

# E. P. Conkle papers

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1928-1994



## Title Statement

E. P. Conkle papers Guide to the E. P. Conkle papers C0157

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**Author:** Eron Ackerman

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## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

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### Unit Date

1928-1994

### Mixed Materials

8-9 (box)

## **Mixed Materials**

10-11 (box)

## **Language**

English

## **Abstract**

Included in the E. P. Conkle papers are plays, poetry, short stories, and book manuscripts written by E. P. Conkle, mostly during Conkle's professorship at the University of Texas at Austin (1939-1973).

## **Creator**

Conkle, E. P. (Ellsworth Prouty)

## **Extent**

3.5 Linear Feet 7 boxes

## **Repository**

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

# **Administrative Information**

## **Access Restrictions**

There are no access restrictions.

## **Use Restrictions**

The copyright and related rights status of this collection have not been evaluated (See <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/CNE/1.0/>)

## **Acquisition Information**

Donated by Virginia McNeal Conkle in 1994.

## **Processing Information**

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## **Preferred Citation**

E. P. Conkle papers, C0157, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

# **Biographical Information**

Ellsworth Prouty Conkle (1899-1994) was a prolific playwright and professor of playwriting. Born on July 10, 1899, Conkle grew up on a farm in the small town of Peru, Nebraska. His rural upbringing had an enduring influence on his writing as exemplified in his first published book, *Crick Bottom Plays* (1928), a collection of short plays which dramatize the wit and wisdom of folksy Nebraskans. After high school Conkle went to Peru State Teachers College and completed his undergraduate education in 1923 at the University of Nebraska. Conkle did graduate work at Yale University in 1926-1928 and earned his Ph.D in playwriting from the University of Iowa in 1936. From 1936-1939 Conkle worked as an assistant professor of speech at the University of Iowa. In 1939 he joined the faculty of the University of Texas at Austin as an associate professor where he became a full professor in 1945 and taught until his retirement in 1973. Conkle's former students include Tennessee Williams, Pat Hingle, Tommy Tune, and Fess Parker.

In addition to teaching classes and developing the Department of Drama at the University of Texas, Conkle wrote numerous published and unpublished plays, several short stories, and dozens of poems. Much of his work captures the humor and wisdom of a bygone era in American folk-life, including the short play "Sparkin'" (1928) and the long plays "Johnny Appleseed" (1940) and "No Time for Heaven" (1972). Abraham Lincoln became another favorite subject of Conkle's, and the play "Prologue to Glory" (1938), a fictionalized account of Lincoln's formative years in New Salem, was chosen for production by the Federal Theatre Project and performed across the United States in 1938-1939. Capitalizing on its success, Conkle wrote a radio script based on the play, entitled *Honest Abe*, which was produced by CBS and aired in thirty-six parts between 1940 and 1941. Conkle died in 1994.

# **Scope and Content**

Included in the E. P. Conkle papers are plays, poetry, short stories, and book manuscripts written by E. P. Conkle, mostly during Conkle's professorship at the University of Texas at Austin (1939-1973). Most of the manuscripts in the collection are undated. Thus, specific dates on subsequently published materials typically refer to the date of publication, and date ranges on unpublished materials refer to letterheads indicating

Conkle's employ at the University of Texas or the University of Iowa. The collection also contains playbills and director's notes from various productions of Prologue to Glory, the radio script to the CBS-produced series, Honest Abe (1940-1941), works and notes from former students, and correspondence between Conkle and his wife, Virginia McNeal Conkle.

Series 1: Correspondence and Biographical Material contains letters written to E. P. Conkle and various articles pertaining to Conkle's career as a playwright.

Series 2: Book Manuscripts contains typed and annotated manuscripts of E. P. Conkle's books Grandpa's Little White Rent House, A Hornbook for Playwrights, and Wake Up, Tom Aycup, or, the Tale of a Great Guy.

Series 3: Play Scripts contains typed and annotated play scripts written by Conkle, including "At the Depot," "Day's End," "Good Night, Dear Grandma," "With How Little Wisdom," and a three-volume weekly radio script entitled "Honest Abe." Also included is a play script by Patty Gideon Sloan entitled "Mementos."

