John C. Campbell Folk School Fain Archives

Laura Sims Collection (2025.10)

Overview of the Collection

Creator:	Laura Sims (primary)
Title:	Laura Sims Collection
Inclusive Dates:	c. 1930-2001; n.d.
Abstract:	A collection of dance calling cards, publications, photographs, and other materials created and/or gathered by Laura Sims throughout her lifetime.
Accession Number:	2025.10
Quantity:	3 boxes; 1.87 linear feet
Language(s):	English
Repository:	Fain Archives, John C. Campbell Folk School 1 Folk School Rd. Brasstown, NC 28902
Preferred Citation:	[description of item], Laura Sims Collection (2025.10), Box # Folder #, John C. Campbell Folk School Fain Archives, Brasstown, NC.

Historical Note

Laura Sims (1954-2014) was a member of the John C. Campbell Folk School (JCCFS) community who was highly involved in different craft and folk arts. A former high school teacher, Sims was introduced to her artistic passion—paper marbling—when she took a weekend class at the Folk School in the 1980s. She was a full-time marbler from 1985 until shortly before her death in 2014. Sims operated her brand Indigo Stone Studio in Asheville, NC, and produced products like paper, note cards, and textiles. She also authored books on paper marbling. Sims was a member of the Southern Highland Craft Guild and sold her products at their stores.

Sims taught at many craft schools in the American South, such as Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts and Penland School of Craft, but she had a particularly deep connection with the Folk School. Sims served as a Hostess at the Folk School in the late 1970s and early 1980s. There she learned not only marbling, but also how to call contra and square dances. Her extensive set of handmade dance calling cards, dance-related publications, and folk music scores form the basis of this collection.

At some point, Sims received dance-related documents that had previously belonged to Lynn Gault (1912-1998), which are also part of this collection. Gault was known for his work in both theater and pottery. He was technical director for the Carolina Playmakers from 1946 to 1951 and was the original stage designer for the outdoor drama *Unto These Hills* in 1950. In 1952, he moved to Brasstown, NC, to pursue pottery full-time and became highly involved with the Folk School. He taught extensively, served on the school's board of directors, and performed a dramatic reading of *A Christmas Carol* at JCCFS every year from 1952 to 1980. Gault died at his Brasstown home in 1998.

Scope and Contents

The Laura Sims Collection consists of publications, dance calling cards, photographs, and other materials connected to Sims' experience as a dance caller. The collection was donated to the John C. Campbell Folk School Fain Archives by Jim Charneski, Sims' husband, on April 8, 2025. The collection was not presented in a specific order and was processed into 11 series once received at the Fain Archives.

Hardcover books and pamphlets were physically separated from the collection to be shelved in the Fain Archives' library. These items were given their own object IDs connected to the collection and can be found via the archive's PastPerfect database. Two books, Ted Sannella's *Balance and Swing* and Cecil Sharp's *One Hundred English Folk Songs*, were deaccessioned due to copies already existing in the archive.

The *Correspondence* series includes a single Christmas card from the Hoffman family from 1952.

The *Dance Calling Cards* series is made up primarily of handwritten, flashcard-sized cards that Sims used to call dances. They are organized alphabetically by dance title. Improvised dances and those with unknown titles are collected in their own folder. Cards that were identified as having belonged to Lynn Gault are also collected in a separate folder.

The *Events* series consists primarily of flyers and promotional materials for dance events that took place throughout the United States in locations such as the Folk School, Berea College, and Pinewoods Camp. The dates for these events range from 1940 to 2001, with some papers being undated.

Music includes sheet music publications that are primarily related to folk music and/or folk dance.

The *Notes* collection is made up of handwritten notes that are related to dance or music, but are not complete dance calling cards. The "Dance Notes" folder contains Sims' partially written dance instructions (including some written on the back of a paper hand fan), as well as notes on dance publications. Notes identified as originating from Lynn Gault have been placed in their own folder. The "Music Notes" folder contains handwritten sheet music, and the "Miscellaneous" folder contains notes that could not otherwise be categorized.

Periodicals contains three documents that are either specifically related to folk dance or folk crafts more generally. They are arranged in chronological order by publication date.

