

Roberta Clay Collection, 1925-1973: A Guide

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Roberta Louise Clay

Title: Roberta Clay Collection, 1925-1973

Inclusive Dates: 1925-1973

Abstract: The collection documents the activities of Roberta Louise Clay, an educator, writer, and supporter of civil rights and social justice. In addition to education-related materials, notes for writing projects, and copies of manuscripts, it contains personal materials such as travel logs and scrapbooks.

Identification: AR13

Extent: 3.29 cubic feet

Shelf location: 6:B:1, 5

Language(s): Collection is predominantly in English; materials in Spanish are indicated at the series level.

Repository: Tarleton State University, Dick Smith Library, Archives and Special Collections, Stephenville, Texas

Biographical Note

Roberta Louise Clay was born on December 30, 1900 in Dublin, Texas. She was the youngest child of William James Clay (1861-1918) and Lucy Ann Higginbotham (1863-1941). Even though they were financially prosperous, the Clays chose careers in education. They taught in Dublin and Stephenville, Texas.

Clay earned a high school diploma in 1917 at Dublin High School. She then attended Texas Woman's University where she received a BA in English in 1921. By 1931 she had obtained a BA in Journalism from the University of Missouri. Her advanced degrees included an MS from Northwestern University (1937) in journalism and an MA from Columbia University of New York City (1947) in English.

Clay began her education career in the 1920s by teaching in several Texas high schools. During that time she became a reporter for the Wichita Falls *Daily Times* and later for the Stephenville *Empire-Tribune*. Clay's career in higher education began in 1931 when she joined the faculty at John Tarleton Agricultural College (now Tarleton State University) as a professor of journalism and sociology. She was also the supervisor of publications and the faculty advisor to *The J-TAC* and the *Grassburr* staffs. After resigning from Tarleton in 1936, she became a professor of English and journalism as well as Dean of Women at College of the Ozarks (now University of the Ozarks) in Clarksville, Arkansas. Clay taught English Journalism (a hybrid course) at Arkansas State Teachers College from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.

During her time at Arkansas State Teachers College, Clay authored two books. She won second place in the Pageant Press Best Book Contest in 1965 for *The College Newspaper*, a textbook for journalism students. In 1970 she published *Promotion in Print: A Guide for Publicity Chairmen*.

Clay's 1937 thesis for Northwestern University was titled *Labor, Liberty, and the Press: A Study of Newspaper Reports of the 1936 Senate Investigations of Violations of Free Speech and the Rights of Labor*. Her interest in civil liberties and social causes resurfaced during her retirement. She supported the United Farm Workers by providing funds to help educate young Mexican-Americans, joined the Society

of Friends in their opposition of the Vietnam War, and wrote letters about academic freedom to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Clay became interested in the prisoners of the Texas penal system in 1966. After reading a newspaper article written by inmate Shirley Jean Jaquess, Clay communicated with authorities and convinced them to release Jaquess to her custody. Clay provided Jaquess with a home, some spending money, and access to an education. The project ended when Jaquess returned to her criminal ways and was again incarcerated.

Clay died on February 16, 1974 in Stephenville, Texas and was buried in New Dublin Live Oak Cemetery in Dublin, Texas. Scholarships were established in her memory at Tarleton State University and Texas Women's University.

Sources:

The Dublin Citizen (Dublin, Tex.), Vol. 18, No. 39, Ed. 1 Thursday, May 29, 2008, newspaper, May 29, 2008; Dublin, Texas.

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth770757/m1/1/?q=The%20Dublin%20Citizen%20vol.%2018%20no.%2039>: accessed March 28, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Dublin Public Library.

The Dublin Progress (Dublin, Tex.), Vol. 76, No. 100, Ed. 1 Thursday, March 10, 1966, newspaper, March 10, 1966; Dublin, Texas.

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth539893/m1/1/?q=The%20Dublin%20Progress%20vol.%2076%20no.%20100>: accessed March 28, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Dublin Public Library.

Hicks, Linda. The Dublin Progress (Dublin, Tex.), Vol. 85, No. 35, Ed. 1 Thursday, February 21, 1974, newspaper, February 21, 1974; Dublin, Texas.

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth775570/m1/1/?q=The%20Dublin%20Progress%20vol.%2085%20no.%2035>: accessed March 28, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Dublin Public Library.

The J-TAC (Stephenville, Tex.), Vol. 17, No. 1, Ed. 1 Saturday, September 19, 1936, newspaper, September 19, 1936;

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth140268/m1/1/?q=The%20J-TAC%20September%2019%2C%201936>: accessed March 28, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Tarleton State University.

Turney, Frances. The Dublin Progress (Dublin, Tex.), Vol. 76, No. 24, Ed. 1 Thursday, September 16, 1965, newspaper, September 16, 1965; Dublin, Texas.

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth540321/m1/1/?q=The%20Dublin%20Progress%20vol.%2076%20no.%2024>: accessed March 28, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Dublin Public Library.

Scope and Contents

The collection documents the activities of Roberta Louise Clay, an educator, writer, and supporter of civil rights and social justice. In addition to education related materials, notes for writing projects, and copies of manuscripts, it also contains personal materials such as travel logs and scrapbooks. Some of the significant topics covered in these files are academic freedom, education of young Mexican-American men and women, and Clay's work with and support of a young woman who was an inmate of the Texas penal system. Copies of manuscripts of her thesis for her Master's of Science in Journalism are found in the collection. Materials are largely textual, comprising correspondence, writing notes, manuscripts for articles, programs for events attended, and speeches written and given by Clay.

