

MSS. Collection #251

W. Raymond Taylor Family Papers, 1931-1950s [bulk 1946-1948].

½ box (20 folders), 49 items.

NOTE: The numbers cited in parentheses, e.g. 1:5, refer the researcher to the Series#:Folder# in which that name/topic will be found.

INTRODUCTION

The W. Raymond Taylor Family Papers consist primarily of documents relating to the Perennial Gardeners, as well as printed materials from local businesses and civic organizations. W. Raymond Taylor established the Drama and Speech Department at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, where he taught English and drama from 1921-1961 and established the theater program. He and his wife Bertie founded the Stage Decoration and Supplies Co. in their living room in 1923. Most materials in this collection were apparently created or acquired by Bertie, who was active in several women's clubs, and their daughter Eloise, who attended Curry High School and worked at Security National Bank. Researchers interested in garden clubs or the high expectations of women's clubs will find some illustrative membership documents in this collection. Also of note is Eloise's high school civics project, which provides a snapshot of selected Greensboro institutions in the 1930s.

Arrangement: This collection is organized into three series and arranged within series by document type or subject. The series are: **Perennial Gardeners**, 1931-1952; **Printed Material**, 1931-1950s; and **Taylor, Eloise**, 1934-1940s.

Provenance: This collection was donated by Eloise Taylor Jackson's daughter, Catherine J. Morris, in November 2018 and assigned the accession number 2018.53.1.

Processing: This collection was organized by Archivist Elise Allison, and the finding aid was completed by volunteer Ann Koppen in December 2021.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William Raymond Taylor (1895-1976) is best known as the founder of the Drama and Speech Department at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina (later the School of Theatre in the College of Visual and Performing Arts at UNC Greensboro), where he taught English and drama from 1921-1961. The Taylor Theater was named in his honor in 1967. Taylor earned his BA from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1915 and his MA from Harvard in 1916. He first taught English, French, and speech at Alabama Polytechnic Institute (later Auburn University) from 1916-1921 and founded its Drama Department. At the Woman's College, he established the first official drama group, the "Play-Likers," and directed over 200 plays. After his retirement in 1961, he focused on the company that he and his wife had started in their living room in 1923,

the Stage Decoration and Supplies Co., which offered design services and equipment to performance venues throughout the U.S., as well as in Canada and South America. An award-winning rosarian, he cultivated over 250 varieties of roses.

Bertie Yancey Taylor (1895-1988) was born in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, and became the first female Railway Express agent in the United States, according to her obituary. She and W. Raymond Taylor were married in 1919 and had three children: Elizabeth, Eloise, and William Raymond Jr. A member of the Perennial Gardeners for over twenty years, Bertie served as the club's treasurer in 1949-50. She was also a member of the Rose Society and the Daughters of the American Revolution, and a charter member of the UNC Greensboro faculty wives. At First Baptist Church in Greensboro, she was active in the Sunday School and the Woman's Missionary Union. In addition to sharing her husband's love of gardening, she was his partner in their stage supply company.

Eloise Taylor Jackson (1921-2010) graduated from Curry High School on the campus of the Woman's College in 1938 and from Woman's College in 1942. That year, she married fellow Curry graduate William E. "B.J." Jackson, who was a radio announcer and sports broadcaster for radio stations in Greensboro and Wilson, and then for WPTF in Raleigh. After college, Eloise worked as a bookkeeper and teller at Security National Bank in Greensboro, and she was later the librarian at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh for over 25 years. A member of Hayes Barton Baptist Church in Raleigh, she also served on the North Carolina Governor's Council on Aging. She and her husband had three daughters: Catherine, Elaine, and Jean.

Biographical Sources: The biographical information about W. Raymond Taylor was acquired from the [article about him in the online Encyclopedia of UNCG History](#) and an article entitled "[Building Legacies at UNCG: Taylor Theatre.](#)" Additional details were obtained from [Ancestry.com](#), the Greensboro city directories, and the obituaries of Bertie Yancey Taylor (*Greensboro News & Record*, April 15, 1988) and Eloise Taylor Jackson (*The News & Observer*, December 10, 2010, <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/newsobserver/name/eloise-jackson-obituary?id=11379767>).

SCOPE & CONTENT NOTE

The types of materials in this collection include club yearbooks, correspondence, and minutes; a school assignment; and printed materials such as brochures, a catalog, flyers, and programs. Most of the items belonged to W. Raymond Taylor's wife Bertie or daughter Eloise.

