

**The New York Public Library
Stephen A. Schwarzman Building
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the
Harriet Walden New Yorker papers

1926-2004

MssCol 18913

Compiled by Susan Malsbury, December 2012

Summary

Creator: Walden, Harriet, 1914-2006

Title: Harriet Walden New Yorker papers, 1926-2004

Size: 3.57 linear feet (9 boxes)

Source: Purchased from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller Inc., 2012

Abstract: Harriet Walden (1914-2006) was on the administrative staff of the *New Yorker* magazine for over forty years, from 1944 to 1985, and was E. B. and Katharine Sergeant Whites' secretary from 1956 to 1986. The Harriet Walden New Yorker papers contain correspondence, procedural documents, and printed materials that reflect her career at the *New Yorker*, as well as the friendships she developed with various *New Yorker* writers and editors. The bulk of the collection concerns Walden's role as secretary to the Whites. Other writers and editors represented in the papers include John Bainbridge, Geoffrey Hellman, Hendrik Hertzberg, Leo Hofeller, Mollie Panter-Downes, Harold Ross, William Shawn, and William Walden.

Access: Advance notice required. Apply at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref>. Editorial address lists have been restricted until 2044.

Preferred citation: Harriet Walden New Yorker papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Creator history

Harriet Walden (1914-2006) was on the administrative staff of the *New Yorker* magazine for over forty years, from 1944 to 1985. Her parents, Bernhard and Sarah Kahn, were Russian immigrants and her father owned a jewelry store. In 1944, she replaced her husband, William Walden, as Harold Ross's secretary at the *New Yorker*, when William went off to war. William later returned to the *New Yorker* as a "Talk of the Town" reporter and remained on the editorial staff until 1983. Harriet Walden continued to work as Ross's secretary until she left the *New Yorker* to raise her two sons. At Katharine Sergeant White's request, Walden returned to the *New Yorker* in 1956, to become Katharine and E. B. White's secretary. In 1968, Walden replaced Daise Terry as office manager. In this capacity, she was head of the editorial assistants, a group that was affectionately known around the office as "Walden Pond."

Walden's more general tasks at the office included typing and proofing manuscripts, managing employee subscriptions, ordering theater tickets and flowers, mailing 'roughs' on Tuesday, mailing tearsheets or copies of the magazine to staff members, and pasting the dummy magazine. In 1985, Walden officially retired from the *New Yorker*, but still managed E. B. White's affairs one day a week at the *New Yorker* offices after White's death. Walden died in New York City in 2006.

Scope and content note

The Harriet Walden New Yorker papers contain correspondence, procedural documents, and printed material that reflect her forty-year career at the *New Yorker*, as well as the friendships she developed with various *New Yorker* writers and editors. Many of the staff members, including E. B. and Katharine Sergeant White, worked remotely or were otherwise in various stages of retirement, and their correspondence demonstrates how Walden facilitated their work and kept them abreast of office news. Other writers and editors represented in the papers include John Bainbridge, Geoffrey Hellman, Hendrik Hertzberg, Leo Hofeller, Mollie Panter-Downes, Harold Ross, William Shawn, and William Walden.

The correspondence and office files of E. B. and Katharine Sergeant White make up the bulk of the collection. Walden handled the Whites' affairs in New York and they corresponded frequently and with affection. The correspondence with both Whites offers glimpses into their life in Maine and the letters are filled with news of their health, visitors, and daily activities on the farm. E. B. White wrote about routine office matters as well as long term projects, such as the accumulation of his papers for donation to Cornell University; the compilation of his letters for publication in *Letters of E. B. White*; and his work editing *Onward and Upward in the Garden*, a compilation of Katharine Sergeant White's essays on gardening. Often White returned Walden's letters and memoranda with holograph replies in the margins. Procedural files regard White's reprints, vacation instruction, and how to handle "autograph chasers." The files provide insight into the various editorial and legal issues surrounding reprints and include clippings and photocopies of White's work. Katharine Sergeant White's correspondence reflects her two-year appointment as fiction editor in 1956, and the part-time editing work she continued until 1961. The file on Joel White regards settling his parents estate and managing reprints, and contains letters to Walden that describe E. B. White's declining health the last two years of his life.

