

Descriptive Summary:

Creator:	William Cowper Brann
Title:	William Cowper Brann Collection
Inclusive Dates:	1887-1990, undated
Bulk Dates:	1897-1898
Abstract:	The William Cowper Brann Collection contains secondary materials (with a few primary sources) detailing the career and death of influential journalist William C. Brann, editor of <i>The Iconoclast</i> .
Accession #:	0045
Extent:	0.90 linear feet (2 document boxes)
Language:	Collection is in English.
Repository:	The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Biographical Note:

Throughout history, there have been individuals who were blatantly controversial; who refused to accept the status quo from institutions of authority. In Baylor University history, such a character was epitomized in the person of William Cowper Brann. Brann was born on 1855 January 4 in Coles County, Illinois. He was the son of Noble J. Brann, a Presbyterian minister. His life changed dramatically, however, when his mother passed away two years after William was born. Brann was placed under the care of a neighboring couple, William and Mary Hawkins.

Brann was not satisfied with the circumstances in which he found himself. In 1868, at the age of thirteen, Brann ran away from the Hawkins' home. With few personal belongings and no formal education, he set out to make his fortune in the West.

As time wore on, Brann found himself with a new family and a new vocation. On 1877 March 3, William married Carrie Belle Martin at Rochelle, Illinois. The couple would go on to have two daughters and one son. Tragedy struck the Brann family when his twelve-year-old daughter Inez committed suicide. On her suicide note, she claimed told her father, "I could never be as good as you want me to." Her death greatly impacted Brann.

While Brann and his wife struggled to cope with the loss of a daughter, William came to the conclusion that he wanted to become a writer and journalist. He gained valuable experiences writing for the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, *Galveston Evening-Tribune*, *Galveston News*, *Austin Statesman*, *San Antonio Express*, and *Houston Post*. In 1889, Brann registered three plays with the Library of Congress: *Cleon*, *That American Woman*, and *Retribution*.

With these valuable opportunities, Brann was confident he could start his own journal. In 1891, while living in Austin, Texas, Brann launched *The Iconoclast*. The paper flopped, and Brann was forced to find more editorial work in San Antonio and Houston. He moved to Waco in 1894 as editor of the *Waco Daily News*. After a brief period of time, Brann restarted *The Iconoclast* in 1895 February. This time, the paper was quite successful. At its peak, *The Iconoclast* enjoyed a circulation between 90-100,000 people.

Brann had strong support in the central Texas region, but he also made many enemies. He was openly critical of the status quo, Baptists, Baylor University,

Episcopalians, the British, women, and African Americans. Brann sparked great outrage when writing about a potential sex scandal involving Steen Morris and Antonia Teixeira. Morris was the son-in-law of Baylor University President Rufus Burleson and Teixeira was a fourteen-year-old Brazilian girl living with the Burlesons at the time. Brann was even bold enough to accuse the president of various improprieties, but a grand jury eventually found Burleson to be innocent of the accusations.

Brann's candid and vitriolic style of writing led to violence against himself and his supporters. On 1897 October 2, Brann was kidnapped by Baylor students. When he refused to leave town, he was beaten by a number of men, including a local judge. In November of that year, Brann supporter Judge G.B. Gerald was involved in a duel with J.W. Harris, editor of the *Waco Times-Herald*, and Harris' brother. The brothers were killed, and Gerald lost an arm.

Brann continued to stir up controversy with his periodical until his death. On 1898 April 1, Brann was walking along Fourth Street when he was shot in the back by Tom Davis, the father of a Baylor student. Brann turned on his assailant and managed to fire off a few shots as well. Both men died the next day. Brann was buried in Oakwood Cemetery. His legacy, as evidenced by the printed materials in this collection, continued to grow. Some denounced Brann as a child of the devil and a fanatic; others praised him as a visionary and a brilliant writer.

Sources:

Conger, Roger N. "William Cowper Brann." *Handbook of Texas Online*. Available at <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fbr23>. Accessed 2012 May 8.

