

Collection Guide Pelley Catalog

Historical Context

The Pelley Catalog refers to materials that are about or by William Dudley Pelley (1890-1965). William Dudley Pelley was an American fascist, Christo-occultist, and writer. The collection includes; books, pamphlets, magazines, and envelopes. The collection is titled "The Pelley Catalog" to facilitate discoverability. Collection materials are of interest to researchers who want to know about William Dudley Pelley or the Silver Legion of America.

William Dudley Pelley was born on March 12, 1890 in Lynn, Massachusetts into a Methodist and Republican family. His parents were William George Apsey Pelley and Grace (Goodale) Pelley. In 1929, he published his first notable work, "Seven Minutes in Eternity," which detailed his metaphysical experiences and communing with Jesus Christ. In 1931, Pelley moved to Asheville, North Carolina and opened his first publishing company. During this time, his writings shifted more towards fascist ideologies blended with his metaphysical beliefs. In 1933, Pelley gained inspiration from Adolf Hitler's "Brown Shirts" in Germany and created the Silver Legion of America, an American fascist group.

In 1935, Pelley was found guilty of violating North Carolina's "Blue Sky Law" due to misrepresenting the stock numbers for his publishing company. Pelley's run-in with the law continued in 1939, when the House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities (HUAC), or the Dies Committee, launched an investigation into Pelley and the Silver Shirt Legion. This was due to distributing propaganda that came from Nazi Germany and other listed "Un-American Activities." The investigation put a subpoena on Pelley and a warrant signed for his arrest. In February 1940, he stood in front of the Dies Committee to make his case but failed to prove his innocence, and Washington D.C. police arrested him on behalf of North Carolina. Shortly after, Pelley made bond and was granted an early release. However, this was not the end, as a witness testimony described Pelley's alleged plans to march onto Washington, D.C. to become a dictator. This renewed the Dies Committee's examination, and the federal government continued to monitor Pelley.

In 1940, days before Christmas, Pelley moved from his home in Biltmore, North Carolina to Noblesville, Indiana. He established the Fellowship Press and appointed Carl Losey, a former state police officer and Klu Klux Klan leader, as president. Noblesville residents expressed their dislike of him and his beliefs both by publishing in the local newspapers and by physically breaking windows of the Fellowship Press. Sales for the *Weekly Roll Call*, Pelley's paper, were minimal due to its anti-Semitism and Hoosier resistance. Losey was fired. In April 1941, the state of North Carolina was successful in appealing to the state of Indiana for Pelley's return. On January 21, 1942, the State of North Carolina found Pelley guilty of multiple parole violations. Pelley was still in Indiana and refused to return to North Carolina as he began the appeals process.

In 1941, Pelley disbanded the Silver Legion of America after the attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S., but continued to publish many pro-Axis, pro-Nazi, anti-Roosevelt, and anti-Semitic works. These publications eventually led to his arrest. In April 1942 in Darien, Connecticut, federal agents arrested Pelley at the residence of George B. Fisher, a Silver Legion of America supporter, and charged him with twelve counts from the 1917 Espionage Act.

Federal agents transferred Pelley from Darien, Connecticut to the Marion County Jail in Indianapolis, Indiana. However, his daughter, Adelaide Pelley Pearson, raised his bail six days later for his release. Pelley hired Noblesville attorney Floyd G. Christian (who previously represented Klan leader D.C.

Stephenson) for his upcoming court case. Christian and Pelley could not sway the US federal jury in their verdict, and the jury ruled that William Dudley Pelley was guilty on eleven of the twelve counts and sentenced to fifteen years in prison on August 13, 1942. Pelley was moved to Terre Haute, Indiana's federal prison.

In 1946, Pelley was unsuccessful in obtaining release under writ of habeas corpus and remained in the penitentiary. Pelley requested parole and was denied in 1948 and 1949. During his time in prison, he continued to draft novels and his metaphysical papers. Adelaide Pelley Pearson and her husband Melford Pearson kept the Fellowship Press in operation, but without new material. Melford campaigned that Pelley was a victim of a communist conspiracy and wrongfully imprisoned, and Adelaide set up a failed letter campaign to release Pelley.