Photographs includes photographs of JCCFS events and classes, as well as other events related to Sims' craft of marbling. The photographs were organized into folders based on the labeled envelopes in which they were originally found. However, the photographs in the folder labeled "Dance Week" do not appear to depict a single event. The "Dance Week" folder includes photo negatives and slides that are not duplicates of existing photographs in the collection. The date range of the photographs is currently unknown. All photographs, negatives, and slides have been scanned, numbered, and added to the PastPerfect database.

The *Postcards* series is made up of one set of JCCFS 25th anniversary postcards from 1950.

The *Publications* series consists of publications related to folk music, dance, and crafts. The format of these publications range from staple-bound books to partial photocopies of larger books. Titles are arranged in chronological order by publication date.

The *Records* series contains one set of 12-inch records and two sets of 10-inch records. "Quadrilles with Calls" and "Six English Folk Dance Tunes" are both related to folk dancing, while "Old World Ballads in America" is related to folk music.

Miscellaneous contains one business card for Sims' paper marbling company, Indigo Stone Studio.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 3 boxes. Boxes 1 and 2 contain papers and photographs. Box 3 contains oversize materials. 22 books and pamphlets are cataloged as 2025.10.1-22 and stored separately (see PastPerfect for locations).

Box 1. Folders 1-24

Box 2. Folders 25-80

Box 3 [Oversize]. Folder 16; Folders 77-79

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Open to all users.

Restrictions on Use

None.

Index Terms

This record series is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms:

Persons

Gault, Lynn (Robert Lynn), -1998

Subjects

Appalachian region
Contra dancing
Country dancing
Folk dancing
Folk high schools
Folk-songs, English
John C. Campbell Folk School
Morris dance
Singing games
Square dancing

Document Types

Books
Manuscripts
Music
Negatives (Photographs)
Periodicals
Personal correspondence
Photographs
Postcards
Slides

Related Material

2021.81 Lucille and Lynn Gault Library

2025.32.1-3 3 marbled silk scarves made by Laura Sims

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Laura Sims' husband, Jim Charneski, on April 8, 2025.

Accession #(s): 2025.10

Accruals

No future accruals are expected.

Processing Information

Processing and finding aid completed by Bridget Lewis, June 2025

Container List

BOX 1

Correspondence

Folder 1. Hoffman, Arnold et al., 1952

Dance Calling Cards

Folder 2. Dances A-L, n.d.

Folder 3. Dances M-Z, n.d.

Folder 4. Improvised and Unknown Dances, n.d.

Folder 5. Full Page Dance Calling Cards, n.d.

Folder 6. Lynn Gault Calling Cards A-Z, n.d.

Events

Folder 7. 1940-2001, n.d.

Music

Folder 8. Seventeen Nursery Songs (Sharp), 1930

Folder 9. Songs of the Hill Folk (Niles), 1934

Folder 10. Ten Christmas Carols (Niles), 1935

Folder 11. More Songs of the Hill Folk (Niles), 1936

Folder 12. Ballads, Carols, and Tragic Legends (Niles), 1937

Folder 13. Folk-Songs, Ballads, and Songs of Great Composers for Informal Singing (Zanzig), 1937

Folder 14. Long Odds and Other Dances from the Preston Collection, 1958

Folder 15. American Tunes for Squares and Contras from the Benacre Note Books, 1959

Folder 16. Moved to Box 3

Folder 17. Miscellaneous, n.d.

Notes

Folder 18. Dance Notes, n.d.

Folder 19. Lynn Gault Dance Notes, n.d.

Folder 20. Music Notes, n.d.

Folder 21. Miscellaneous, n.d.

Periodicals

Folder 22. Boston Sunday Herald, August 31, 1947

Folder 23. Foxfire, Winter 1979

Folder 24. Country Song and Dance 19, June 1989

BOX 2

Photographs

Folder 25. "Dance Week," n.d.

Folder 26. "First Class in New Studio- Paper/Dye, JCCFS," n.d.

Folder 27. Photographs, n.d.

