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Mr. X and Mr. Y Source Material: Finding Aid

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Mr. X and Mr. Y Source Material | Finding Aid

Summary Information

Repository

Houston Cole Library
Alabama Gallery, 10th Floor
700 Pelham Road North
Jacksonville, AL 36265-1602
256.782.8195

Creator

Houston Cole Library

Title

Mr. X and Mr Y Source Material

Date

1959

Extent

1 box (4 folders, 2 notebooks, 2 newspapers)

Background Information

Scope and Content Note

This collection (cataloged on Bib #1360871) contains photographs, a clipping file, notes, and newspaper articles pertaining to the murder investigation of a double homicide (known as the “Torso Murders”) that occurred in Calhoun County, Alabama, in 1959. In June 1959, a torso was discovered near Attalla, Alabama, and a day later, a second torso was found near Ashville, Alabama. The two unidentified bodies were designated Mr. X and Mr. Y; they were later identified as Lee and Emmett Harper, who had been living in a trailer on a farm in White Plains, Alabama. Viola Hyatt, daughter of the farmer on whose land the brothers lived, was eventually charged with, confess to, and convicted of the murders.

Donald Brown (b. July 15, 1936), a reporter with *The Birmingham News* when the murders occurred in 1959, covered the story and wrote several articles for the newspaper concerning the investigation and subsequent events. In 2016, he published a book based on his earlier pieces and later research entitled *Mr. X and Mr. Y*. Brown graduated from Birmingham-Southern College, worked as an investigative reporter, and later as executive editor of the *Florence Times-Daily* and *Tuscaloosa News*. He went on to teach journalism at the University of Alabama.

(Sources: Information found in the materials and JSU News articles)

Arrangement

This collection is arranged by type of material:

- Box.
 - *Folder 1: Notes*

- *Folder 2: Photographs*
- *Folder 3: Clipping File*
- *Folder 4: Newspaper Articles*

Administrative Information

Access and Use

This collection is open to researchers under the guidelines set out in the *Houston Cole Library Policy and Procedures Manual*, Alabama Gallery section. Please consult the policy for specific instructions.

In addition, digital surrogates of the items are available through the Library's Digital Collections: http://libguides.jsu.edu/digital_collections. These surrogates are the property of Jacksonville State University and are intended for non-commercial use. They may be copied for research, teaching, personal, or any fair use as defined by U.S. copyright law. They may not be altered in any way. Users are asked to acknowledge Jacksonville State University. For questions or further information about usage rights, please contact the Library's Digital Projects & Special Collections Department at 256.782.8195.

Preferred citation

Mr. X and Mr. Y Source Material, Houston Cole Library.

Provenance

Mr. Brown spoke at the Houston Cole Library regarding his research and book on 21 October 2016. After the book's publication, he donated to the Library some of the source materials, including his original reporter notebooks, which were used to write the book.

Processing Information

Arranged and described by Bethany Latham, 2021.

Inventory by Alisha Cantrell, 2021.

Physical Condition

Most items are in good condition.

Related Materials

Mr. X and Mr. Y (book) (Bib #1194057)

MRXY 1

Container Contents and Collection Inventory

BOX, Folder 1 | Notes

<i>Item</i>	<i>Title/Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Notebook 1, "Champion shorthand book"	1959
2	Notebook 2, "Steno note book"	1959
3	Notebook 3, (larger pages of notes)	1959

BOX, Folder 2 | Photographs

<i>Item</i>	<i>Title/Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Black and white photographic print captioned, "Viola Hyatt, after confessing the murders, walks on her farm, with state investigator Ben Allen." [8x10 in]	Undated
2	Black and white photographic print captioned, "Neighbors watch as the Hyatt farm yard is searched for clues." [8x10 in]	Undated
3	Black and white photographic print captioned, "Viola's father, Martin Hyatt, whom she called 'Daddy.' Pet is unnamed." [8x10 in]	Undated
4	Black and white photographic print captioned, "The Harper brothers built this tiny trailer near the farm house, and lived there." [8x10 in]	Undated
5	Black and white photographic print captioned, "State investigators at the spot in front of the trailer where Viola chopped up her victims on bare ground." [8x10 in]	Undated
6	Black and white photographic print captioned, "Ice box, TV and two beds cramped the small space inside the trailer." [8x10 in]	Undated
7	Black and white photographic print captioned, "State investigator Arthur Mason (foreground). Viola watches as police officer looks in Lee Harper's car." [8x10 in]	Undated
8	Black and white photographic print captioned, "Gadsden artist John King, working from remains, made drawings of what victims may have looked like, but missed their likenesses." [8x10 in]	Undated