In early 1950, Pelley received parole suddenly. Part of the success was due to Melford Pearson painting Pelley as more anti-Communist (even though often in Pelley's works he wrote "Jewish" and "Communist" interchangeably) and the United States' culture shifting towards the fear of communism. Later in 1950, Pelley and the Pearsons established Soulcraft Press in Noblesville, Indiana in the same location as the previous Fellowship Press. Soulcraft Press promoted his mixture of Christian and New Age occult ideas, mixed with dollops of racism, anti-Semitic views, and conspiracies that echoed his previous publications. Pelley also expressed beliefs in Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) and incorporated them into Soulcraft Press publications. In 1961, he retired from his involvement with Soulcraft Press and gave ownership to Melford Pearson. Pelley died on July 1, 1965 in Noblesville, Indiana and is buried in Crownland Cemetery.

Sources

Materials in Collection

"“Shamerican” William Dudley Pelley: Self-Styled Fascist Leader & Noblesville Publisher." Indiana History Blog, 30 Oct. 2024, blog.history.in.gov/shamerican-william-dudley-pelley-self-styled-fascist-leader-noblesville-publisher.

["Strange doings in Noblesville."](#) *Time Magazine*, January 27, 1941.

Daley, Jason. "The Screenwriting Mystic Who Wanted to Be the American Führer." *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2 Oct. 2018, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/meet-screenwriting-mystic-who-wanted-be-american-fuhrer-180970449.

Beekman, Scott. *William Dudley Pelley: A Life in Right-Wing Extremism and the Occult*. Syracuse University Press, 2005.

Related Material

The Flowing Bowl Collection contains materials that were owned and written by Floyd G. Christian. Floyd G. Christian was born on July 14, 1887, in Noblesville, Ind., and was a former attorney in Hamilton County. Christian was most notable for defending Klu Klux Klan Grand Dragon, D.C. Stephenson, and American fascist and Christo-occultist, William Dudley Pelley, in two separate cases. He was a part of the law firm Christian, Waltz, and Klotz.

For more resources on fascism, ask for our resource guide, available in the Crossroads Discovery Center.

Sources

Materials in Collection

“Rites To Be Tuesday for Floyd G. Christian,” The Noblesville Daily Ledger, 17 May 1954, pp. 1

Items

Publications	Archives	Circulation	Reference	Total
Adam Awakes: Design for Romance	1		1	2
As Thou Lovest: The Biography of a Benefaction			1	1
Behold Life: Design for Liberation	1			1
Beyond Grandeur: Design for Immortality	1			1
Drag	1	1		2
Earth Comes: Design for Materialization	1	1		2
Fog	1	1		2
Getting Born: Design for Reembodiment			1	1
The Golden Scripts	1	1		2
Know Your Karma: design for Destiny	1	1		2
Little Visits with Great Americans	23			23
My Seven Minutes in Eternity			1	1
Nations-in-Law: An Unconventional Analysis of Civics	1	1		2
No More Hunger: Presenting the			1	1

Christian Commonwealth				
Road into Sunrise: A Narrative of the Eternal Verities	1	1		2
Seven Minutes in Eternity with Aftermath		2	1	3
Soulcraft	19		1	20
Soulcraft: A Post-Graduate Education in the Eternal Verities	12	1		13
The Soulcraft Elucidata: A Handbook of Expositions of Terms Employed in Soulcraft		1		1
Star Guests: Design for Mortality		1		1
Twilight Clear: A Volume of Soulcraft Poems	1			1
Thinking Alive: Design for Creation	1	1		2
Undying Mind			1	1
Valor: The Golden Weekly	1			1
Why I Believe the Dead are Alive!	2	1		3
A Blueprint for Survival		1		1
Challenge to Crisis		1	1	2
The Price of Truth!		2	1	3
Scourge of Cords		1		1
William Dudley Pelley: A Life in Right-Wing Extremism and the Occult		1		1
The Blot on North Carolina: The Pelley Appeal to the Supreme Federal Court			1	1

In the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, No. 11054, William Dudley Pelley, movant-appellant, vs. United States of America, respondent-appellee: appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, Indianapolis Division

