

Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA)

Maud Karpeles Fonds Description

Fonds description written by Anita Best under the co-sponsorship of the Canadian Council of Archives and the Association of Newfoundland & Labrador Archives. Reformatted by Renee Lawrence.

TITLE:

Maud Karpeles Fonds

COLLECTION NUMBER:

Special Collection I.4
Accession Number 78-003

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

27 cm of textual records

DATES:

1929-1930

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY/BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Maud Karpeles (1885-1976) was born in London, England to a family of international connections. After finishing her education she took up social work and “while looking for something creative for a girl’s club to do, she heard of Cecil Sharp’s rediscovery of English traditional dances.” She became immediately involved in this study and with her sister (mother of folksong collector Peter Kennedy) she became one of the demonstration team who illustrated Sharp’s lectures throughout England. She continued to work with Sharp when he started collecting folksongs in 1903 and became as interested in the songs as she was in the dances, attending summer schools and learning the songs as they were collected. Being associated with the work from the earliest days, she became an authority on folksong

in her own right as well as Sharp's assistant and collaborator. During the First World War, Karpeles travelled with Sharp in the Appalachian Mountains, where they found a large number of songs that had come over with the early immigrants and had remained virtually unchanged for several generations.

After Sharp's death, she spent about fourteen weeks in Newfoundland during 1929 and 1930 and made a collection of songs, 90 of which were published by Faber and Faber in 1971 as *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*. With collaborator Ralph Vaughn Williams, she published several dozen of these songs for formal performance with piano accompaniment. Karpeles became honorary secretary to the English Folk Dance and Song Society, and was active in organizing and participating in several international festivals. In 1947 she founded and became secretary of the International Folk Music Council and travelled extensively promoting English folksong and dance. She wrote a biography of her mentor, (*Cecil Sharp, His Life and Work*) and edited several volumes of folksongs and dance tunes. While in Newfoundland she stayed with Fred Emerson and his wife (parents of harpist Carla Furlong) in St. John's. They were instrumental in making contacts and introductions for Karpeles during her visits.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

Fonds consists of field notebooks with entries made by Maud Karpeles during her Newfoundland folksong collecting trips. Included are field diaries, notes on Newfoundland history and social organisation, shorthand notes of song texts, notebooks of tune transcriptions and correspondence. The shorthand notes seem to follow a non-standard system perhaps devised by Karpeles herself. Several of the notebooks contain entries made after Karpeles left Newfoundland, and pertain to observations made in New York and various parts of Europe.

RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS:

Access with permission of archivist.

FINDING AID AVAILABLE:

Box lists available

TERMS GOVERNING USE AND REPRODUCTION:

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LANGUAGE:

English

ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL:

Correspondence between Herbert Halpert and Ursula Vaughn Williams regarding transfer of the materials

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Title based on creator and contents of fonds