BOX, Folder 3 | Clipping File

<i>Item</i>	<i>Title/Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Newspaper clipping with photograph captioned, "Mr. Y Found Here, Easily Visible from State Highway 11," photographer Norman Dean	30 Jun 1959
2	Newspaper clipping, "Experienced lawmen heading investigation of torso murders" by Don Brown	6 Jul 1959
3	(1) Newspaper clipping, "An old man rocks, hopes and waits for his daughter" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper clipping, "Viola Hyatt refuses to cooperate with defense attorneys in torso case" by Don Brown	12 Mar 1960, 18 Feb 1960

4	(1) Newspaper clipping, "Long calm Hyatt farm on with clamor of newsmen" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper clipping, "Probers continue check of clothing" by Don Brown	3, 18 Jul 1959
5	(1) Newspaper clipping, "Clothing checked in torso murders" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper clipping, "Prison doors close on last torso chapter" by Don Brown and Charlie Grainger	15 Mar 1960, 2 Jul 1959
6	(1) Newspaper clipping, "Case sure to break investigators say" (2) Newspaper clipping, "Toxicologist provided first break in case"	17 Jul 1959
7	(1) Newspaper clipping, "Viola Hyatt had help, probers think" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper clipping, "Phone call for a dead man" by Don Brown	17, 20 Jul 1959
8	Newspaper clipping, "Killer may have forced second man to watch while first victim slain" by Don Brown	1 Jul 1959
9	Newspaper clipping, "Woman"	1959-1960

BOX, Folder 4 | Newspaper Articles

<i>Item</i>	<i>Title/Description</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Newspaper article, "Calhoun woman confesses torso murders of 'Mr. X' and 'Mr. Y' by Clancy Lake and Don Brown	17 Jul 1959
2	Newspaper articles, "Sturdy Viola Hyatt grilled for six hours before confessing" and "Drawings were sure to break torso case, investigators say" both by Don Brown	17 Jul 1959
3	Newspaper photographs captioned, "Ripped clothing found," "Evidence buried here," "Murder trailer interior," and "Where bodies chopped" photographs by Norman Dean	1959
4	(1) Newspaper article, "Officers tie net of evidence which still may catch killer" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper article, "Torso slayings hunt narrows; 10 facts known" by Don Brown (3) Newspaper article, "Torso slayings site sought" by Don Brown	4, 8, 13 Jul 1959
5	(1) Newspaper article, "Torso victims your neighbors? 'Perhaps,' is tight-lipped answer" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper article, "Harper brothers are buried again" (3) Newspaper article, "News issues appeal for torso murder info" (4) Newspaper article, "Clues are few in mysterious torso murders" by Don Brown	15, 23 Jul 1959, 30 Jun 1959
6	(1) Newspaper article, "Viola Hyatt dons best white shoes for ride to jailhouse" by Clancy Lake (2) Newspaper article, "Torso case gets 'like poker game'" (3) Newspaper article, "Viola Hyatt gets life in torso slayings" by Don Brown and Charlie Grainger (4) Newspaper article, "Torso slayings hunt narrows; 10 facts known" by Don Brown	14 Mar 1960, 27 Feb 1960, 4, 17 Jul 1959
7	(1) Newspaper article, "'Torso murders' shocked country just one year ago" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper article, "Butchered torsos remain nameless" by Don Brown (3) Newspaper article, "Torso victims your neighbors? 'Perhaps,' is tight-lipped answer" by Don Brown	27 Jun 1960, 15 Jul 1959
8	(1) Newspaper article, "Torso slayer pleads guilty, gets life" by Don Brown and Charlie Grainger (2) Newspaper article, "Torso case gets 'like poker game'"	14 Mar 1960, 27 Feb 1960

9	(1) Newspaper article, "Viola Hyatt was quiet, nice girl to neighbors" by Don Brown (2) Newspaper article, "Fear stalks wake of torso murders" by Don Brown	4, 18 Jul 1959
10	Newspaper article, "Cold, careful torso murderer had definite plan for killing" by Don Brown	12 Jul 1959
11	Entire newspaper of St. Clair Times, front page advertising "Mr. X and Mr. Y" book by Don Brown; article written by Gary Hanner	20 Oct 2016
12	Entire newspaper of "Coosa Valley Advantage," front page advertising "Mr. X and Mr. Y" book by Don Brown; article written by Gary Hanner	26 Oct 2016