



William Carlos Williams and son William Eric Williams, 1917. Photographer unknown.

OPPOSITE PAGE: William Carlos Williams outside his private medical practice with sons Paul Herman Williams and William Eric Williams, 1919. Photographer unknown.

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New Acquisition Enriches William Carlos Williams Collection

A key collection of the papers of William Carlos Williams, one of America's greatest poets, has found a new home in the Poetry Collection of the University Libraries. Perhaps the last major collection of the writer's papers still in private hands, the new collection was acquired from Williams's granddaughters, Daphne Williams Fox and Erica Williams Gilbert. Once processed, the papers will be made accessible to the public for the first time. The collection will provide rich new insights into Williams's medical career, family life, and personal interests, as well as his literary life. It complements the Poetry Collection's William Carlos Williams Collection, one of the world's largest collections of Williams's papers.

"These materials offer new resources for understanding William Carlos Williams as a writer, a doctor and a person," says curator of the Poetry Collection James Maynard, "and we are very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with the poet's granddaughters in bringing this significant collection to the Poetry Collection."

Williams was a central figure of early 20th-century literary modernism and has continued to be an enduring influence today. Famous for poems like "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "This Is Just to Say," which are on everyday subjects and written in colloquial American English, Williams published over 30 books of poetry, novels, plays, translations and an autobiography, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1963. Williams was also a full-time practicing

"The job of the poet is to use language effectively, his own language, the only language which is to him authentic."

- William Carlos Williams

physician who owned a private practice and was on staff at Passaic General Hospital in New Jersey, delivering over 3,000 babies between 1912 and 1955.

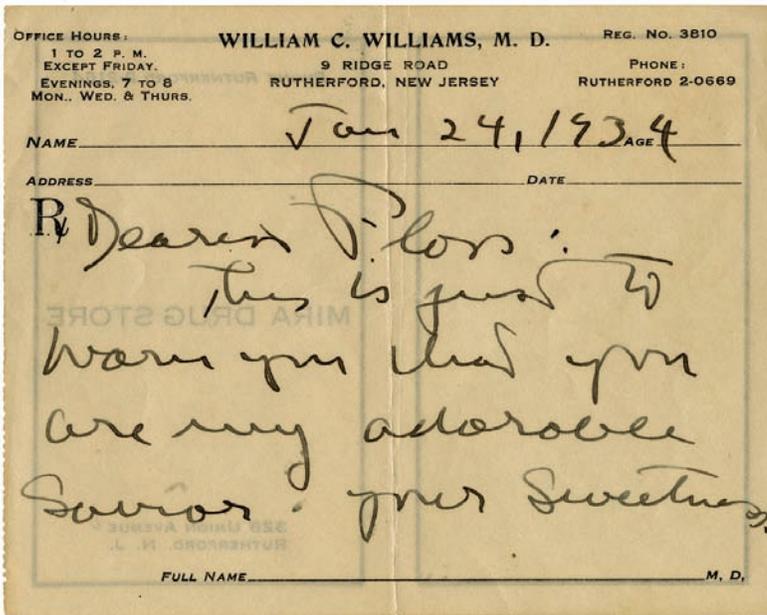
To Williams, poetry and medicine were "two parts of a whole." This new collection illustrates the truth of that statement. A central part of the collection are the voluminous notes written on index cards that Williams compiled during the early stages of his career. Over 1,250 of these are related to his medical practice, detailing diagnoses,

treatments, medical instruments and other related topics.

While Williams originally kept index cards as an aid for medical study, he quickly realized that they could be useful in other areas of his life. He kept notes about topics as various as contemporary English drama, summaries of possible plays, his daily walks, and books he intended to purchase. The index cards also record his observations of his own yard, demonstrating that for Williams the ordinary was the source of poetic inspiration. For example, in May 1908, he noted that the "Mulberry tree [was] not yet in full leaf. Certainly a dainty light tree. Reminds me of Boticceli [sic]." Williams returned to this idea nearly twenty years later with his poem "The Botticellian Trees."

The collection also offers an unprecedented view of Williams's family life. It includes a letter from Williams to his wife, Floss; sketches by Williams's younger





First page of a draft of a letter from Williams to his wife Floss, Jan. 24, 1934.

