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## Collection Summary

**Repository:** Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

**Creator:** McHenry, Bannon

**Title:** Bannon McHenry-James Merrill Collection

**Dates:** circa 1971-2001

**Quantity:** 0.6 cubic feet (1 box, 3 oversize portfolios)

**Abstract:** The Bannon McHenry-James Merrill Collection contains materials pertaining to poet James Merrill, collected by his friend and neighbor, Bannon McHenry (VC 1952). The collection contains correspondence, ephemera, photographs, printed material, and writings of James Merrill.

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## Biographical Note

James Merrill was recognized as one of the leading poets of his generation. Born in 1926 in New York City, Merrill won nearly every major literary award in America: two National Book Awards, one for *Nights and Days* (1966), and one for *Mirabell: Books of Numbers* (1978); the National Book Critics Circle Award for his Ouija-inspired long poem *The Changing Light at Sandover* (1982); and the inaugural Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry by the Library of Congress for *The Inner Room* (1988). He also received both the Bollingen Prize in Poetry and the Pulitzer Prize for *Divine Comedies* (1976). James Merrill died of a heart attack related to AIDS in 1995 while vacationing in Tucson, Arizona.

Bannon McHenry was born in Baltimore in 1930. She attended the Bryn Mawr School and then Vassar College, graduating from the latter institution in 1952. Bannon McHenry's intellectual interests focused on art, and she pursued a career as an art historian, teacher, and journalist based in New York. For many years McHenry lived at 164 East 72nd Street, the same building as James Merrill, who had inherited an apartment in the building from his grandmother. McHenry and Merrill became friends, and McHenry collected materials relating to Merrill's life and work. Merrill gave several of his publications to McHenry, many containing inscriptions to her. McHenry acquired other materials pertaining to Merrill from dealers, bookshops, or other sources.

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## Scope and Content Note

The collection includes correspondence, ephemera, photographs, printed material, and writings of James Merrill collected by Merrill's friend and neighbor, Bannon McHenry.

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## Access and Use

### Access

This collection is open for research according to the regulations of the [Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

### Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

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## Related Material

### Related Materials

- [See the Bannon McHenry-James Merrill Collection in Vassar's Rare Book Collection for books included with this gift.](#)

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## Subject Headings

### Names:

- Hagstrom, Jack
- Hooten, Peter
- Jackson, David, 1922-
- Merrill, James, 1926-1995
- Ray, Kevin

### Subjects:

- American literature--20th century
- American poetry--20th century
- Broad­sides--United States--20th century
- Ouija boards

### Places:

- New York (N.Y.)
- Stonington (Conn.)

### Document Types:

- Broad­sides
- Ephemera

### VCL Categories:

- Literature and Writing

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## Encoding Information

Encoded by Mark Seidl, January 2019.

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Bannon McHenry-James Merrill Collection, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

### Processing Information

Processed by Janine St. Germain, September-October 2019.

### Acquisition Information

Gift of Bannon McHenry (VC 1952), 2017.

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## Series List

### [Series I.](#) Correspondence, approximately 1980-2001

This series is divided into three subseries: Letters to Bannon McHenry, Letters from James Merrill, and Letters to James Merrill. Correspondents include Jack Hagstom, Peter Hooton, Robert Hughes, and Kevin Ray.

### [Series II.](#) Notes and Ephemera, undated

This series consists of a recipe and other ephemera and handwritten material.

### [Series III.](#) Photographs, approximately 1971-2000

This series consists of publicity and portrait photographs of James Merrill, as well as photos of James Merrill and David Jackson.

### [Series IV.](#) Printed Material, approximately 1971-2000

This series consists of reviews, publicity materials, programs and other printed matter pertaining to James Merrill's works and events in his honor.

## **Series V. Writings, 1981-1988**

This series consists of writing by James Merrill, including drafts and copies with annotations by Merrill.

