The Fugitive Reunion Collection
May 3 - 5, 1956

MSS  693
Scope and Content Note

This small collection (2.33 linear feet) consists of the recordings and transcripts of the proceedings of the sessions of the Fugitive Poets Reunion held in Nashville, Tennessee and at Vanderbilt University on May 3, 4, 5 in 1956.

The recordings were originally made on reel to reel tape, and have been transferred to audio cassettes and in 2010 to compact disc format. The 26 reel to reel tapes, audio cassettes and compact discs are included here. The transcriptions are bound in two volumes.

The Fugitive Reunion participants were Donald Davidson, William Y. Elliott, Sidney Mttron Hirsch, Merrill Moore, John Crowe Ransom, Alfred Starr, Alec Brock Stevenson, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Jesse Wills. Others who participated in the reunion events were Richmond Croom Beatty, Dorothy Bethurum, Cleanth Brooks, William Cobb, Louise Cowan, Robert Jacobs, Andrew Lytle, Frank Owsley, Louis Rubin, Randall Stewart, and Willard Thorp.

Biographical Notes – The Fugitive Poets

Donald Davidson (1893 - 1968) held B.A. and M.A. degrees from Vanderbilt, and was a member of the English Department at Vanderbilt beginning in 1920 and a faculty member at Breadloaf School of English in Vermont. He was a poet, critic, teacher, author, and literary editor at the Tennessean. Davidson also was one of the twelve Agrarians who contributed to I'll Take My Stand. His wife Theresa Sherrer an artist and legal scholar illustrated his two volume book The Tennessee, part of the Rivers of America series.

William Yandell Elliott (1896 - 1979) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1917 and took a Vanderbilt M.A. degree in 1920. He was a Rhodes Scholar 1921 – 1923 at Balliol College, and his Ph.D. is from Oxford University, 1923. He taught at Vanderbilt, the University of California, and for most of his career at Harvard and was the author of a number of books in his field of political science and history.

Sidney Mttron Hirsch (1883 - 1962) was born in Nashville. He served in the Navy, and lived in Paris and New York for a time. It was Hirsch along with Davidson, Stanley Johnson, and John Crowe Ransom who started the poetry discussions which led to the formation of the Fugitive literary group, and it was Hirsch who first suggested publishing the poetry that came out of the group and the title for the magazine – The Fugitive. His play The Fire Regained was performed in Nashville with the Parthenon as a backdrop in May 1913.

Merrill Moore (1903 - 1957) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1924 with a B.A. and with an M.D. in 1928. He was a clinical associate at Harvard Medical School and a practicing psychiatrist in Boston. He wrote over 50,000 sonnets and published a number of books of poetry including The Noise that Time Makes. He joined the Fugitive group while he was an undergraduate at Vanderbilt.

John Crowe Ransom (1888 - 1974) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1909, and then was a Rhodes Scholar at Christ Church College in Oxford from 1910 -1913. He taught English at Vanderbilt.
from 1914 - 1937, and then was Carnegie Professor of Poetry at Kenyon College from 1937 - 1958. He was the founder and editor of the *Kenyon Review*, and published literary criticism and many volumes of poetry. He along with Davidson, Tate, and Warren contributed also to the Agrarian manifesto of 1930 *I’ll Take My Stand*.

**Alfred Starr** (1898 - 1956) attended Vanderbilt from 1922-24 and during this time was an active member of the Fugitive group. In 1926 he received his B.A. from Harvard. He served as President of the Bijou theater chain and of the Theater Owners of America. He was one of the founders of the Nashville Symphony Association and the Nashville Arts Council.

**Alec Brock Stevenson** (1895 - 1969) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1916 and later served on the Vanderbilt Board of Trust and as a trustee for the Joint University Libraries He was a reporter for the *Nashville Banner* and later an investment banker in Nashville. Stevenson was a contributor to the Fugitive magazine from the beginning of its publication in 1922, and in the early issues used the pen names Drimlonigher and King Badger.

**Allen Tate** (1899 - 1979) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1922. He was invited by Donald Davidson to join the Fugitive poets and later went on to join the Agrarian group and contributed to both *I’ll Take My Stand* (1930) and *Who Owns America?* (1936). He taught at a number of universities including Princeton and the University of Minnesota, and was editor of *The Sewanee Review* from 1944 - 46. Tate was a distinguished teacher, critic, novelist and poet and was honored in many ways including holding the Chair of Poetry at the Library of Congress from 1943 - 44.

**Robert Penn Warren** (1905 -1989) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1925. He received an M.A. from the University of California and was a Rhodes Scholar at New College, Oxford University where he took the B. Litt. Degree in 1930. He joined the Fugitive group while a student at Vanderbilt, and later contributed his essay “The Briar Patch” to the Agrarian publication *I’ll Take My Stand*. Warren went on to have an international career as a poet, novelist, critic, and teacher winning many awards and honors including Pulitzer prizes for his novel *All the King’s Men* and for his 1958 book of poetry *Promises*. He taught at Southwestern at Memphis, Vanderbilt, Louisiana State University, University of Minnesota, and at Yale University. In 1986 he was named Poet Laureate of the United States.

