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A de Grummond Primer: Highlights of the Children's Literature Collection

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A de Grummond Primer: Highlights of the Children's Literature Collection

Edited by Carolyn J. Brown, Ellen Hunter Ruffin, and Eric L. Tribunella

If you are a graduate of the School of Library and Information Science at The University of Southern Mississippi, the name “de Grummond” will be familiar to you. More than likely, you have read the history of the de Grummond Children’s Literature Collection. You are probably aware of how Lena Y. de Grummond came to Southern Miss in 1966. She had finished her career in Louisiana, where she had served as the director of school libraries at the Department of Education. In her “retirement,” she planned to teach courses to graduate students—in children’s literature.

As the story goes, Dr. de Grummond wanted her teaching to be “more than a textbook.” She wanted her students to experience her classes. Most of the students were working in school systems as teachers and driving to Hattiesburg at night in order to achieve a master’s degree in library science.

Dr. de Grummond decided to begin a children’s Collection. So, she began writing letters to authors and illustrators, asking for “bits and pieces of their work.” The response to her query was impressive. Elmer and Berta Hader were the first respondents, but it wasn’t long before de Grummond began hearing from others: Madeleine L’Engle, J. R. R. Tolkien, Lois Lenski, H. A., and Margret Rey. Each class meeting contained something new for the lucky students.

Along with de Grummond’s decision to request original materials from authors and illustrators was her commitment to building a library of books—containing children’s books and books about children’s books. Not only would the books reflect and support the holdings of original work, they would also provide scholarly research opportunities.

Finally – a book about the de Grummond Collection is going to be available in April 2021. This is the first book-length project on the Collection. Unique aspects of the holdings appear in the scholarly essays written by children’s literature “notables.” Along with over ninety full-color images, the book examines the Collection’s strengths: Fairy tales, 19th Century periodicals, African American children’s literature, the Golden Age of illustrated books, early books for children, and many more.

A particular treat is the story of Lena Y. de Grummond and how she happened to arrive in Hattiesburg. The contributors are Ann Mulloy Ashmore, Rudine Sims Bishop, Ruth B. Bottigheimer, Jennifer Brannock, Carolyn J. Brown, Ramona Caponegro, Lorinda Cohoon, Carol Edmonston, Paige Gray, Laura Hakala, Andrew Haley, Wm John Hare, Dee Jones, Allison Kaplan, Megan Norcia, Nathalie op de Beeck, Amy Pattee, Deborah Pope, Anita Silvey, Danielle Bishop Stoulig, Roger Sutton, Deborah D. Taylor, Laura Wasosicz, Alexandra Valint, Eric L. Tribunella, and Ellen Hunter Ruffin.

Published by University Press of Mississippi, the 2021 Spring Summer catalog highlights one of the original works in the book. For a better description, go to <https://www.upress.state.ms.us>, where you will be able to see the catalog and more images from the book.