Today, the Poetry Collection is one of the largest poetry libraries of its kind in the world, and holds important original work by Dylan Thomas, James Joyce, Robert Graves, Helen Adam, and Robert Duncan among its 150 archival collections.

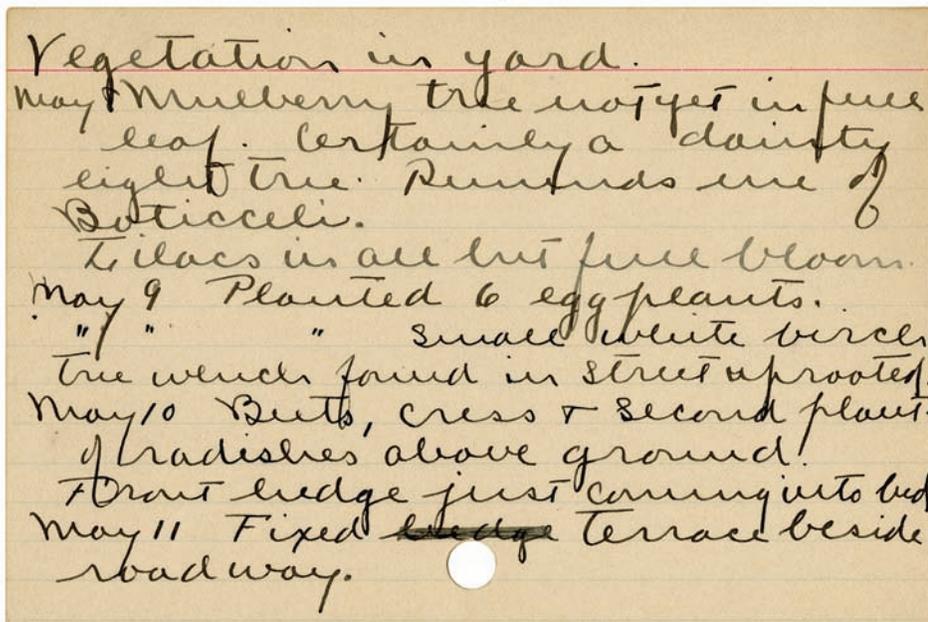
One of the first poets Abbott approached to contribute to the Poetry Collection was Williams, to whom he wrote in the fall of 1936. Williams's response was enthusiastic, and he deeply understood Abbott's vision and the value to literary study the Poetry Collection would offer. Over the course of their 25-year friendship, Williams sent Abbott over 20,000 pieces of paper from the 1920s through 1950s, including manuscripts, correspondence, notebooks, photographs and other significant materials that have been a rich source of scholarly discovery and poetic inspiration for generations of scholars, poets and students. The two developed a strong friendship, and Williams was a frequent guest at Abbott's home in Western New York at the Gratwick Highlands, which Williams described as "like nothing I have ever seen in this country."

In his forward to the descriptive catalogue of the William Carlos Williams Collection, poet Robert Creeley explains that one of the values of this collection is the "intimate revelation" of examining Williams's manuscripts. This new acquisition offers even more possibility for intimate revelation through its insights into the larger scope of Williams's life and work. As Curator James Maynard explains, "Arriving more than 75 years after Williams himself began donating manuscripts in 1943, this new collection of materials expands the archival record of the poet's life and work while at the same time acknowledging the rich and continuing history of the Poetry Collection as conceived by Charles Abbott."

brother Edgar; postcards from Williams to his parents; and over 100 photographs of the Williams family.

An important resource for the study of modernism and American literature, the Williams Collection is also central to the history of the Poetry Collection. Founded in 1935 by the University Libraries' first director, Charles Abbott, the Poetry Collection was designed to be "a kind of research laboratory for the study of the poetry of our times." Abbott's innovative plan was to collect all first and other bibliographically significant editions of poetry written in

English since 1900. His plan also called for collecting "little magazines" and other poetry journals, broadsides, anthologies, and works of scholarship in order to create a comprehensive print collection for the study of contemporary poetry. In addition, Abbott had the revolutionary idea to create a systematic collection of poets' working papers. Abbott noticed that manuscripts were "as often thrown away or lost," and he began asking poets to send their drafts to the Poetry Collection instead, where they "could be used later to piece out an understanding of [poets'] lives and methods of work."



Index card, "Vegetation in yard," 1908.

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