

# Isabel Gordon Carter Collection

AFC 2005/004

Prepared by Sarah Bradley Leighton



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American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Washington, D.C.

September 2006

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.home>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/2005700213>

Finding aid encoded by Glenn Gardner, May 2016

Finding aid URL: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadafc.af016003>

## Collection Summary

Title: Isabel Gordon Carter Collection

Inclusive Dates: 1921-1942

Call No.: AFC 2005/004

Collector: Isabel Gordon Carter, 1897-

Extent (Manuscripts): 132 leaves.

Extent (Graphic Materials): 2 photographic prints : black and white ; 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 in.

Extent (Graphic Materials): 1 photographic print : color ; 15 x 18 in.

Language: Collection materials in: English.

Location: Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress , Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.home>

Summary: Collection of correspondence, notes, and photographs related to Isabel Gordon Carter's research and publications on Appalachian ballads and folktales, and customs from 1921 to 1942.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Bean, Robert Bennett, 1874-1944.

Bishop, E. A.

Brooks, Nelly L.

Carter, Isabel Gordon, 1897-

Carter, Isabel Gordon, 1897- --Correspondence.

Chase, Richard, 1904-1988.

Hrdlička, Aleš, 1869-1943.

Kephart, Horace, 1862-1931.

Long, Maud, 1893-1984.

Powell, Hannah J.

Stearns, I. K.

Williams-Ellis, Amabel, 1894-1984.

### Subjects

Ballads, English--Appalachian Region--Texts.

Folk songs--Appalachian Region--Texts.

Folklore--Appalachian Region.

Jack tales--Appalachian Region.

Tales--Appalachian Region.

### Titles

*I'm as free a little bird as I can be.*

*Jonah and the whale.*

*Little mohea.*

### Form/Genre

Correspondence.

Manuscripts.

Photographic prints.

# Administrative Information

## Arrangement

Organized into the following series: I. Manuscripts; II. Graphic Materials.

## Acquisition

Janet Carter, daughter of Isabel Gordon Carter, donated the collection to the Archive of Folk Culture in January 2005, from the estate of her mother.

## Processing History

Sarah Bradley Leighton processed the collection in February 2005. Janet Carter included a list of items conveyed to the Library, but indicated that there was no specific importance to her numbering. During processing, each item was assigned a unique manuscript (MS) number and placed in chronological order. A descriptive log of each item was then created. Due to the fragile condition of the paper, most items are housed in Mylar sleeves. Preservation copies were made for extremely fragile original documents.

## Copyright Status

Duplication of the collection materials may be governed by copyright and other restrictions.

## Access and Restrictions

Collection is open for research. The material is fragile. Preservation copies are available for extremely fragile items. To request materials, please contact the Folklife Reading Room at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.contact>

## Preferred Citation

Isabel Gordon Carter collection (AFC 2005/004), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Publications

Carter, Isabel Gordon. 1925. "Mountain White Folk-Lore: Tales from the Southern Blue Ridge." *Journal of American Folklore*, 38:340-374.

# Biographical Notes

Isabel Gordon Carter was a collector of folktales, ballads, and riddles in North Carolina and Tennessee in the 1920s and 1930s. In the summer of 1923, Isabel Gordon Carter collected tales in the Blue Ridge region and published "Mountain White Folk-Lore: Tales from the Southern Blue Ridge" in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1925. Her special interest was the traditions of mountain folk. She published numerous articles in the *Southern Folklore Quarterly* regarding her fieldwork and was also a social worker who wrote on aspects of social welfare. She received her M.A. from the University of Tennessee and Ph.D. from Columbia University.

# Scope and Content

Collection of correspondence, notes, a research notebook, and photographs related to Isabel Gordon Carter's research and publications on Appalachian ballads, folktales, and customs from 1921 to 1942. Carter's correspondents include E. A. Bishop, Horace Kephart, I. K. Stearns, Nelly L. Brooks, Amabel Williams-Ellis, Ales Hrdlicka, Richard Chase, Kay Chase, Maud Gentry Long, Robert B. Bean, Maude Minish, Helen Dashiell, W. H. Rothe, Rev. Hannah J. Powell, and Mary H. Brown. E. A. Bishop enclosed texts for two ballads, "Jonah and the whale," and "Little Mohea"

(1921) and Nelly L. Brooks sent the text to "I'm as free a little bird as I can be" (1924). Includes copies of Richard Chase's articles on Jack tales.

