

# Hard Times Blues Collection

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1966, 2001, 2003, 2019



## Title Statement

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## Profile Description

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## 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.

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### **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

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## 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)