



**Walter Havighurst Special Collections
Miami University Libraries**

**William Merriam Gibson Collection
1875-1977**

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Title:	William Merriam Gibson Collection
Creator:	William Merriam Gibson
Dates:	1875-1977 (bulk 1938-1972)
Media:	Correspondence, printed material, manuscripts
Quantity:	0.5 cubic feet
Location:	Manuscript shelving

COLLECTION SUMMARY

This collection includes correspondence and printed material pertaining to William Merriam Gibson's research and collecting efforts, together with student papers and newspaper articles regarding William Dean Howells.

PROVENANCE OF THE COLLECTION

Many of the letters and items included in this collection were found in books once belonging to William Merriam Gibson that are now housed in the Walter Havighurst Special Collections. No other information about the provenance of other items in the collection is available.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

William Merriam Gibson (1912-1987) received his undergraduate degree from Princeton University in 1933. He earned both a master's degree (1934) and a Ph.D. (1940) from the University of Chicago.

From 1937 to 1941, Gibson was an instructor of English at the University of Chicago. He served as an associate professor (1941-1942) and a professor of English (1946-1949) at Williams College. He was a professor of English at New York University from 1949 to 1973 and at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1973 to 1981.

Gibson was a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Turin (1960-1961), the University of Aix-Marseilles (summer 1961) and the University of Delhi (1963). In 1980, he was a lecturer at Peking Language Institute. Additionally, Gibson served as director of the Center for Editions of American Authors.

Gibson researched and collected the works of author William Dean Howells. In 1948, Gibson and George Arms collaborated on producing *A Bibliography of William Dean Howells* for the New York Public Library.

Gibson also devoted many years to studying the work of Mark Twain. As a result, he edited two books on Twain – *Selected Mark Twain-Howells Letters, 1872-1910*, in collaboration with Frederick Anderson and Henry Nash Smith (Harvard University Press, 1960; abridged edition, 1967), and *Mark Twain's "Mysterious Stranger" Manuscripts* (University of California Press, 1969). In 1976, Gibson's *The Art of Mark Twain* was published by Oxford University Press. Finally, the University of Tennessee Press published Gibson's *Theodore Roosevelt Among the Humorists: W.D. Howells, Mark Twain, and Mr. Dooley* in 1980.

Source: "William M(erriam) Gibson." *Contemporary Authors Online*. Detroit: Gale, 2003. *Literature Resources from Gale*.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The collection begins with Gibson's correspondence. Highlights include an October 20, 1954 letter from the editor of the *United States Quarterly Book Review* requesting that Gibson read and review Everett Carter's *Howells and the Age of Realism*, together with a portion of Gibson's manuscript review and the review that was printed in the November 14, 1954 issue of the *New York Times*.

Correspondence also addresses Gibson's editing of William Dean Howells's essay titled "Novel Writing and Novel Reading," which Howells used as his text for a series of lectures in 1899.

Rare-book dealers often wrote Gibson with news of Howells works that were available for purchase. For example, John S. Van E. Kohn of Seven Gables Bookshop wrote Gibson on March 6, 1957 regarding a leaflet advertising J.J. Piatt's *Poems*, with a quote from Howells in *Atlantic Monthly* that was found in a copy of *Little New-World Idyls & Other Poems* (1893). The leaflet can also be found in the collection.

Gibson's interest in and study of Howells was apparently well-known by his colleagues. For example, Oscar Cargill of Ohio University's Department of English sent Gibson a pamphlet about the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia that included a comment Howells made on the building in the February 1919 issue of *Harper's Magazine*. The pamphlet is included in the collection.

Various letters, together with the printing specifications of *Selected Mark Twain-Howells Letters* from Harvard University Press, chronicle Gibson's accomplishments as an author.

Other items in the collection include invoices for purchases Gibson made through various book dealers. Annotated lists of works by William Dean Howells track Gibson's collecting efforts, as do a number of catalogues that Gibson used in selecting new acquisitions for his collection. For example, the collection includes a catalogue for the sale of the library of actor and bibliophile Francis Wilson in November 1940. Book collecting practices can also be tracked through advertisements for David Douglas' Series of "American Authors" in one-shilling volumes, which contained several titles by William Dean Howells.

Clippings from *The Literary World* (dating from 1875 to 1878) include references to William Dean Howells and his works. The collection also includes an article titled "The Significance of Henry James," from the January 6, 1927 issue of *The Times Literary Supplement*. Other clippings found inside Gibson's books include an illustration of "Allies' Day" by Childe Hassam, published in the rotogravure picture section of an unknown publication dating from March 17, 1918.