Photographs include Bob DeHart family in front of their cabin near Bryson City, North Carolina, and a photograph of camp equipment and car belonging to Horace Kephart, taken by I. K. Stearns, circa 1923. Also includes color photograph of an oil portrait by artist Katherine Wiley of Isabel Gordon Carter, dated 1913.

## Collection Concordance by Format

Quantity	Physical Extent (original)	Location	Item Numbers
Series I: Manuscripts			
32	manuscript items, 132 leaves	Box 1	MS01-MS32
Series II: Graphic Materials			
2	black-and-white photographs	Box 1	PH01-PH02
1	digital color print	RR Map Case	GR01

# Description of Series

*Container*

*Series*

[Series I: Manuscripts](#)

[Series II: Graphic Images](#)

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
Series I: Manuscripts	
FOLDER 1	Finding Aid. 7 leaves.
FOLDER 2	MS01 [MS01a-MS01e]. 5 leaves.
ITEM	MS01a. Envelope addressed to "Miss Gordon"; Elgin State Hospital; Elgin, Ill. Sent from Murphy College; Sevierville, Tenn. December 27, 1921 (postmark).
ITEM	MS01b. Letter to "Miss Gordon" from E. A. Bishop of Murphy College referring to "two ballads." December 24, 1921.
ITEM	MS01c. Typewritten page of "Jonah and the Whale Ballad." Undated.
ITEM	MS01d. Typewritten page of "Little Mohea." Undated.
ITEM	MS01e. Handwritten note with H. E. Bishop's address. Undated.
FOLDER 3	MS02. 1 leaf.
ITEM	MS02. Letter to "Miss Gordon" from Horace Kephart with information about vocabulary usage. August 8, 1923. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 4	MS03 [MS03a-MS03h]. 5 leaves.
ITEM	MS03a. Envelope addressed to "Miss Isabel Gordon"; 1616 W. Clinch Ave.; Knoxville, Tenn. Sent from Bryson City Pump Works Co.; Bryson City, N.C. September 20, 1923 (postmark).
ITEM	MS03b. Letter to "Miss Gordon" from I. K. Stearns regarding enclosed typewritten contents and photographs (first page). September 5, 1923.
ITEM	MS03c. Letter to "Miss Gordon" from I. K. Stearns regarding the enclosed typewritten contents and photographs (second page). September 5, 1923.
ITEM	MS03d. Typewritten page from "Pierceville Ga" from "Wm Payne." January 13, 1902.
ITEM	MS03e. Typewritten page from "Piercville Ga" from "Wm Payne" (first page). March 25, 1903.
ITEM	MS03f. Typewritten page from "Piercville Ga" from "Wm Payne" (second page). March 25, 1903.
ITEM	MS03g. Typewritten page of an article that was copied from the Bryson City Times. November 18, 1922.
ITEM	MS03h. Typewritten page of a notice that was posted on the door of the Alarka Lumber Company's Commissary near Bryson City, N.C. August 23, 1921.
FOLDER 5	MS04 [MS04a-MS04b]. 2 leaves.
ITEM	MS04a. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Nelly L. Brooks (two sided). April 26, 1924.

