THE FORT HAYS KANSAS STATE COLLEGE FOLKORE COLLECTION

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The choice of the word "collection" rather than "archive" to describe the materials available at Fort Hays Kansas State College is a deliberate act of modesty. The collection consists of perhaps fifteen hundred sheets of manuscript materials and about fifty tape recordings, almost all of which deal with the folklore of western Kansas and have been collected by myself and students working under my direction.

Although these materials have nearly all been collected in western Kansas, they are remarkably diversified in type and origin. We have manuscripts and tape recordings of oral narratives, folksongs and ballads, dance music and calls, games, recipes, customs, and so forth. And since the people of western Kansas represent both the North and the South American traditions as well as many of the nations of Europe (Germany, France, Czechoslovakia, for instance), our collection embraces much that would be found in any collection of American or European folklore, including Child ballads and Märchen. A considerable amount of the material in Kansas Folklore, edited by William E. Koch and myself (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), as well as a large number of the play-party games collected in the issue of Heritage of Kansas devoted to them, come from the Fort Hays Kansas State College Folklore Collection.

As manuscript material comes in, we assign it a number in accordance with the Boggs classification system, as given in the Standard Dictionary. We have modified the Boggs system only slightly in accordance with the nature of the material; for instance, since a substantial amount of what we collect is reminiscences, we have invented a B500 category to accommodate these. Otherwise we have found the Boggs system entirely satisfactory.

Catalog cards are made out for each piece as it comes in; these cards are filed alphabetically by type (folksong, folktale, recipe, and so on), by informant, and by collector. The type cards contain information about the informant, collector, date of collection, number of pages, and so forth. Folksongs and verses are cross-indexed by first line.

With as many items as possible we file information forms giving the informants' accounts of the backgrounds of the songs or stories and any other relevant data which might be helpful in interpreting them. We also keep informant biography forms, but we file these alphabetically, separately from the items, since a number of items may derive from the same informant.

Tape-recorded materials are at present handled differently because of lack of help. With each tape - which may contain several interviews, for we economize by dubbing several items on one reel - we file an index of the items on that tape, song or story information forms if these have been collected, and informant biography forms. These comprise a "tape supplement," which is kept in an envelope with the tapes.

We hope that during the coming year all our tapes will be re-processed and catalog cards made out for them; these will then be filed with the cards for the manuscript materials, in the same alphabetical file. We hope eventually also to analyze motifs in all oral narratives except reminiscences and to have a separate motif file for these.

Considering the remoteness of Hays, we have had continually in mind the fact that our collection will be used by mail, and so have tried to make such use easy. A letter addressed to me or to Mr. Paul Friesner, our librarian, who has shared with me making the decisions concerning the collection, will bring a reply indicating whether we have the material inquired about and how much it would cost to reproduce it. We are prepared to photocopy any of the manuscript materials in the collection at a cost of ten cents a sheet, to microfilm manuscripts at a nominal charge, and to copy any of the tape recordings for a fee of fifty cents, if the person making the request will supply the tape.

As for financial assistance, Fort Hays Kansas State College offers two graduate fellowships which apply to the Folklore Collection. One is in the amount of $1800 for a year; the holder works for the English department, and part of his time is spent working on the Collection. The other is in the amount of $500 for a year; the holder works only on the Collection. Naturally there is a substantial difference in the amount of working time required from the holders of the two fellowships, as well as a difference in the course load each is permitted to take. The college offers a Master of Arts degree in English, and the holders of the fellowships work toward that degree. Other expenses connected with the Collection are borne by the Forshy Library and by the Department of English.

Compared with archives at other institutions, ours is, we realize, a small one. It is also a new one, having been started only in 1955. But it is very rapidly growing, and contains a considerable amount of valuable and interesting material, of which we are proud. Austin Fife has used our collection and can, I think, serve as reference that it is worth consulting and that we are anxious to make our materials available for scholarly use. I hope that this brief notice of what we have will bring our collection to the attention of folklorists, and that they will not forget us when looking for material of almost any kind.

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