### **Container List**

#### **Series I. Correspondence**

##### **Letters to Bannon McHenry**

Folder 1.1 Hagstrom, Jack, 2001 Dec

Folder 1.2 Hooten, Peter, undated

Folder 1.3 Hooten, Peter, 1999 Dec

##### **Letters from James Merrill**

Folder 1.4 to Hughes, Robert, 1980

Folder 1.5 to McHenry, Bannon, approximately 1980

Folder 1.6 to McHenry, Bannon, 1988

##### **Letters to James Merrill**

Folder 1.7 Ray, Kevin, 1994 Sep 16

Folder 1.8 Illustrated envelopes, 1991

#### **Series II. Notes and Ephemera**

Folder 1.9 Real estate flyer, 72nd Street duplex, undated

Folder  
1.10 Recipe, undated

#### **Series III. Photographs**

Folder  
1.11 James Merrill Memorial Service, Stonington, CT, 2000 Dec

Folder  
1.12 James Merrill portrait, photograph of painting by Bruce Hafley, undated

Folder  
1.13 James Merrill portrait, by Tom Victor, 1971 (signed by James Merrill)

Folder  
1.14 James Merrill portrait, approximately 1986

Folder  
1.15 James Merrill and David Jackson at Ouija Board, by Harrison Pemberton, 1990

- Folder 1.16 James Merrill and Peter Hooten, 1985, 1994
- Folder 1.17 James Merrill publicity photograph, by Rollie McKenna, undated
- Folder 1.18 Snapshots of James Merrill, bronze bust, approximately 1980
- Folder 1.19 James Merrill at piano, undated

#### Series IV. Printed Materials

- Folder 1.20 Blank postcards, printed with photographic images by James Merrill, undated
- Folder 1.21 Book review, *The First Nine: Poems, 1946-1976*, *New Yorker*, 1984 May 21
- Portfolio Book review, *A Scattering of Salts*, *New York Review of Books*, 1995 May 11
- Portfolio 1 Flyer, Academy of American Poets, at The Guggenheim Museum, James Merrill reading, 1999 Dec 1
- Folder 1.22 Flyer, *Voices from Sandover* publicity, undated
- Folder 1.23 Invitation, The Academy of American Poets, *Voices from Sandover*, 1989 May
- Folder 1.24 Invitation, Marie Bullock Poetry Reading, New York University, 1992 Sep 30
- Folder 1.25 Invitation, National Arts Club, The Bait and the Image Maker, 1988 Nov 19
- Folder 1.26 Invitation, Philip Taaffe, Rebecca Camhi Gallery, 1998 Apr
- Folder 1.27 Merrill Memorial, Amherst College, 2001 Apr 12
- Portfolio Merrill Memorial, Amherst College, 2004 Apr 32-24 (2 programs, 2 keepsakes, chronology)
- Folder 1.28 Merrill Memorial, The New School, 2001 Apr 10
- Folder 1.29 Merrill Memorial, New York Public Library, 1995 May 13
- Folder 1.30 Merrill Memorial, Stonington, CT, 1995 Feb
- Folder 1.31 Merrill Memorial, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, 2001 Mar 22
- Folder 1.32 Newsletter, *Envoy*, Academy of American Poets, No. 51, 1988
- Folder 1.33 Newsletter, *Erato*, Harvard College, Spring, No. 4, 1987
- Folder 1.34 Obituary, Harry Ford, *New York Times*, Grolier Club memorial, program, 1999 Apr
- Folder 1.35 Obituary, James Merrill, *New York Times*, 1995 Feb 7

Folder Pamphlet, Manuscript Collection, Washington University Libraries, 2009 Feb 3 (with note from Jack  
1.36 Hagstrom)

### Series V. Writings

Folder "164 East 72nd Street," 1988 (signed by James Merrill)  
1.47

Portfolio "Fort Lauderdale," 1977 (handwritten broadside poem, Folger Poetry Broadside Series)

Folder "The Metro," 1981 Nov 24 (draft with edits, initialed JM)  
1.48

Portfolio "Palme," 1981 Nov 24 (proof, James Merrill's translation, with hand drawn illustration and notation from Bannon McHenry)

Folder "Popular Science Used to Claim...", 1988 (including note to Ted Danforth)  
1.49

Portfolio "Processional," 1986-1987 (handwritten poem, written on sheet from The Folger Shakespeare Library 1986-87 Evening Poetry Series)

Portfolio "Snapshot of Adam," 1984 Nov (broadside poem, hand numbered 6 of 60, with large lithograph of seated male nude by Laurence Scott, signed by James Merrill)

Portfolio "Trees Listening to Bach," 1984 (broadside poem, illustration by Lawrence Scott, one of 60 copies)

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