

## Finding Aid to the Grace V. Watkins Papers

### Watkins, Grace V., 1905-1993

Grace V. Watkins Papers, 1921-1960

2 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 233

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### OVERVIEW

**Access:** The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

**Provenance:** Donated by J.R. Hoffer, 2000, (Acc. 2610). The collection was found in the lake home of his step-mother in Minnesota. The family knows of no connection between Miss Watkins and his step-mother. She may have purchased the collection at a flea market, based upon a handwritten sign in the collection.

**Property rights:** The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

**Copyrights:** Copyrights to this collection are not held by the Institute for Regional Studies.

**Citation:** [Identification of item]. Grace V. Watkins Papers, MS 233, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

### BIOGRAPHY

Grace V. Watkins was born on October 11, 1905 in Fargo, North Dakota. Her father was Ashley Rooker Watkins and her mother was Honore Verona (Ashbaugh) Watkins. After graduating from Central High in Fargo, Miss Watkins attended Jamestown College. She graduated magna cum laude with a degree in music. She then attended graduate school at The University of Iowa where she completed a Master of Arts degree in music in 1927. Miss Watkins had several short-term teaching positions. She was an Associate Professor of music at Jamestown College, Jamestown, North Dakota, Dean of Women at Huron

College, Huron, South Dakota and the head of secretarial training at Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa. She subsequently spent many years at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota as a business education teacher. In 1953 Miss Watkins left teaching and worked full time as a freelance writer. In the late 1960s Miss Watkins returned to the Fargo/Moorhead area. She lived at the Villa Maria HealthCare Center in Fargo from 1976 until her death on January 4, 1993.

Along with being a teacher and musician, Miss Watkins was a prolific writer of poetry and short essays. She had hundreds of poems and articles published. Her work was published in newspapers, journals, and periodicals. She wrote for religiously oriented publications like *Youth*, *These Times*, *The Christian Advocate* and *Christian Family*. She also published poems and articles in more secular publications like *The Journal of Business Education*, *Christian Science Monitor* and several newspapers. She won various poetry prizes from the National League of American Pen Women and The American Poetry League. She was a long time member of The National League of American Pen Women.

### SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection of Grace Watkins' papers includes diaries, scrapbooks, a small number of magazines and pamphlets, and a small collection of unorganized clippings. With the exception of the magazines, pamphlets and few clippings of poems and articles that were found loose in a folder, the collection of scrapbooks and diaries has been preserved in the way that Miss Watkins left them.

The [Diaries Series](#) contains six diaries. These diaries cover the years 1921-1928. During this period Miss Watkins graduated from high school, attended Jamestown College and graduate school at the University of Iowa. While large sections of the diaries show daily entries, there are time gaps of various lengths found within the diaries and between the six diaries. The entries are largely Miss Watkins' personal experiences as a high school and college student. Along with her personal experiences readers get a sense of the culture of North Dakota during the 1920s and a North Dakota perspective on some of the historical developments of the time. In an entry from 1924 talking about a debating contest at Jamestown College she wrote, "Rueben Ashkauge was the best without doubt and to think that last year the kids refused to take any Jews into the society." One of Miss Watkins high school teachers tells the students, "Boys are more likely to be sincere [than girls]." Another entry from her high school years talks about a teacher's grading methods. "She marks everybody the same whether they know anything or not and I don't care to be in such a class." In the 1926 diary she writes about going to the movies and being reminded of World War One. "...tho it seemed glorious then it seems barbarous and horrible now." In 1926 she also make two separate entries about area banks failing and families losing all their "worldly goods." She reported that a dean at Jamestown College told the students, "Anyone who doesn't believe in the League of Nations is immoral." The diaries give readers a look at the language of 1920s North Dakota. She describes something as being "really punk" and a classmate as "a simp." A classmate is described as, "inclined to be a windjammer." At one point in the diaries she exclaims, "suffering cats!"

The [Subject Files Series](#) contains clippings of published poetry and articles that were not included in any of he scrapbooks and also a small collection of magazines and pamphlets.

There are eight scrapbooks in the [Scrapbook Series](#). The scrapbook in box 2 folder 3 contains poems and articles collected by Miss Watkins. These poems and articles are from 1951-1953 but there also is a love letter from Miss Watkins' father to her mother that is dated 1898. The scrapbook in box 2 folder 4 contains poems, sayings, and articles that Miss Watkins collected from the years 1928-1943. The scrapbook in box 3 folder 1 contains a variety of mementoes from Miss Watkins' years at Jamestown College, 1922-1926. Box 4 folder 1 contains a scrapbook of mementoes from her trips to Cuba, Panama, New Orleans, Mexico, San Antonio, California, Alaska, British Columbia, and Chicago during the years 1934-1937. Box 4 folder 2 contains a scrapbook that holds a collection of Miss Watkins' poems that had been published in various periodicals. These poems were published from 1951-1953. The scrapbook in box 5 folder 1 contains mostly cartoons from the year 1934-1936. There are a few Saturday Evening Post covers in this scrapbook also. Box 5 folder 2 holds a scrapbook of poems, newspaper articles, and cartoons collected by Miss Watkins. These items are undated. The scrapbook in box 5 folder 3 contains, for the most part, newspaper clippings of engagement announcements. There are also a few articles about Miss Watkins from her time at Huron College and Simpson College. These clippings are from 1932-1947. This collection also contains a folder of Miss Watkins' poems and essays that were not organized into a scrapbook. Some of this writing by Miss Watkins had been clipped from newspapers or periodical and in some cases the entire periodical that contains the poem or article survives intact. This writing in this scrapbook is from the years 1929-1960. One additional folder contains magazines and pamphlets that Miss Watkins kept. These date from 1949-1960. This collection has been organized into three series: Diary, Subject files, and Scrapbook.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

### Box/Folder      Contents

1/1                  Finding aid, and Biographical material

#### Diary Series

1/2                  Diary, Jan. 1, 1921-Dec. 31, 1921  
 1/3                  Diary, Jan. 1, 1922-Aug. 31, 1922  
 1/4                  Diary, Aug. 26, 1923-Dec. 7, 1923  
 1/5                  Diary, March 28, 1924-July 22, 1924  
 1/6                  Diary, April 8, 1926-Oct. 10, 1926  
 1/7                  Diary, May 8, 1927-Oct. 23, 1928

#### Subject Files Series

2/1                  Published poetry and essays not organized in a scrapbook, April 1929-Nov. 16, 1960  
 2/2                  Magazines and pamphlets, June 1949-Nov. 16, 1960

#### Scrapbook Series

- 2/3 Scrapbook of poems and articles, circa 1952
- 2/4 Scrapbook of poems, 1928-1943
- 3/1 Scrapbook, Jamestown College, 1922-1926
- 4/1 Scrapbook, various trips, 1934-1937
- 4/2 Scrapbook, poems by Miss Watkins, June 3, 1951-Nov. 12, 1953
- 5/1 Scrapbook, cartoons, 1934-1936
- 5/2 Scrapbook, poems, article, cartoons, undated
- 5/3 Scrapbook, newspaper clippings, Feb. 9, 1932-April 24, 1947