Series 4: Poetry contains typed and annotated poems written by Conkle, including the collections Eleven Various Ballads, A Gift of Small Inconsequential Verses, and Thirteen Sonnets Which Speak of Time, and One More.

Series 5: Short Stories contains typed and annotated copies of Conkle's stories "Little Angel of the Backward Look," "Traveller, and General Lee," and "Miss Lute."

Series 6: Miscellaneous contains various items including essays and term papers Conkle wrote as a student.

## Related Material

The Special Collections Research Center also holds the [Jay Bradford Fowler, Jr. papers](#).

## Keywords

Short stories, American  
American poetry -- 20th century  
American drama -- 20th century  
Poetry  
Manuscripts  
Creative writing  
Correspondence  
Theater  
Theater programs  
Performing arts  
Conkle, E. P. (Ellsworth Prouty)

## Arrangement

This collection is organized into six series by document type and genre with manuscripts arranged alphabetically by title and correspondence arranged chronologically.

Series

- Series 1: Correspondence and Biographical Material, 1938-1939, 1977-1994 (Box 1)
- Series 2: Book Manuscripts, undated (Box 1)
- Series 3: Play Scripts, 1928-1973, bulk 1939-1973 (Boxes 2-6)
- Series 4: Poetry, 1939-1973 (Box 6)
- Series 5: Short Stories, 1939-1973 (Box 7)
- Series 6: Miscellaneous, 1931-1992 (Box 7)

## Description of Subordinate Components

### Series 1: Correspondence and Biographical Material

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30821

**Unit Date** 1938-1939, 1977-1994

#### Scope and Contents note

This series contains letters written to E. P. Conkle and various articles pertaining to Conkle's career as a playwright.

**Personal**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30822

**Unit Date** circa 1977-1994

**Mixed Materials** 1 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

**Letter from Patty Gideon Sloan to E. P. Conkle**

**Unit ID** 1.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30823

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

**Letter from Mrs. Virginia Conkle to Lorraine Brown**

**Unit ID** 2.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30824

**Unit Date** September 18, 1994

**Scope and Contents note**

**Brief annotated biography of E. P. Conkle**

**Unit ID** 3.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30825

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Annotated biographical entry from "Contemporary Authors,"**

**Unit ID** 4.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30826

**Unit Date** 1982

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Biographical write-up of Conkle for "Notable Names in American Theatre,"**

**Unit ID** 5.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30827

**Unit Date** 1977

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**George Mason University Federal Theatre Tribute Luncheon Guest List**

**Unit ID** 6.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30828

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Prologue to Glory Playbills and Press**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30829

**Unit Date** 1938-1939

**Mixed Materials** 1 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

**Playbill for "Prologue to Glory," Portland Production**

**Unit ID** 1.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30830

**Unit Date** January 1939

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Audience reaction sheet for "Prologue to Glory," Portland Production**

**Unit ID** 2.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30831

**Unit Date** 1939

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**News article from the New Orleans States entitled "Lincoln drama well received,"**

**Unit ID** 3.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30832

**Unit Date** January 24, 1939

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Playbill for "Prologue to Glory," Cincinnati Production**

**Unit ID** 4.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30833

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Playbill for "Prologue to Glory," Chicago-Based Road Company**

**Unit ID** 5.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30834

**Unit Date** January 1939

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Memorandum from the Federal Theatre's Publicity Department entitled "Prologue Tour Praised"**

**Unit ID** 6.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30835

**Unit Date** 1939

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile; address of the Works Progress Administration in heading

**Playbill for "Prologue to Glory," San Francisco Production**

**Unit ID** 7.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30836

**Unit Date** May 1938

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile

**Director's Report for "Prologue to Glory,"**

**Unit ID** 8.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30837

**Unit Date** June 1938

**Scope and Contents note**

facsimile; note in margin indicates "Los Angeles Production,"

**Series 2: Book Manuscripts**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30838

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

This series contains typed and annotated manuscripts of books written by E. P. Conkle.