Conger, Roger N. "William Cowper Brann." *The Handbook of Waco and McLennan County, Texas*. Ed. Dayton Kelley. Waco: Texian Press, 1972.

Curlin, Allison. "Anniversary of a Killing." *Baylor Lariat*. 1998 April 1.

Scope and Content:

The William Cowper Brann Collection ranges in chronology from 1887 to 1990. The primary source materials that are included within the collection, which are largely newspaper clippings, span from 1887 to 1898, the year in which Brann was killed. There are a few photographs of Brann and his gravesite in Series V of the collection.

Most of this collection is comprised of secondary source material collected by researchers like Roger N. Conger and various historical societies. These materials include notes, clippings, and other printed materials commemorating Brann's life and chronicling the development of public memory surrounding this controversial figure.

Organization and Arrangement:

This collection was well-organized by those who previously processed it. Thus the original folders titles and organization were largely maintained. There are now six series in the collection: I. Correspondence, II. Legal Documents, III. Financial Documents, IV. Literary Productions, V. Photographic Materials, and VI. Subject Files. Literary Productions represent the largest contingent of materials.

Restrictions: The collection is open for research.

Literary Rights Statement:

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Index Terms:

Baylor University -- History.
 Brann, William Cowper, 1855-1898.
 Iconoclast -- Waco (Tex.)
 Journalists -- Texas.
 Waco (Tex.) -- History.

Related Materials:

Rufus C. Burleson Papers, #0057.
 Benajah Harvey Carroll, Jr. Items, #2402.
 Oliver Harlan Cross Papers, #3712.
 William Orville Wilkes Papers, #0172.

Separated Materials: A tracer sheet can be found in the control file. It details the location of materials pertaining to the incident in 1897 when Brann was kidnapped by a group of Baylor University students.

Custodial History:

Acquisition:	<p>This collection was assembled through multiple gifts from a variety of donors.</p> <p>Gift from John McNamara, Jr., 1970 January 15. Gift from Mrs. Bonner Frizzell, 1972 September. Gift from Tony Duty (via Roger N. Conger), 1981 July. Gift from The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1986 October 9. Gift from Arizona Historical Society, Southern Arizona Division, 1988 January 8.</p> <p>Purchase from Roger N. Conger, 1978 March.</p>
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Citation:	William Cowper Brann Collection, Accession #0045, Box #, Folder #, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.
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Processing Information: Finding aid completed by Thomas A. DeShong, 2012 May 8.

Container List:

Series I: Correspondence, 1897-1948, undated, 3 folders.

This series consists primarily of secondary materials. The correspondence is written about William C. Brann rather than to or from him. The letters reflect Brann's divisive nature as a journalist but also his influence in the Central Texas region, even after his untimely death. The materials are in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	1	Correspondence: Concerning William C. Brann	1897-1931
	2	Correspondence: Concerning William C. Brann	1936-1946
	3	Correspondence: Concerning William C. Brann	1948, undated

Series II: Legal Documents, 1898, 1 folder.

This series, comprised of one folder, consists of the public notification concerning Brann's death in 1898. The material is in excellent condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	4	Legal Documents: Notice: Death	1898

Series III: Financial Documents, 1919, 1 folder.

This series, which is comprised of one folder, contains a bond purchased by W.O. Wilkes. In 1919, Wilkes invested in The Brann Publishers, Inc. The material is in excellent condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	5	Financial Documents: Stock: W.O.Wilkes: The Brann Publishers, Inc.	1919 August 26

Series IV. Literary Productions, 1893-1990, undated, 28 folders.