Student papers about William Dean Howells' works can also be found in the collection. For example, papers discuss uses of imagery in *Indian Summer* and the cyclical nature of time in that book.

The collection concludes with newspaper articles from the Hamilton Journal-News and the Columbus Sunday Dispatch Magazine about William Dean Howells and Mac-O-Chee Castle in West Liberty, Ohio, which was built by the Piatt family. John James Piatt (1835-1917) was a friend of William Dean Howells; they collaborated on the 1860 volume titled *Poems of Two Friends*.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

- Series I. Correspondence
- Series II. Miscellaneous Manuscript Items
- Series III. Miscellaneous Printed Material
- Series IV. Catalogues
- Series V. Student Papers
- Series VI. Oversized Materials

RELATED MATERIALS

Several books with William Merriam Gibson's bookplate can be found in The Walter Havighurst Special Collections. The bookplate includes Gibson's name and an illustration of a serpent and the phrase, "Sin vos y sin dios y mi," or "Without you and without God and myself." A reference to this phrase can be found in *Green Mansions: A Romance of the Tropical Forest*, written by William Henry Hudson in 1904.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

- Access: This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.
- Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to cite the *William Merriam Gibson Collection* and *The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries* in all footnote and bibliographic references.
- Processed By: Betsy Butler, October 2008
- Property Rights: The Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries, owns the property rights to this collection.
- Copyrights: Reproduction of materials in the collection is subject to the restrictions of copyright law. To use any materials not yet in the public domain, the researcher must obtain permission from the copyright holder.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the box and folder numbers shown below.

Series I: Correspondence

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
1	1	Grace D. Vanamee The American Academy of Arts and Letters New York, New York	Mrs. Edward J. Pearson New York, New York	June 18, 1938	Returning <i>Italian Journeys, The World of Chance, Poems, and Venetian Life</i> after Pearson lent them to Howells exhibition
	2	Paul S. Abrams	William Merriam Gibson	November 20, 1952	Sending William Dean Howells volume from Howard Mott
	3	W.D. Humphrey Porcelain Products, Inc. Findlay, Ohio	James E. Larkins Miami University Oxford, Ohio	May 6, 1954	May 27, 1887 letter from William Dean Howells to Mark Twain urging him to come to Findlay for the celebration of natural gas in June of that year
	4	Joseph P. Blickensderfer United States Quarterly Book Review, The Library of Congress Washington, D.C.	William Merriam Gibson	October 20, 1954	Request for Gibson to read and review <i>Howells and the Age of Realism</i> , by Everett Carter (Folder includes portion of Gibson's manuscript review and the review printed in the November 14, 1954 <i>New York Times</i>)
	5	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	March 6, 1957	Leaflet advertising J. J. Piatt's <i>Poems</i> , with a quote from Howells in <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , found in a copy of <i>Little New-World Idyls & Other Poems</i> (1893). Leaflet included in folder.
	6	Watt P. Marchman The Rutherford B.	William M. Gibson Upper Montclair,	September 30, 1957	<i>New York Public Library Bulletin</i> to publish

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
		Hayes Library Fremont, Ohio	New Jersey		Howells lecture edited by Gibson. Folder also includes clipping from the April 4, 1958 <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> mentioning same
	7	Watt P. Marchman The Rutherford B. Hayes Library Fremont, Ohio	William M. Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	April 19, 1958	Thanks for autographed copy of the reprint of Howells article from the <i>New York Public Library Bulletin</i>
	8	George [Arms] The University of New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico	William Merriam Gibson	April 22, 1958	Thanks for offprint of "W.D. Howells on Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading." Folder also includes information on translated line in <i>Dichtung und Wahrheit</i> , ed. Bohn
	9	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	October 7, 1962	Offer of copy of <i>Myth & Romance</i> , by Madison Cawein, which includes a quote Howells contributed to <i>Literature</i>
	10	Howard A. Wilson Knox College Galesburg, Illinois	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	May 10, 1963	Thanks for Gibson's help when Wilson was working on manuscript
	11	Jacob Blanck Bibliography of American Literature Harvard University Cambridge, Massachusetts	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	September 13, 1965	Returns Piatt reviews
	12	Scott Bennett Bloomington, Indiana	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	June 2, 1966	Returning Douglas editions of <i>World of Chance</i> and <i>The Landlord</i>
	13	Vernon Sternberg	William Merriam	ca. 1966-1967	Sending a copy of