**Grandpa's Little White Rent House**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30839

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 1 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

Austin, Texas; typed manuscript, 292 pages, includes cover with title

**Grandpa's Little White Rent House copy**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30840

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 1 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

typed manuscript, 292 pages, no cover

**A Hornbook for Playwrights**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30841

**Unit Date** before 1974

**Mixed Materials** 1 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; typed manuscript with annotations, 135 pages

**Wake Up, Tom Aycup, or, the Tale of a Great Guy**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30842

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 1 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

Austin, Texas; typed manuscript with revisions, 266 pages

### **Series 3: Play Scripts**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30843

**Unit Date** 1928-1973

#### **Scope and Contents note**

This is the largest series of the collection, and it contains typed and annotated play scripts written by E. P. Conkle and includes one play script written by Patty Gideon Sloan entitled "Mementos."

#### **"At the Depot" and Four Other Short Plays; "A Long Journey" (tentative title)**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30844

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; includes the plays "Dusk, Dusk, Dusk," "Two Minds with but Two Single Thoughts," "Mr. Map and the Beautiful Hat," "Oak Leaves Burning," and an annotated play script tentatively titled "A Long Journey."

#### **"Day's End" and "Oak Leaves Burning,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30845

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; includes an 18 page annotated manuscript of "Day's End: A Few Words Spoken by Mr. Lincoln, the President," an 11 page typed play script of "Day's End" with no revisions, and an 18 page annotated manuscript for "Oak Leaves Burning."

#### **Five Short Plays for Twenty-Four Elderly Women and a Young Girl**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30846

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; includes typed play scripts for "The Fancy One," "Four Old Ladies and Pansy Potter," "Oak Leaves Burning," "Gatie, or Eight Women on a Toot," and "The Jewel in Papa's Crown," 62 pages.

#### **"Good Night, Dear Grandma,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30847

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; includes two 133 page typed play scripts for "Good Night, Dear Grandma," one of which contains manuscript revisions marked "final."

#### **Honest Abe, vol. 1**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30848

**Unit Date** broadcast aired on September 14 - December 20, 1940

**Mixed Materials** 2 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS); a radio script divided into 12 parts for weekly broadcasting,

**Honest Abe, vol. 2**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30849

**Unit Date** broadcast aired on December 28, 1940 - March 22, 1941

**Mixed Materials** 3 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS); a radio script divided into 12 parts for weekly broadcasting, volume 2 of 3

**Honest Abe, vol. 3**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30850

**Unit Date** broadcast aired on March 29 - June 18, 1941

**Mixed Materials** 3 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS); a radio script divided into 12 parts for weekly broadcasting, volume 3 of 3

**"Incident on Collander Hill,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30851

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 4 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; two copies of the play script, 121 pages each

**Johnny Appleseed**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30852

**Unit Date** circa 1940

**Mixed Materials** 4 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

**"Mementos" by Patty Gideon Sloan**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30853

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 4 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

Texas; typed script of play in three acts by Patty Gideon Sloan; see Box 1, Folder 1 for correspondence with Sloan

**"Mr. Lincoln, the President,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30854

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 4 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

two annotated scripts with revisions, one titled simply "Mr. President," approximately 120 pages each

**"A Murder of Convenience," "Muletail Prime," and "Sparkin',"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30855

**Unit Date** circa 1928-1949

**Mixed Materials** 4 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

Austin, Texas

**"A Murder of Convenience,"**

**Unit ID** 1.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30856

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

Austin, Texas; facsimile of typescript

**"Muletail Prime,"**

**Unit ID** 2.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30857

**Unit Date** circa 1949

**Scope and Contents note**

cast: Clyte Cedars and Arlie Askew; place: Clyte's place

**"Sparkin',"**

**Unit ID** 3.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30858

**Unit Date** circa 1928

**Scope and Contents note**

**"No Time for Heaven,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30859

**Unit Date** circa 1972

**Mixed Materials** 4 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

123 pages

**"Oxygenator,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30860

**Unit Date** 1936-1939

**Mixed Materials** 5 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Iowa, Experimental Theatre Seminar; soft-bound copy, 91 pages

**Papa Got Us into It, or, There's a New Woman in Town: A Play in Three Acts**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30861

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 5 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

two typed manuscripts

**"Sam Smith's Oral History of His Times,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30862

**Unit Date** 1969

**Mixed Materials** 5 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; two copies of the play script, one 65 pages and another with revisions at 69 pages

**"Stormy Weather,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30863

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 5 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

84 pages

**"Waiting for Henry Plummer,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30864

**Unit Date** 1971

**Mixed Materials** 5 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; two typed copies, one marked "Final / 1971"

**"Way Down in the Paw-Paw Patch: A Grand Guignol,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30865

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

two copies, one 66 pages and the other 67 pages; the former bears a stamp of the author's agent, Frieda Fishbein

**"With How Little Wisdom: A Play about War,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30866

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; two copies, 113 pages each

**Series 4: Poetry**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30867

**Unit Date** circa 1939-1973

**Scope and Contents note**

This collection contains typed and annotated poems written by E. P. Conkle.

