

Hard Times Blues Collection

Hard Times Blues Collection

1966, 2001, 2003, 2019



Title Statement

Hard Times Blues Collection *Hard Times Blues* Collection, 1966, 2001, 2003, 2019 Ms.2019.038

Author: LM Rozema, Archivist

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)
560 Drillfield Drive
Newman Library, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Business Number: 540-231-6308
specref@vt.edu
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2019 (CC0 1.0)

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2024-06-25 07:00:23 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2019.038

Unit Date

1966, 2001, 2003, 2019

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

The *Hard Times Blues* Collection contains materials about the play *Hard Times Blues* by Lucy Sweeney and its production by the Dumas Theatre Troupe in 2003. Items include background research, correspondence, and a 2019 revised copy of the play as well as programs, flyers, photographs, and a newspaper article about the 2003 production. The play is about Blacksburg local and Virginia Tech employee Floyd "Hardtimes" Meade (1882-1941), who was influential as a mascot performer and turkey trainer for football games. His turkeys served as an early predecessor to the HokieBird mascot representing Virginia Tech today.

Extent

0.2 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

The playwright Lucy Sweeney retains all rights to *Hard Times Blues*, and permission to publish or perform must be obtained from Sweeney. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for more information on permissions.

For the rest of the collection, the copyright status of this collection is unknown. Copyright restrictions may apply. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for assistance in determining the use of these materials.

Reproduction or digitization of materials for personal or research use can be requested using our reproduction/digitization form: <http://bit.ly/scuareproduction>. Reproduction or digitization of materials for publication or exhibit use can be requested using our publication/exhibition form: <http://bit.ly/scuapublication>. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives (specref@vt.edu or 540-231-6308) if you need assistance with forms or to submit a completed form.

Source of Acquisition

The collection was donated to Special Collections and University Archives in June 2019.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the *Hard Times Blues* Collection was completed in July 2019.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], *Hard Times Blues* Collection, Ms2019-038, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note - Floyd Meade

Virginia Tech employee Floyd Hobson "Hardtimes" Meade (also Mead) was born October 2, 1882, in Blacksburg to Denie (also Dina) Meade and either William Meade or Joe Dill. Meade also had a brother Emmett (b. 1880), sister Octavia (b. May 1885), and probably another brother named Alex (1887-1896). Emmett also worked at Virginia Tech, in the Mess Hall as a waiter and later the Machine Shop as a machinist.

According to Col. Harry Temple's Virginia Tech epic history *The Bugle's Echo*, Meade briefly lived with the family of Cadet N. W. Thomas, who brought him to campus in 1889. After that, Meade started advertising the school's athletic games. By 1896, he traveled with the football team on their trips as a mascot in an orange and maroon clown costume. (pp. 254-255) At this time, he also began working at the college in the Mess Hall (p. 448).

In 1913, Meade started bringing live turkeys to football games, inspired by the team's informal nickname the "Gobblers." He trained the birds to pull carts, walk on a leash, and flap their wings and gobble on command. Temple even recounts after a victorious Thanksgiving Day game against V.M.I., that the rotund turkey was cooked and served in the Mess Hall! He also played music for himself and for the cadets - Temple states Meade was a regular one-man-band playing a guitar, bass drum, and harmonica all at once (p. 3115-3116).

On August 25, 1913, Floyd married Lucy M. Turner, daughter of Giles Turner and a cook in private service. Floyd and Lucy were both involved in the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America. In 1905, he joined Tadmore Light Lodge #6184, the Blacksburg chapter of the fraternal organization. Minutes and attendance records list him as Past Noble Father (the highest degree or rank in the organization), and a number of other documents refer to Meade's service as secretary of the organization. Lucy Meade was a member of the Household of Ruth, the female auxiliary of the Odd Fellows.

In December 1929, Floyd lost his job at Virginia Tech, according to Temple. So students took up a collection to help with his family's living expenses, and alumni wrote letters to try and change administrators' minds - to no avail. (p. 3846-3847) Then, tragedy struck once more, when Lucy died on June 28, 1931, around age 45 of heart disease.

Floyd continued to work as a cook or waiter in restaurants around town and even served as head waiter at the Lake Hotel in Mountain Lake. By 1940, he was working as a janitor in private service. The next year, Meade died on February 8, after a car accident.

Blacksburg (Virginia) Odd Fellows Records, Ms1988-009, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Vertical Files, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

The Bugle's Echo by Col. Harry Temple

Marriage certificate for Floyd Meade and Lucy Turner, FamilySearch.org

Draft card for Floyd Meade, FamilySearch.org
Death certificates for Denie, Floyd, and Lucy Meade, Ancestry.com
Death certificate for Alex Meade, FamilySearch.org
U.S. Census records from 1880 through 1940 for Denie, Emmett, and Floyd Meade and their families, Ancestry.com

Biographical Note - Lucy Sweeney

Playwright and licensed psychologist, Lucy Sweeney, Psy.D., earned a Bachelor's degree in theatre arts at the University of Denver before receiving a Master's in developmental psychology at Columbia University and a Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) from Rutgers, awarded in 1990. Her dissertation, *Eminent Women in Acting: Personality & Development of Five Actresses* melded her two passions for psychology and the arts. Upon receiving her doctorate, Sweeney began practicing psychology and became a member of the American Psychological Society. During this time, she also joined Actors' Equity as an actress in the New York and regional area, keeping her interest in theatre alive.

Sweeney opened her first private practice in Scotch Plains, NJ, in 1993, closing in 1999. The next year, she opened a private practice in Blacksburg, Virginia. Here she also joined the faculty of Virginia Tech in 2002, teaching the course "Women and Creativity" in the Department of Women's Studies. It was during this time that she wrote the first edition of *Hard Times Blues* (2001) about Blacksburg-native Floyd "Hardtimes" Meade, which was performed in Blacksburg and Roanoke by the Dumas Theatre Players. Sweeney's practiced closed down in 2005, but she continued to work, publishing the play *Nashville Dreams* in 2007. The next year, Sweeney opened a new practice in Gallatin, TN, just outside Nashville.

Scope and Content

The *Hard Times Blues* Collection contains materials about the play *Hard Times Blues* by Lucy Sweeney and its production by the Dumas Theatre Troupe in 2003. Items include background research, correspondence, and a 2019 revised copy of the play as well as programs, flyers, photographs, and a newspaper article about the 2003 production. The play is about Blacksburg local and Virginia Tech employee Floyd "Hardtimes" Meade (1882-1941), who was influential as a mascot performer and turkey trainer for football games. His turkeys served as an early predecessor to the HokieBird mascot representing Virginia Tech today.

Separated Materials

Two copies of *Hard Times Blues* by Lucy Sweeney (2019 rev. ed.) separated to the Rare Books Collection and Newman Library's Scripts Collection (call number PS3619.W44 H37 2019).

Keywords

African Americans -- History
Blacksburg (Va.)
Community theater
Faculty and staff
Local/Regional History and Appalachian South
Theater programs
Theater -- United States
University Archives
University History
Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (1896-1944)

Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the *Hard Times Blues* Collection by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

Description of Subordinate Components

Hard Times Blues (revised edition) by Lucy Sweeney

Unit Date 2001, 2019

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Background research

Unit Date 1966, undated

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Correspondence

Unit Date 2001, 2019

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Programs

Unit Date 2003

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Flyers

Unit Date 2003

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Newspaper article

Unit Date 2003

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Photographs

Unit Date 2003

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)