Two letters signed by Cesar Chavez are included in the files. As a preservation measure, archival staff made photocopies of the original letters for researcher access.

Organization

The Roberta Clay Collection is organized in 12 series:

- Series I. Biography
- Series II. Correspondence
- Series III. Writings
- Series IV. Memorabilia
- Series V. Notes
- Series VI. Programs
- Series VII. Speeches
- Series VIII. Personal
- Series IX. Travels
- Some materials are in Spanish.
- Series X. Manuscripts
- Series XI. Thesis
- Series XII. Scrapbooks

Rights and Access

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Physical Access Restrictions

None.

Technical Access Restrictions

None.

Publication Rights

Copyright restrictions may apply.

Reproduction Note

Reproductions must be made from surrogates (microfilm, digital scan, photocopy, transcript of the original held by Archives/Special Collections, Dick Smith Library, Tarleton State University), when available. Only archives staff may photocopy collection documents.

Index Terms

Persons

Bentsen, Lloyd Millard, 1921-2006
Chavez, Cesar Estrada, 1927-1993
Gore, Albert Arnold, Sr., 1907-1998
Kennedy, Edward Moore, 1932-2009
Tower, John Goodwin, 1925-1991

Organizations

American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International
Columbia University in the City of New York
Texas Civil Liberties Union
The Arkansas State Teachers College
United Farm Workers

Subjects

Civil liberties
Correctional institutions—Inmates
Free speech
Great Britain—Description and travel
Incarcerated persons
Labor and laboring classes—Texas
Newspapers
Prisoners
Roberta Clay—Travel
United States—Description and travel
Voyages and travels—1960-1980
Working class

Administrative Information

Provenance

Donated to the Dick Smith Library at Tarleton State University by Roberta Clay before 2008.

Preferred Citation

[Title of file or item], Roberta Clay Collection, AR13, Box [no.], Folder [no.], Tarleton State University, Dick Smith Library, Archives and Special Collections, Stephenville, Texas.

Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by Phyllis Kinnison and Alyce Crane, 2019.

Related Collections

Clay Family Papers, 1930, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

Higginbotham family collection, 1886-1921, Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas.

Lena Lewis Manuscripts, AR32, Tarleton State University, Dick Smith Library, Archives and Special Collections, Stephenville, Texas.

Note to the Researcher

The collection is processed, but advance notice is required with time allowed to retrieve the records from an offsite location before conducting research. There may be occasions when staffing or weather conditions delay or prevent retrieval of the records. For more information, contact Librarian/Archivist Phyllis Kinnison at pkinnison@tarleton.edu.

Container List

<u>Stack Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder(s)</u>	<u>Series Title and Folder Contents (with dates)</u>
6:B:1	1	1	Clay, Roberta, 1962
		2	American Civil Liberties Union (High School and College Cases); 1967-1970
		3	Anecdotes; 1959, 1961, 1962
		4-7	Correspondence; 1965-1973
6:B:1	2	1-4	Correspondence—Shirley Jaquess; 1966-1971
		5	Jottings; 1952, 1959-1963, 1966
		6	Personal Jottings; 1960, 1961, 1968, 1969, 1970, undated
		7	Jottings—Summer 1959; 1959, 1960, undated
6:B:1	3	1	Literary Allusions; 1947, 1951, 1961-1962, 1965-1973, undated
		2	Mama's Cookbook; 1949, undated
		3	Memorabilia—Photograph; undated
		4	Muscular Dystrophy (David Smith story); 1935, 1939, 1945, 1950-1955, 1960, undated
		5	Notes on Books; 1966, 1968-1973, undated

6:B:1	3	6	Outlines; undated
		7	Personal (Williams Graduate from US Naval Academy); 1941
		8	Programs; 1965-1972 (1 of 3)
6:B:1	4	1-2	Programs; 1965-1972 (2-3 of 3)
		3-4	Speeches; 1925, 1939, 1941, 1943, 1956, 1960, 1962-1966, 1968-1972, undated
		5	TWU Writers Conference "What to Write About"; 1967
		6	Transcripts, Curriculum Vitae; 1940-1941, 1947-1950, 1952-1953, 1964, 1968, 1971, 1972, undated
		7	Spanish Class; 1927, undated
6:B:1	5	1-3	Travels; 1966, 1969, 1970, 1973, undated
		4	Efforts at Versifying; undated
		5-6	Manuscripts, writings 1; 1967, 1970, 1971, undated (1 & 2 of 3)
6:B:1	6	1	Manuscripts, writings 1; 1967, 1970, 1971, undated (3 of 3)
		2	Manuscripts, writings 2; 1949, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962, undated
		3-4	Manuscripts, writings 3; 1953-1954, 1957-1958, undated
		5-6	Manuscripts, writings 4; 1946, 1958-1960, 1962-1963, 1965-1970, undated (1 & 2 of 3)
6:B:1	7	1	Manuscripts, writings 4; 1946, 1958-1960, 1962-1963, 1965-1970, undated (3 of 3)
		2-6	Manuscripts, writings 5; 1935, 1957-1958, 1961-1963, 1965-1967, 1970-1971, undated
		7	Letters to the Editor; 1948, 1967-1968, undated
		8	Thesis paper for Master of Science in Journalism; 1937
6:B:5	8	1	Handmade booklet: "Compliments of the Young Peoples Missionary Society," August 1921
		2	Handmade scrapbook: "The Cheerful Cherub," undated
		3	Traveling Texans materials, 1971, undated
		4	White Trip Book, July 13, 1965-August 13, 1965, July 11-August 6, 1973