**Jesse Ely Wills** (1899 - 1977) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1922. With his cousin Ridley Wills he joined the Fugitive group in 1922 and over his lifetime published a number of books of poetry including *Early and Late*, and *Nashville and other Poems*. Some of the meetings for the Reunion took place at his home *Meade Haven* in Nashville. Wills established the Fugitive Room as the depository of Fugitive papers and manuscripts in the Vanderbilt library, and was a longtime member of Vanderbilt’s Board of Trust. For many years he was an executive with the National Life and Accident Insurance Company in Nashville.

**Biographical Notes - others**

**Richmond Croom Beatty** (1905 - 1961) graduated from Birmingham Southern College in 1926 and received the M.A. and Ph.D degrees from Vanderbilt in 1928 and 1930. He was a member of
the English faculty at Vanderbilt from 1937 - 1957 and in 1957 became the literary editor at the Nashville Tennessean. In 1944 he edited A Vanderbilt Miscellany and was the author of a number of other books including William Byrd of Westover.

**Dorothy Bethurum (Loomis)** (1897 - ) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1919. She received her M.A. from Vanderbilt in 1922, and her Ph.D. from Yale in 1930. She taught at Randolph-Macon College for Women, Lawrence College, and Connecticut College. With Randall Stewart she edited Living Masterpieces of English Literature and was the author of The Homilies of Wulfstan.

**Cleanth Brooks** (1906 - 1994) graduated from Vanderbilt in 1928. He received his M.A. from Tulane in 1929, and then went on to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar at Exeter College from 1929 - 1932 where he took an honors B.A. in 1931 and a B.Litt. in 1932. He taught at Louisiana State University and at Yale beginning in 1947. With his lifelong friend and colleague Robert Penn Warren he founded the Southern Review at LSU in 1935. They went on to be colleagues at Yale and to author together important textbooks of literary criticism including Understanding Poetry and Understanding Fiction. Brooks was Gray Professor of Rhetoric at Yale University.

**William Cobb** (1902 -?) received his B.A. degree from Vanderbilt in 1922, and his M.A. in 1923. He served as college editor for Houghton-Mifflin Company and later as editor of publications with the Rockefeller Foundation.

**Louise Cowan** (1916 - ) received her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Texas Christian University in 1946 and 1947 and her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt in 1953. She taught at Texas Christian University and at the University of Dallas. She wrote the landmark and standard history of the Fugitives: The Fugitive Group: A Literary History which was published by Louisiana State University Press in 1959.

**Robert Jacobs** (1918 -?) received a B.A. degree from the University of Mississippi and a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University and was a member of the English faculty there. Beginning in 1953 he taught at the University of Kentucky. With Louis Rubin he was co-editor of The Hopkins Review and Southern Renascence and a contributor to numerous magazines and periodicals.

**Andrew Lytle** (1902 - 1995) received his B.A. from Vanderbilt in 1925, and attended the Yale School of Drama from 1927 - 28. He was one of the original twelve Agrarians and contributed to I’ll Take My Stand. He taught at the University of the South and at the University of Florida, and was the editor of The Sewanee Review for twelve years. He was a farmer and a writer and a raconteur whose works include The Long Night, The Velvet Horn, and Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company.

**Frank Owsley** (1890 – 1956) graduated from Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1911 and then received the M.S., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from University of Chicago. He was a member of the Vanderbilt history faculty from 1920 – 1949, and then taught at the University of Alabama.
from 1949 -1956. He was a Fulbright Scholar Lecturer at St. John’s College, Cambridge University in the autumn of 1956 when he died. Owsley was one of the twelve original Agrarians who contributed to I’ll Take My Stand. He wrote several books on Southern history including King Cotton Diplomacy and Plain Folk of the Old South, and was aided in his scholarship and research by his wife Harriet Chappell Owsley.

**Louis Rubin** (1923 - ) received his B.A. from The University of Richmond and his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins. He was, with Robert Jacobs, editor of The Hopkins Review and Southern Renascence, and the author of more than fifty books mostly on Southern literature and letters. He was chairman of the English faculty at Hollins College before his long tenure as a distinguished professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Randall Stewart** (1896 - 1964) graduated from Vanderbilt as Founder’s Medalist in 1917. In 1921 he was awarded an M.A. from Harvard, and in 1930 a Ph.D. from Yale. From 1955 - 1963 he was Professor of English at Vanderbilt. Earlier he taught at the University of Idaho, Yale, Brown, and Connecticut College. He established the Mrs. Harold S. Vanderbilt literary symposium at Vanderbilt in 1958.

**Willard Thorp** (1899 -?) graduated from Hamilton College in 1920 and received his M.A. from Harvard in 1921 and his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1926. He joined the Princeton English Department in 1926 and authored The Triumph of Realism in Elizabethan Drama and other works.

**Container List**

**Box 1**

Transcriptions of tapes 1 -11 bound in volume 1
Transcriptions of tapes 12 – 26 bound in volume 2
13 compact disc copies of original recordings of the 1956 Fugitive Reunion
Compact disc backup data for Reunion tapes 1 – 7 and 8 - 13

**Box 2**

Audio cassettes
13 Archival
13 Use copies

**Box 3**

1. – 26. 7” reel to reel recordings of the proceedings of the 1956 Fugitive Reunion