## Series I: Manuscripts

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
ITEM	MS04b. Handwritten note in Isabel Gordon Carter's handwriting noting that she collected folklore from the Brooks family when she was in Rugby, Tenn. Undated.
FOLDER 6	MS05. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Ales Hrdlicka at the Smithsonian Institution. September 4, 1931. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 7	MS06. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Amabel Williams-Ellis requesting permission to use stories in a book she is publishing. Isabel Gordon Carter's handwritten notes in pencil on verso (two sided). May 22, 1933. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 8	MS07. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Amabel Williams-Ellis thanking her for permission to use the stories in the book she is publishing. June 27, 1933. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 9	MS08 [MS08a-MS08b]. 2 leaves.
ITEM	MS08a. Letter to Richard Chase from Isabel Gordon Carter regarding her interest in collecting stories and the origins of her interest (first page). November 26, 1938.
ITEM	MS08b. Letter to Richard Chase from Isabel Gordon Carter regarding her interest in collecting stories and the origins of her interest (second page). November 26, 1938.
FOLDER 10	MS09. Letter to Mrs. Grover Long from Isabel Gordon Carter regarding articles Gordon Carter printed and the summer of 1923 when she collected stories with the Long family. December 5, 1938. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 11	MS10. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Maud Gentry Long referring to the inquiry Gordon Carter made in MS09 (two sided). December 11, 1938. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 12	MS11. Letter to Richard Chase from Isabel Gordon Carter regarding a trip to Richmond, Virginia. April 17, 1939. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 13	MS12. Typewritten bulletin from Richard Chase as the Virginia Representative of the English Folk Dance & Song Society of America (two sided). January 1940. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 14	MS13. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Mrs. Richard Chase (Kay) regarding a recent household move and a borrowed book (two sided). January 24, 1940. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 15	MS14. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Richard Chase regarding "The Jack Tales" (two sided). May 16, 1940. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 16	MS15. Reprint from <i>Southern Folklore Quarterly</i> , Vol. 2, No. 3, 145-147, "Jack's Hunting Trip" by Richard Chase. September 1938. 2 leaves.
FOLDER 17	MS16. Postcard to Isabel Gordon Carter from Richard Chase regarding the printing of "The Jack Tales" (two sided). August 10, 1942. 1 leaf.

## Series I: Manuscripts

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
FOLDER 18	MS17. Letter to Isabel Gordon Carter from Robert Bennett Bean. Undated. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 19	MS18. Typewritten page with two stanzas. Undated. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 20	MS19. Typewritten page on letterhead from 2039 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.; Washington, D.C. 20009 September 4, 1931. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 21	MS20 [MS20a-MS20b, FRAGILE]. 2 leaves.
ITEM	MS20a. Handwritten notes on fragile folded pages. The verso of the letter appears to be Isabel Gordon Carter's handwritten verses of "Noah just don't know..." (first page, two sided). Undated.
ITEM	MS20b. Handwritten notes on fragile folded pages. The verso of the letter appears to be Isabel Gordon Carter's handwritten verses of "Noah just don't know..." (second page, two sided). Undated.
FOLDER 22	MS21. Handwritten research and field notebook. Undated. 71 leaves.
FOLDER 23	MS22. Handwritten notes about "Butler." Undated. 10 leaves.
FOLDER 24	MS23. Handwritten notes about gardening. June 26? 1 leaf.
FOLDER 25	MS24. Letter from Isabel Gordon Carter to Miss Maude Minish explaining her interest in folk tales of Tennessee and North Carolina. June 29, 1923. 1 leaf.
FOLDER 26	MS25. Letter and envelope from Helen Dashiell to Isabel Gordon Carter. July 29, 1923. 2 leaves.
FOLDER 27	MS26. Letter with a Junior League of America heading and a note about \$5.00 dues. August 4, 1923. 2 leaves.
FOLDER 28	MS27. Letter and clipping from W. H. Rothe to Isabel Gordon Carter. August 5, 1923. 3 leaves.

## Series II: Graphic Images

	FOLDER 4
ITEM	PH01. Photograph of Bob DeHart family in front of their cabin near Bryson City, North Carolina. Stearns refers to the photograph in MS03b. Undated.
ITEM	PH02. Photograph of camp equipment and car belonging to Horace Kephart, taken by I. K. Stearns, ca. 1923. Stearns refers to the photograph in MS03c. Undated.
	DRAWER Map Case
ITEM	GR01. Preservation copy of digital color photographic print of an oil painting portrait of Isabel Gordon Carter by Katherine Wiley. 1913. [Located in the Folklife Reading Room Map Case]