

Bridgers, Ann Preston ^[1]

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By H. C. Bridgers, Jr., 1979

1 May 1891–3 May 1967

Ann Preston Bridgers, teacher and actress, was born in [Raleigh](#) ^[2]. During most of her childhood she lived in Adrian, Ga.,



Photo Courtesy of Little Raleigh Theatre.

"Ann Preston Bridgers, playwright and first

with her parents, Annie Preston Cain of sponsor of Raleigh Little Theatre" ^[3] Hillsborough and Robert Rufus Bridgers, Jr., of [Wilmington](#) ^[4]. She attended [Mary Baldwin Seminary](#) ^[5] in Staunton, Va., and then [Smith College in Northampton](#) ^[6], Mass., where she received a B.A. degree in 1915.

After being graduated from Smith, she studied with the Henry Jewett Players of Boston and played a few minor roles. Returning to Raleigh, she taught in the public schools and served with the Selective Service Bureau. She went overseas in 1919 with the Smith College Unit of the [YMCA](#) ^[7]. On returning to Raleigh again, she opened a gift shop and became president of the Raleigh Community Players.

In 1923 she sold her gift shop, moved to New York, and enrolled in dramatic school; there, according to [New York Times](#) ^[8] article entitled "And Who is Ann Preston Bridgers?" "she trifled with fencing, costuming, designing, carpentering, diction, dancing and even acting, the latter a purely academic interest inspired by a desire to familiarize herself with the fundamentals of the theatre *per se*."

For several years after 1923 she enjoyed considerable success in the theater, beginning as understudy for [Lynn Fontanne](#) ^[9] in *Dulcy*. Her first major role was that of Mrs. Bercovitch in *Fall Guy*, in which with great acclaim she also portrayed two offstage voices, one Irish and one Jewish. Her next role was as the original Katie, the cigarette girl, in *Broadway*. By this time she had begun writing a play, *Norma*, which when submitted to George Abbott impressed him so favorably that he agreed to collaborate with her. Together they produced the hit show *Coquette*, in which she played a supporting role to Helen Hayes, the star, both on Broadway and on the road. For *Coquette*, Ann Bridgers received the Theatre Club's award for "the most pleasing play of 1927–28."

Forsaking Broadway, she traveled extensively in Europe for a few years and in 1933 moved permanently to Raleigh, where she became active in the Civic Music Association. She was also a member of the board of the [Literary and Historical Association](#) ^[10], an editor of the Survey of Federal Records, an occasional contributor to the [Raleigh Times](#) and [News and Observer](#) ^[11], and an early moving spirit in the formation of the [Raleigh Little Theater](#) ^[12].

An ardent Christian Scientist, Miss Bridgers died in Raleigh after a long illness and was buried in [Oakdale Cemetery](#) ^[13], [Wilmington](#) ^[4].

References:

New York Times, 13 Nov. 1927

North Carolina Authors (1952)

Raleigh News and Observer, 4 May 1967

Smith College Alumnae Register (1935) and Class of 1915 Reunion Book (1940)

Additional Resources:

Ann Bridgers Papers: http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/b/Bridgers,Ann_Preston.html ^[14]

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Subjects:

Art ^[15]

Biographies ^[16]

Educators ^[17]

Fine arts ^[18]

Women ^[19]

Authors:

Bridgers, H. C., Jr. ^[20]

Origin - location:

Wake County ^[21]

Raleigh ^[22]

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1 January 1979 | Bridgers, H. C., Jr.

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