More than half of this collection relates to the Perennial Gardeners, of which Bertie Taylor was a long-time member. The women's club materials, also including a Junior Woman's Club yearbook, provide a glimpse of the expectations of members and their sense of mission and decorum. Also included in the collection are printed materials from local department stores and a Town of Hamilton Lakes swimming permit. Eloise's high school civics project contains a wealth of information on schools and also includes sections on churches, public safety, and public health, offering a window into the educational, civic, and health priorities of the time.

Only a few items in this collection relate to W. Raymond Taylor: a flyer and Christmas card from his stage supply company; a flyer for one of his Play-Likers performances, "The Streets of New York" (1931); and four programs from a series of performances in Aycock Theatre, the theater at Woman's College that he helped design.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

1. Perennial Gardeners. 10 folders (26 items). 1931-1952.

Basic documents from Bertie Taylor's garden club, the Perennial Gardeners, comprise this series. The club's mission was "to study gardening fundamentals and to be interested actively in community problems relating to local improvement." The documents include membership rosters (1:6), by-laws (1:3), annual reports (1:2), minutes (1:7), club calendars (1:10), correspondence (1:4), and a self-graded club rating sheet (1:9). Newspaper clippings describe the club's activities, leadership, and lectures (1:8). The first of two narrative histories includes interesting material about the effect of the war years and interactions with Negro gardening clubs in efforts to beautify downtown Greensboro (1:5).

2. Printed Material. 8 folders (17 items). 1931-1950s.

The brochures, handbooks, programs, catalogs, and flyers in this series range from shopping to recreation and entertainment. Highlights include a Town of Hamilton Lakes swimming permit (2:7), a book of Christmas songs from Belk's Department Store (2:1), a fashion show program from Ellis Stone (2:2), and a Meyer's Department Store catalog showing the kitchen tools and cookware, furniture, and small appliances available at the time (2:5).

The Junior Woman's Club yearbook (2:4) provides an interesting snapshot of a women's club that was "for the purpose of promoting social, economic, intellectual, and spiritual growth among the younger women of Greensboro." It includes a handwritten tally of participation points, of which a minimum number were required of new members. The yearbook likely belonged to Eloise, but neither Bertie nor Eloise is listed in the membership.

The only materials relating to W. Raymond Taylor in this collection are a brochure promoting his stage production company, which details the range of supplies it provided, a blank Christmas card from the company (2:6), and a flyer for "The Streets of New York," a Play-Likers production that Taylor directed (2:8). Four programs and one flyer relate to a Junior League Concert series in Aycock Theatre at Woman's College (2:8). The programs contain advertisements that illustrate some of the goods and services available in Greensboro at the time.

3. Taylor, Eloise. 2 folders (6 items). 1934-1940s.

This series contains daughter Eloise's high school civics project (3:1), as well as an employee time card and deposit books, slips, and envelopes from Security National Bank, where she worked (3:2). The project was for her civics class at Curry High School and covers schools, churches, the police and fire departments, and public health. In addition to breakdowns and descriptions of these sectors and individual institutions, the project delineates segregation in schools and churches. It also includes newspaper clippings with additional detail about things such as a mass resignation of teachers, a lack of clothing that prevented many black children from attending school, a serious forest fire, and a concern for sanitation and contagious diseases.

FOLDER LISTING

<u>Series</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>	
1	1	Perennial Gardeners	-- 15 th Anniversary (1946)
	2	“	-- Annual Reports (1946-1950)
	3	“	-- Constitution & By-Laws (1931)
	4	“	-- Correspondence (1952)
	5	“	-- History (1946-1950)
	6	“	-- Membership (ca. 1946-1952)
	7	“	-- Minutes (1945-1952)
	8	“	-- Newspaper Clippings (1945-1952)
	9	“	-- Rating Sheet (1947)
	10	“	-- Yearbook (1949-1950)
2	1	Printed Material	-- Belk's Department Store (ca. 1945)
	2	“	-- Ellis Stone (1948)
	3	“	-- Greensboro Touchdown Club (1948)
	4	“	-- Junior Woman's Club (Yearbook; 1947-1948)
	5	“	-- Meyer's Department Store (1940s)
	6	“	-- Stage Decoration & Supplies Co. (1950s)
	7	“	-- Town of Hamilton Lakes (Swimming permit; 1946)
	8	“	-- Woman's College (1931-1946)
3	1	Taylor, Eloise	-- Civics Project (Curry High School; 1934-1935)
	2	“	-- Security National Bank (1940s)