This series, the largest in the collection, consists of materials such as articles,

newspaper clippings, and printed materials that chronicle the life and death of William C. Brann. While there are relatively few primary sources, this series is an excellent starting point for those seeking to understand how Brann has been remembered over time. The materials are in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
1	6	Literary Productions: Advertisements: <i>Brann: The Iconoclast</i>	undated
	7	Literary Productions: Articles: General	1938-1979, undated
	8	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>Brann's Iconoclast</i>	1897 March
	9	Literary Productions: Articles: T.W. Knowles II: "A Bullet for the Iconoclast"	1986 July 2
	10	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>New York Times Magazine</i> : William Safire: "I Like Icon"	1990 February 4
	11	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>Real West</i> : Dale Walker: "Brann: The Iconoclast"	1979 March
	12	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>Religion in Life</i> : Charles Wellborn: "Brann vs. the Baptists"	1978 Summer
	13	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>Southwest Review</i> : Joseph M. Dawson: "Image-Breaker Brann Six Decades Later..."	1958 Spring
	14	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>The Free Lance</i> : "Shall Brann be Driven Out?"	1897 December
	15	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>The Gatling Gun</i> : "The Texas Tragedy"	1898 June
	16	Literary Productions: Articles: <i>Waco-Tribune Herald</i> : Mark England: "Waco's Six-Shooter Journalist"	1998 April 1
	17	Literary Productions: Book: Roger N. Conger: <i>The Best of Brann</i>	1967
	18	Literary Productions: Circular: Knights of Columbus: Catholics	undated
	19	Literary Productions: Clippings	1893
	20	Literary Productions: Clippings	1897-1948
	21	Literary Productions: Clippings	1949-1957
	22	Literary Productions: Clippings	1958-1965
	23	Literary Productions: Clippings	1966-1990
2	1	Literary Productions: Essay: Elizabeth Echols: "Report on Brann and The Iconoclast"	1959 January 7

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
2	2	Literary Productions: Notes: Roger N. Conger: Foreword: <i>The Best of Brann</i>	undated
	3	Literary Productions: Periodicals	1897-1975
	4	Literary Productions: Printed Materials: Play: "Brann's Iconoclast"	1971-1972
	5	Literary Productions: Printed Materials: Roger N. Conger	1958-1968, undated
	6	Literary Productions: Printed Materials: Roger N. Conger	undated
	7	Literary Productions: Unpublished Materials	1918-1934
	8	Literary Productions: Unpublished Materials	1938-1940
	9	Literary Productions: Unpublished Materials	1957-1961, undated
	10	Literary Productions: Unpublished Materials	undated

Series V. Photographic Materials, 1887-1964, undated, 6 folders.

This series consists of negatives and photographic materials pertaining to the life of William Brann. Photographs focus on buildings in Waco, William Brann in life, William Brann in his coffin, and the tombstones that marked the graves of William Brann and G.B. Gerald. These materials are in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
2	11	Photographic Materials: Negatives: William C. Brann	undated
	12	Photographic Materials: Photos: Buildings: Waco	1887-1895, undated
	13	Photographic Materials: Photos: Guns	undated
	14	Photographic Materials: Photos: People	1895, undated
	15	Photographic Materials: Photos: Tombstone: William C. Brann	1964, undated
	16	Photographic Materials: Photos: Tombstone: G.B. Gerald	undated

Series VI. Subject Files, 1891-1960, undated, 3 folders.

This series is comprised of subject files collected prior to and after Brann's death. These files focus on three particular individuals/issues: B.H. Carroll, Jr. G.B. Gerald, and the Teixeira-Morris controversy at Baylor University. Carroll was an esteemed professor at Baylor University at the turn of the century. G.B. Gerald was a judge in McLennan County. The Teixeira-Morris controversy involved the impregnation of a young Brazilian girl that scandalized the university. Brann had accused the Burleson family of

impropriety, but a grand jury had found the Baylor president to be innocent of all charges. These materials are in good condition.

BOX NUMBER	FOLDER NUMBER	FOLDER TITLE	DATES
2	17	Subject Files: B.H. Carroll, Jr.	1891-1933
	18	Subject Files: G.B. Gerald	1897-1960, undated
	19	Subject Files: Teixeira-Morris Controversy: "The Brazilian Girl and Baylor University"	1893-1896

Notes:

For an insightful biography about William Brann, see Charles Carver's *Brann and the Iconoclast* (1957). For books that contain edited works of William Brann, see *The Complete Works of Brann* (1919) and Roger N. Conger's *The Best of Brann* (1967). The latter can be found in this collection.