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
		Southern Illinois University Press Carbondale, Illinois	Gibson New York University New York, New York		<i>William Dean Howells</i> , by William McMurray, in Crosscurrents/Modern Critiques series
	14	Oscar [Cargill] Department of English Ohio University Athens, Ohio	William Merriam Gibson	January 15, 1967	Enclosing pamphlet from the Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia including a comment on the building by Howells from the February 1919 issue of Harper's Magazine. Folder includes pamphlet.
	15	David J. Nordloh English Department Indiana University Bloomington, Indiana	William Merriam Gibson	January 25, 1967	Thanks for allowing the department to use books for <i>A Selected Edition of William Dean Howells</i>
	16	Walter J. Gray United States Information Service New Delhi, India	William Merriam Gibson Center for Editions of American Authors, Modern Language Association New York, New York	July 5, 1967	Sending a copy of the Indian reprint edition of <i>A Hazard of New Fortunes</i> published by Eurasia Publishing House of New Delhi
	17	R.J. Powell Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts	William Merriam Gibson Center for Editions of American Authors, Modern Language Association New York, New York	January 23, 1968	Enclosing copies of mailing piece that includes <i>Selected Mark Twain-Howells Letters, 1872-1910</i>
	18	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair,	February 29, 1968	Receipt of new Howells list; <i>Sixty American Opinions of the War</i>

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
		New York, New York	New Jersey		(1915) is the only one in stock
	19	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	March 1, 1968	Sale of Howells' <i>Poems</i> (1873) with letter to Stedman
	20	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	March 8, 1968	Lists Howells books of interest that Gibson sent; inquires about what to do with the remaining 16 books
	21	William Mulder American Studies Research Centre India	K.P. Saradhi English Department Digvijai Mahavidyalaya Rajnandgaon, India	April 3, 1968	Gibson's carbon copy of letter regarding receipt of Howells titles from Gibson, making theirs the best Howells collection in the country. Annotated with Mulder's note of thanks to Gibson for sending the books.
	22	Howard S. Mott Sheffield, Massachusetts	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	April 17, 1968	Order for Howells pamphlet; copies of other Howells books available for sale, including <i>Tuscan Cities</i>
	23	Joseph A. Dowling Department of History Lehigh University	William Merriam Gibson	July 14, 1968	Dowling's review of <i>The Achievement of William Dean Howells: A Reinterpretation</i> , by Kermit Vanderbilt (1968) in <i>The Journal of American History</i> . Review included in folder.
	24	Harry Hayford Department of English Northwestern University Evanston, Illinois	William Merriam Gibson	December 12, 1968	Enclosing Howells item found in book; other Howells items were sent the previous day
	25	John S. Van E. Kohn	Union Catalogue	January 9, 1969	Finding a Belfords,

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
		Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	Library of Congress Washington, D.C.		Clarke & Co. (Toronto) edition of <i>The Lady of the Aroostook</i> (1879)
	26	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	January 16, 1969	Finding a Belfords, Clarke & Co. (Toronto) edition of <i>The Lady of the Aroostook</i> (1879)
	27	Edward Wagenknecht West Newton, Massachusetts	William Merriam Gibson Modern Language Association New York, New York	March 5, 1969	Thanks for letter about review of <i>The Altrurian Romances</i> ; University of Iowa edition of the works of Mark Twain
	28	William Merriam Gibson Center for Editions of American Authors New York, New York	Edward Wagenknecht West Newton, Massachusetts	March 14, 1969	Publication information about the <i>Works of Mark Twain</i>
	29	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	June 3, 1969	Interest in eight books that Gibson sent; inquiry about instructions for the books he declined to purchase
	30	Jean Riviere Villemomble, France	William Merriam Gibson	June 13, 1969	Seeking advice on translation and publication on his thesis on Howells by a university press
	31	William Merriam Gibson	Jean Riviere Villemomble, France	June 24, 1969	Promises to advise on translation and publication on thesis on Howells by a university press
	32	George [Arms] The University of New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico	William Merriam Gibson	July 27, 1969	Italian article titled "Il pendolo della fortuna di Howells"
	33	William Merriam Gibson	George Arms The University of	October 29, 1969	Gadda Conti's article (referenced above?);