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Archives

- C-94
 - Soulcraft
 - 19 Envelopes
 - Pelley's lessons
 - 1950s
- C-95
 - Valor: The Golden Times Weekly
 - Magazine
 - IND RM REF 977.256 MISC Val
 - Jan 1952 - May 1952
 - Little Visits with Great Americans (x23)
 - 23 booklets in 11 envelopes
 - IND RM REF 977.256 MISC LIT
 - All have same call number
 - 1937 - 1939
- C-206, 207
 - Nations-In-Law: An Unconventional Analysis of Civics
 - IND RM 320.97 Pel
 - Road into Sunrise: A N V.1-2
 - IND RM Fic Pel
 - The Dead are Alive (x2)
 - 133.9
 - Soulcraft: A Post-Graduate Education in the Eternal Verities (x12)
 - Volumes 1 to 12
 - IND RM 140 V. (#)
 - Thinking Alive: Design for Creation
 - IND RM 140 Pek
 - Twilight Clear: A Volume of Soulcraft Poems
 - IND RM 811.52 Pel
 - Know Your Karma: Design for Destiny
 - IND RM 140 Pel
 - Earth Comes: Design for the Materialization
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
 - Behold Life
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
 - Adam Awakes
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
 - The Golden Scripts
 - IND RM 230 Pel
 - The Fog
 - IND RM Fic Pel
 - Drag
 - IND RM Fic Pel
- D-158

- Biography Pelley, William Dudley Duplicate Articles
 - The box has 9 total files/envelopes, but only one has information on Pelley.
 - General reference duplicates

Public Circulation

- Adam Awakes: Design for Romance
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
- The Dead are Alive
 - Alternative title: Why I Believe the Dead are Alive
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
- Star Guests: Design for Mortality
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
- Earth Comes: Design for Materialization
 - IND RM 133.9 Pel
- The Golden Scripts
 - IND RM 230 Pel
- Know Your Karma: Design for Destiney
 - IND RM 140 Pel
- Thinking Alive: Design for Creation
 - IND RM 140 Pel
- Soulcraft Scripts
 - Volume 4
 - IND RM 140 Pel V. 4
- A Blueprint for Survival
 - By Melford Pearson
 - IND RM 306.0973 Pea 2002
- A Scourge of Cords
 - By Melford Pearson
 - IND RM 306.0973 2009
- Nations-in-Law: An Unconventional Analysis of Civics
 - IND RM 320.97 Pel
- Challenge to Crisis
 - By Melford Pearson
 - IND RM 353
- The Price of Truth! (x2)
 - By Melford Pearson
 - IND RM B Pelley
 - IND RM B Pelley 2008
- Seven Minutes in Eternity with Aftermath (x2)
 - IND RM B Pelley
- William Dudley Pelley: A Life in Right-Wing Extremism and the Occult
 - By Scott Beckman
 - IND RM B Pelley 2005
- The Fog
 - IND RM FIC Pel

- Drag
 - IND RM FIC Pel

Public Reference

- Getting Born: Design for Reembodiment
 - IND RM REF 129 Pel
- Star Guests: Design for Mortality
 - IND RM REF 133.9 Pel
- The Soulcraft Elucidata
 - IND RM REF 133.03
- No More Hunger: Presenting the Christian Commonwealth
 - IND RM REF 133.9 Pel
- Undying Mind
 - IND RM REF 153 Pel
- Challenge to Crisis
 - By Melford Pearson
 - IND RM Ref 353 Pea
- The Blot on North Carolina: the Pelley Appeal to the Supreme Federal Court
 - Other Author
 - IND RM REF 977.256 MISC Blo
- In the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, No. 11054, William Dudley Pelley, movant-appellant, vs. United States of America, respondent-appellee: appeal from the United States District Court for Southern District of Indiana, Indianapolis Division
 - Spine: "US VS Pelley"
 - Other Author
 - IND RM REF B Pelley
- Price of Truth
 - Written by Melford Pearson
 - IND RM REF B Pel
- Seven Minutes in Eternity
 - IND RM REF B Pel
- As Thou Lovest: The Biography of a Benefaction...
 - IND RM REF FIC Pel