Murder Camp," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]  

"Sixgun, Salvation-and Sin!" 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]  

"Soft Touch," [short story] nd  

"Some Hoss Thieves Is Different," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]  

Speeches, 1960-1963  

"The Story of Catarino," [short story drafts] nd  

"Supposed Your Son Were a Turtle Biter!" [short story] nd  

"Sweet Cream for Arabella," [short story] nd
"The Tales They Tell," [short story] nd

"That Damn Chongo!" 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]

"Timid Soul," [short story] nd  

"To The Mule," [poems] nd, 2 versions

"The Toughest Man in Texas," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]

"Town of Beer and Sorrow," [short story] nd

Trail-Driving Rooster, [short story] nd

"Trapped in a Boghole," [short story] nd

The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters, [screenplay] 1959

The Travels of Jaimie McPheeters, A One Hour Television Series, [teleplay] 1962

"Turkey Hunt," [short story] nd  

"Visit with Peter Hurd," [nonfiction] nd

"Valley of Missing Herds," 1942 [see Short Stories Scrapbook]

"We Used to Go Fishing," [short story] nd

"Wee Willy Rides Again," [short story] nd

"Whittlin' Banker," [short story] nd

"Wild Hogs Are Different," [short story] nd

Wild in the Country, first draft [screenplay] 1958, 2 copies
Wolf Hound, [short story notes] nd

"Women Anglers Get the Fish," [short story] nd

"Yea, Verily," [short story] nd, 2 versions

Miscellaneous stories by other authors, 1936-1947, nd, including Bob Becker, Bernice Cosulich, Martha B. Darbyshire, L. Wingfield Hudgins, Ernest Lee, David Newell, Harold Clay Pope

Miscellaneous Titled Drafts, 1935, 1957, 1961, nd

"Big-Foot Wallace and the Little Author," by John C. Duval [condensed novel by Tommie Gipson] 1935

Big Tom, [story brief] nd

The Great Blue Shining Mountains, [adult novel brief] nd

High Ride, I Remember Uncle Firth, [character story idea] nd

A Man of Honor, [novel brief] nd

Song Maker, [novel brief] nd

_The Story of the Texas Tangers_, by Walter Prescott Webb (1957), [synopsis] nd

_The Trail-Driving Rooster_, [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
Series II. Clippings and Printed Materials, 1935-1983

Miscellaneous clippings and printed materials, 1937-1983

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Miscellaneous clippings and printed materials, 1937-1983

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folder 1-18

Reviews, publicity, and other printed materials

*Big Bend*, 1953-1953


*Fabulous Empire: Colonel Zack Miller's Story*, 1946-1948

*The Home Place*, 1950-1952

*Hound Dog Man*, 1948-1949

*Old Yeller*, 1957-1958

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folder 2

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Scrapbooks (3) of newspaper columns, 1935-1938

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Series III. Correspondence, 1920-1973

Subseries A: General Correspondence, 1920-1973

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Adicks, David, nd  
Agriculture, 1952  
Aldridge, Bob and Vel, 1956-1962  
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Allen, Gloria, 1958-1962, nd  
American Library Association, 1972  
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*American Weekly*, 1957-1958  
Angelus Book Shop, 1953  
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Austin National Bank, 1962, nd  
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Balto [the Alaskan husky dog], 1957-1960, nd folder 27
Banks, Jimmy, 1958 folder 28
Barker, Omar, 1953-1969, nd folder 29
Barnard, Bill, 1955-1960 folder 30
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Bishop, Curt, 1957 folder 38
Blodgett, Terrell and Dorothy, 1962 folder 39
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Bode, J. R., 1961 folder 2
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Bolton, Paul, 1961 folder 4
Book of the Month Club, 1961 folder 5
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Burke, Edith, 1959-1962, nd

Burnett, Frank, 1952

Burnett, John, 1955-1962, nd

C (misc.), 1948-1956, nd

Campbell, Camilla, 1952

Campbell, Jim, 1955-1960

Campbell, W. S., 1947-1957

Case, Jack, nd

*Cavalier Magazine*, 1955-1957

Centennial, 1953-1958

Central Texas Electric Coop, 1957-1962

Chambrun, Jacques, 1955

Chapman, Gerard, 1948-1952

Chenoweth, Dean, 1962

Chrisman, Harry, 1954-1973

Civic Reading Club, nd

Clark, Martin, 1949-1962

Clemmons, Larry, nd

Clendenen, Ada, 1953

Club Invitations, 1949-1958

Coburn, Pat and Walt, 1946-1957

Cocke, Inez, 1970, nd

Coleman Company, 1954

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Connell, Jack and Polly, nd

Conners, Chuck, 1957

Cooley, Leland Frederick, 1962

Cooper, T.L., 1962

Coppola, Luis, 1955

Corcoran, Kevin, 1957

Cousins, Margaret, 1950

Craig, Harden, 1955

Craig, Jan Gartman and Creighton, 1956-1962

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Crawford, William, 1961

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Croom, P. B. and Fletcher, 1962

Crume, Paul, Marian and Christopher, 1956-1972

Daniel, Beverly, 1971

Davenport, Mrs. O. H., 1956

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David, Mrs. Henry, 1955

Davidson, Alvin G., 1959

Davis, Clare Ogden, 1949

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Day, Beth, 1961-1964

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