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
			New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico		royalty statement
	34	David J. Nordloh English Department Indiana University Bloomington, Indiana	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	October 5, 1970	Gibson's order for Howells editions published by Indiana University
	35	Marilan Lund The New York Public Library New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	June 11, 1971	Sending article by [Joseph A.] Dowling for comments about his work
	36	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	William Merriam Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	November 29, 1971	Enclosing a printing of a Howells poem
	37	Tom Tanselle Department of English University of Wisconsin Madison, Wisconsin	William Merriam Gibson	January 7, 1972	Thanks for gift of <i>The Pit</i> , including a comment by Howells on the dust jacket. Folder includes the Xerox of the jacket that is mentioned in the letter.
	38	George [Arms] The University of New Mexico Albuquerque, New Mexico	William Merriam Gibson	January 8, 1972	Note on copy of letter from L.W. Currey Rare Books (Elizabethtown, New York) to Arms regarding 1887 edition of Howells' <i>Their Wedding Journey</i>
	39	John S. Van E. Kohn Seven Gables Bookshop New York, New York	Barbara Gibson Upper Montclair, New Jersey	May 11, 1972	Copy of the 1868 edition of Howells' <i>Venetian Life</i>
	40	Walter	William Merriam Gibson	Undated	Note inquiring whether he has these Howells imprints and bindings
	41	Arthur Benjamin Queens College Flushing, New York	William Merriam Gibson	October 30	Piero Plowman scholar J. Bennett of Oxford University
	42	William Merriam Gibson	Dan	Undated	Will send list; enclosing <i>Nation</i> volume

Box	Folder	Author/Location	Recipient/Location	Date	Topics Discussed
	43	[Harry Hayford]	William Merriam Gibson	Undated	Has another copy of [<i>A Foregone Conclusion</i>] in a brick-brown binding

Series II. Miscellaneous Manuscript Items

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	44	Invoices from Seven Gables Bookshop, Howard S. Mott Rare Books, Charles E. Tuttle Company, Edward Morrill & Son, Inc., Pyetells Bookshop, and L.W. Currey	1940-1972
	45	Specifications for Mark Twain-Howells Letters (Harvard University Press)	1959
	46	Advertisements/announcements of Howells books for sale	Undated
	47	Miscellaneous notes	Undated
	48	Annotated lists of works by William Dean Howells	Undated

Series III: Miscellaneous Printed Material

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	49	Clippings from <i>The Literary World</i> , including references to William Dean Howells and his works	1875-1878
	50	"Russian Novels," by Thomas Sergeant Perry, <i>Scribner's</i> , Vol. I	February 1887
	51	"Allies' Day," by Childe Hassam	March 17, 1918
	52	"The Significance of Henry James," <i>The Times Literary Supplement</i>	January 6, 1927
	53	"Mark (Ye) (the) Twain," by Dora Jane Hamblin, <i>Life</i>	July 1964
	54	"Ca' Foscari e ca' Giustinian dai Vescovi," by Silvana Longega and Tito Talamini	1964
	55	Advertisements for David Douglas' Series of "American Authors" in one-shilling volumes	undated

Series IV: Catalogues

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	56	Catalogue from the sale of the library of actor and bibliophile Francis Wilson	1940
	57	Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints catalogue	1957

Box	Folder	Title	Date
	58	Howard S. Mott catalogue	1968
	59	L.W. Currey Rare Books catalogue excerpt	1971
	60	Seven Gables Book Shop catalogue excerpt	1971
	61	Seven Gables Bookshop list of items pertaining to William Dean Howells	Undated
	62	Miscellaneous catalogues and catalogue excerpts	Undated

Series V: Student Papers

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	63	"Some Uses of Imagery in <i>Indian Summer</i> ," by Ronald J. Christ	August 1, 1960
	64	"The Cyclical Nature of Time in William Dean Howells' <i>Indian Summer</i> ," By Linda P. Hotkins Dunbar	April 20, 1972
	65	Excerpts from a paper [on Howells] given by Elsa T. Baer before the Monday Club of Oxford	September 20, 1976
	66	"A Selected Edition of W.D. Howells: An Essay Review," by Hershel Parker	Undated

Series VI: Oversized Items

Location	Title	Date
Map Case 1, Drawer 1	"The Crusading Builder of Mac-o-chee Castle," <i>The Columbus Sunday Dispatch Magazine</i>	September 4, 1949
Map Case 1, Drawer 1	"Howells Immortalized City in 'A Boy's Town' and other articles on page 10 of the <i>Hamilton, Ohio Journal</i>	July 22, 1963
Map Case 1, Drawer 1	"'Boy's Town Peculiarly Adapted for a Boy to be In'," <i>Hamilton Journal-News</i>	June 15, 1975
Map Case 1, Drawer 1	"Hamilton – A Boy's Town Peculiarly Adapted for a Boy to be a Boy in," <i>Hamilton & Fairfield Journal-News</i>	February 27, 1977