Postcards

Folder 28. John C. Campbell Folk School Postcards, 1950

Publications

Folder 29. Play Party Games (Rohrbough), 1932

Folder 30. The Kit: Puppets (Rohrbough), 1936

Folder 31. Six Folk Songs, 1938

Folder 32. American Folk Dances (Rohrbough), 1939

Folder 33. Square Dances of the Great Smoky Mountains [Copy 1] (Rohrbough), 1939

Folder 34. Square Dances of the Great Smoky Mountains [Copy 2] (Rohrbough), 1939

Folder 35. Favorite Songs and Play Party Games (Rohrbough), 1940

Folder 36. Favorite Square Dances (Rohrbough), 1941

Folder 37. Quadrilles (Rohrbough), 1941

Folder 38. Singing Games and Folk Dances, 1941

Folder 39. Dance Lightly (Dunsing), 1946

Folder 40. Songs of All Time, 1946

Folder 41. Community Dances Manual 1, 1949

Folder 42. Country Dances of Today (Gadd), 1951

Folder 43. The Square Dance Caller (Holder), 1951

Folder 44. ...And Promenade All (Eisenberg), 1952

Folder 45. …And Promenade All [Photocopy] (Eisenberg), 1952

Folder 46. Community Dances Manual 3 (Kennedy), 1952

Folder 47. A Year of Song (Chase & Nace), 1952

Folder 48. Community Dances Manual 4 (Kennedy), 1954

Folder 49. Beginner's Square Dance Workbook No. 1 (Armstrong), 1956

Folder 50. Square Dance Workbook No. 2 (Armstrong), 1956

Folder 51. Community Dances Manual 5 (Bell), 1957

Folder 52. Songs of All Time, 1957

Folder 53. Little Book of Carols, 1960

Folder 54. Community Dances Manual 6 (Hamilton), 1968

Folder 55. Community Dances Manual 7 (Hamilton), 1969

Folder 56. Come Let Us Sing, 1974

Folder 57. Artisans/Appalachia/USA (Gaynes), 1977

Folder 58. To Twirl or Not to Twirl (Hendrickson), 1983

Folder 59. Unknown Title [Contra Dance Book] (Hubert), 1983

Folder 60. Dizzy Dances Volume II (Hubert), 1986

Folder 61. Eclectic, Electric Contras (Fuerst), 1992

Folder 62. Controlled Dancing is Safe, Sane and Downright Satisfying (Sanella), 1994

Folder 63. Contra Dance, n.d.

Folder 64. Dances (Fuerst), n.d.

Folder 65. English Folk Songs, n.d.

Folder 66. Little Book of Carols, n.d.

Folder 67. Play Party Games and Musical Mixers (Rohrbough), n.d.

Folder 68. Saturday Night Fun at Holiday Hill (Rowlands), n.d.

Folder 69. Songs of All Time Sampler, n.d.

Folder 70. Square Dances of America (Kennedy), n.d.

Folder 71. Square Dance Workbook No. 3 (Armstrong), n.d.

Folder 72. Walking on Air (Kennedy), n.d.

Folder 73. Wire and Fabric Sculpture (Turner), n.d.

Folder 74. Why Not Dance with Me? (Whynot), n.d.

Folder 75. Unknown Title [Contra Dance Instructions] (Hubert), n.d.

Folder 76. Unknown Title [Contra Dance Instructions] (Hubert), n.d.

Folder 77. Moved to Box 3

Folder 78. Moved to Box 3

Folder 79. Moved to Box 3

Miscellaneous

Folder 80: Indigo Stone Business Card, n.d.

BOX 3

Music

Folder 16. Five Virginian Folk songs (Powell), 1938 [Oversize]

Records

Folder 77. Six English Folk Dance Tunes (Foster), 1939 [Oversize]

Folder 78. Quadrilles with Calls (Mayo), 1942 [Oversize]

Folder 79. Old World Ballads in America (Summers), n.d. [Oversize]

References/Further Reading

Laura Sims:

Grolier Club. (2023). The 1980s: Expansion and Commercialization. *Grolier Club Online Exhibitions*. https://grolierclub.omeka.net/exhibits/show/pattern-and-flow/the-1980s

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (2022, April 27). Get groovy with it. This mesmerizing hand-marbled design was created by Laura Sims—a high school teacher who was introduced to marbling [image attached] [timeline post]. *Facebook*.

https://www.facebook.com/metmuseum/photos/a.10150413272772635/10159097794127635/?type=3

Piedmont Craftsmen. (2015). Laura Sims. *Piedmont Craftsmen*. https://piedmontcraftsmen.org/2015/03/laura-sims/

Lynn Gault:

Lynn Gault Papers Inventory #04987, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/catalog/04987