S. J. Ray Collection (SC208)

Introduction

This collection contains original artwork and other materials relating to S. J. Ray, who worked as editorial cartoonist for The Kansas City Star from 1931 to 1963. Ray’s cartoons depict a wide array of historical figures and events, including New Deal politics, World War II, and the Cold War.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Silvey Jackson Ray
Title: S. J. Ray Collection
Dates: 1921 – 2005
Size: 3.2 linear feet, 3 boxes
Collection Number: SC208

Donor Information

Gift, 2016, Jennie Frederick.

Citation Note

S. J. Ray Collection (SC208), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information

Reproduction restrictions: This collection contains original artwork that may be protected under copyright law. Some items may not be photocopied due to fragile condition.

Additional form available: S. J. Ray’s published political cartoons may be found in the Kansas City Star digital archives.

Related Collections: Additional information relating to S. J. Ray may be found in the library catalog and in the Missouri Valley Special Collections Local History Index. Related special collections include: SC30-13: S. J. Ray Cartoons and SC63 Vertical Files Special Collection. Other collections pertaining to S. J. Ray may also be found at The Truman Library (S. J. Ray Papers) and The State Historical Society of Missouri (Editorial Cartoons Collection.)

Biographical Sketch

Artist, illustrator, and cartoonist Silvey Jackson (S. J. or Sil) Ray was born on a farm in Chariton County, Missouri on March 15, 1891. Though he received no formal academic training beyond grade school, he began working as an illustrator at the
Kansas City Journal-Post in 1913 before joining the staff at The Kansas City Star in 1915.

Ray’s career at the Star was briefly interrupted when he left to serve in the United States Army from 1917 to 1919. He then studied in New York City under F. R. Gruger at the Arts Student League before resuming work in Kansas City in 1920.

In 1931, Ray became the Star’s editorial cartoonist, and his work was featured six times per week on the editorial page. His distinctive cartoons depicted current events and politicians, and critics commended Ray for his ability to infuse his satirical caricatures with both humor and humanity. Many of Ray’s political cartoons drew national attention, won awards from the U. S. Treasury department and the Freedom Foundation, and were reprinted by the U. S. State department to counter Soviet propaganda. Ray created approximately 10,000 cartoons during his 32 years as editorial cartoonist.

After his retirement in 1963, Ray retreated to his Clay County home, where he enjoyed painting rural scenes in watercolor. S. J. Ray died on February 3rd, 1970 at the age of 78.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains original and published cartoons drawn by S. J. Ray for The Kansas City Star/Times, as well as newspaper clippings, correspondence, and other biographical materials. Ray’s cartoons depict a wide array of historical figures and events from 1931 to 1963, including New Deal politics, labor unions, World War II, the Cold War and topics specific to Kansas City, such as the flood of 1951. A few items pertaining to the Donnelly Garment Company are also included in this collection. The collection is arranged into five series by type of material.

Series 1: Biographical Information, 1921-2005 and n. d.

This series contains miscellaneous biographical materials, including newspaper articles about S. J. Ray, his marriage certificate, personal correspondence, memorial service program, and photograph. This series is arranged by item type and therein chronologically.


This series contains materials pertaining to the Donnelly Garment Company, including a brochure and photograph of staff at a Nelly Don Christmas party. These items were collected by William and Vivian Frederick, who were employees of Nelly Don and family members of S. J. Ray.


This series contains photocopies of Kansas City Star/Times clippings featuring S. J. Ray cartoons and watercolors. This series is described at the item level by title and is arranged chronologically.

This series contains original editorial cartoons drawn by S. J. Ray, most of which were printed in the *Kansas City Star/Times* during World War II. This series is described at the item level and is arranged chronologically by publishing date. Undated cartoons are listed at the end of the series and arranged alphabetically by cartoon title.

Series 5: C. K. Berryman Editorial Cartoon, 1934

This series contains an original editorial cartoon by artist C. K. Berryman, a friend of S. J. Ray. The 1934 cartoon depicts Franklin D. Roosevelt and comments on New Deal Code Regulations.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Biographical Information, 1921-2005 and n. d.

f. 1  Miscellaneous, 1921-1970 and n.d.
f. 2  New clippings and obituaries, 1963-2005


f. 3  Donnelly Garment Company, 1938 and n.d.


#1  But His Soul Goes Marching On, December 7, 1935
#2  Service Station on the Road to Suez, May 5, 1941
#3  This is the Enemy!, January 6, 1943
#4  A Great Friend and a Fine Artist, May 15, 1943
#5  He’Il Get Out--Or Else, September 10, 1943
#6  Shepherd of the Hills, May 26, 1944
#7  The Fever Pitch, November 3, 1944
#8  And That’s That--Thank Heaven!, November 6, 1944
#9  Now That They’re Getting Cornered, December 4, 1944
#10  They Shall Not Pass, December 29, 1944
#11  Pistol Packin’ Patton, December 30, 1944
#12  Handwriting on the Wall, March 23, 1945
#13  My Folks Will Miss You Too, Ernie, April 19, 1945
#14  Harvest Moon, April 27, 1945
#15  To the Seven Seas, October 27, 1945
#16  From Foxholes to--., November 14, 1945
#17  Unexpected Blizzard, November 3, 1948
#18  I Love a Parade!, January 18, 1949
#19  The Biggest Catch, August 2, 1949
#20  Going to the Square Dance, May 12, 1950
#21 We’d Better Stop Laughing at an Old Joke, July 18, 1951
#22 No One Else Could Have Filled It, December 12, 1957
#23 He’ll Find His Orbit, December 16, 1957
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#25 Monty’s Memoirs, October 16, 1958
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#28 The 1961 Session Ends, September 28, 1961
#29 California Gold Rush, September 29, 1961
#30 Hard to Fill, September 30, 1961
#31 And One for the Road, June 18, 1962
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#100 As Three Cartoonists Saw Truman, December 27, 1972
#101 More Free Parking for Everyone, April 15, 1979
#102 Wherever He Strikes Next, There’ll Be a Hole in His Armor, December 22, 1991
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Processed by Joanna Marsh, Special Collections Librarian, May 2017.