### **"196 Disjointed Thoughts from a Demented Mind,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30868

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

several copies, including one 8 page typed copy with corrections

### **Eleven Various Ballads**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30869

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 4 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

Austin, Texas; typed poems with revisions, including "Ballad of the Gay Cavalier," "The Ballad of Henry Plummer," "Ballad to a Wooden Leg," "The Ballad of the Youngster and His Dog," "Ballad of a Hallelujah Marriage," "Ballad of the Merry Miller-Man," "Ballad of the Prairies," "Ballad of Aunt Susan," "Ballad of Mad Beggars," "Ballad of the Happy Milkmaid," and "Ballad of the Cosset Lamb and the Crumpled Cow"

### **A Gift of Small Inconsequential Verses**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30870

**Unit Date** undated

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 5 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

two typed 45 page manuscripts of poems including "Birds and Other Animals," "Weather and Scenery," "More and Less Personal," "Just People," and "Philosophy and Other Things"

### **Poems about My Farm; A Saga of St. Paul; A Gift of Small Verses**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30871

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 6 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; these poetry collections are respectively 22 pages, 27 pages, and 41 pages long; folder includes a title page of "Verses for a Year"

### **Thirteen Sonnets Which Speak of Time, and One More**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30872

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 7 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; typed manuscripts with revisions

### **Verses about My Grandpa; Inconsequential Quatrains for a Year**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30873

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 6 (box)

**Container** 8 (folder)

#### **Scope and Contents note**

small format type scripts

## **Series 5: Short Stories**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30874

**Unit Date** circa 1939-1973

### **Scope and Contents note**

This collection contains typed and annotated short stories written by E. P. Conkle.

#### **"Little Angel of the Backward Look,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30875

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 7 (box)

**Container** 1 (folder)

### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; two copies of the manuscript, 14 pages each, the second alternately titled, "The Littlest Angel of the Backward Look, a Fantasy"

#### **"Traveller, and General Lee"; "Miss Lute,"**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30876

**Unit Date** 1939-1973

**Mixed Materials** 7 (box)

**Container** 2 (folder)

### **Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; two copies of "Traveller, and General Lee," both 22 pages and one with annotations; one 43 page copy of "Miss Lute"

## **Series 6: Miscellaneous**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30877

**Unit Date** 1931-1992

### **Scope and Contents note**

This collection contains various items including essays and term papers Conkle wrote as a student.

#### **Miscellaneous**

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30878

**Unit Date** 1931-1992

**Mixed Materials** 7 (box)

**Container** 3 (folder)

### **Scope and Contents note**

#### **"The Element of Comedy in the Towneley Cycle,"**

**Unit ID** 1.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30879

**Unit Date** December 28, 1931 - January 5, 1932

### **Scope and Contents note**

35 pages including bibliography; described on title page as "a term-paper written for the class in "Chaucer" for Mr. Frantz"; annotated

#### **The Department of Drama - The University of Texas, Austin - M.F.A. Theses and PhD. Dissertations**

**Unit ID** 2.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30880

**Unit Date** circa 1979

### **Scope and Contents note**

list of University of Texas graduate students and the titles of their theses and dissertations arranged by

date

**"Let Him Copy!"**

**Unit ID** 3.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30881

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

University of Texas, Austin; revised three-page essay on education written by Conkle

**News article from Sunday World Herald,"**

**Unit ID** 4.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30882

**Unit Date** October 4, 1992

**Scope and Contents note**

**Lists of play titles and a four-line untitled verse**

**Unit ID** 5.

**Unit ID** /repositories/2/archival\_objects/30883

**Unit Date** undated

**Scope and Contents note**

two pages listing titles of plays by Conkle and four lines of verse, untitled