Files on staff members primarily contain letters to Walden. Both Leo Hofeller and William Maxwell wrote often and affectionately and their correspondence was mainly of a social nature. The Harold Ross file includes a small amount of outgoing letters, holograph notes to both Waldens, and a list of salary increases for the staff in 1944. After he returned home from the war, William Walden held the position of Head of the Varitype Department and his file includes instructions for varitypists. Edmund Wilson's file includes a small self-published comic magazine that Wilson sent out as his 1976 Christmas card.

The "Letters and cards from New Yorker people," (Walden's designation) demonstrate the close relationships that Walden had with many of the staff members, and their wives, and they regard gifts; salutations; requests for books, tearsheets of articles, and office supplies; or simply to say hello. Many of the cards and letters had been sent to her home address. Writers and editors include Gardner Botsford, Brendan Gill, Philip Hamburger, Geoffrey Hellman, Hendrik Hertzberg, Edith Iglauer, Lois Long, Tom Meehan, Mollie Panter-Downes, Lillian Ross, and Joseph Wechsberg.

The Conflict was an in-house newsletter attributed to writer Russell Maloney that contained office news, updates on staff members reporting on the Second World War from Europe and Asia, and staff changes. Printed material contains a parody issue about Harold Ross that was published on November 6, 1926, an April 22, 1985 issue signed by William Shawn, and promotional reprints of articles. Other files include a procedure file, a style file, and a file of obituaries that contains invitations to and programs from

memorial services of *New Yorker* staff members.

Arrangement

The Harriet Walden New Yorker papers are arranged alphabetically.

Key terms

Subjects

Authors, American
Journalism -- United States
Literature

Titles

New Yorker (New York, N.Y. : 1925)

Names

Bainbridge, John, 1913-1992
Hellman, Geoffrey T. (Geoffrey Theodore), 1907-1977
Hertzberg, Hendrik
Panter-Downes, Mollie, 1906-
Ross, Harold Wallace, 1892-1951
Shawn, William
Walden, Harriet, 1914-2006
Walden, William
White, E. B. (Elwyn Brooks), 1899-1985
White, Katharine Sergeant Angell

Special formats

Invitations

Container list

- b.1 f.1-2 Bainbridge, John, 1967-1986
- b.7 f.1 *The Conflict*, 1942-1943, undated
- b.1 f.3 Hellman, Geoffrey and Katherine, 1962-1977
Includes remarks regarding Harold Ross that were given at the Grolier Club on May 14, 1975.
- b.1 f.4 Hertzberg, Hendrik, 1977-1985
- b.1 f.5 Hofeller, Leo, 1973-1992
- b.1 f.6 Maxwell, William, 1977-1996
- b.1 f.7 Memoranda, 1968-1974
- b.1 f.8 Panter-Downes, Mollie, 1980-1982
- b.7 f.2-6 Newsclippings, 1966-2001
- b.8 f.1-2 Newsclippings, 1966-2001
- b.8 f.3 Obituaries and Memorial Services, 1952-2004
- b.8 f.4 Office Procedures, 1984-1985, undated
- b.8 f.5 Printed Material, 1926-1986
- b.1 f.9 Ross, Harold, 1943-1947
- b.1 f.10 Ross, Lillian, 1965-1996
- b.2 f.1 Shawn, William and Cecille, 1960-1997 (Cards)
- b.8 f.6 Style Rules, circa 1938
- b.2 f.2 Walden, William, 1942-1948
White, E. B.
Correspondence
- b.2 f.3-7 1957-1971
- b.3 f.1-5 1972-1981
- b.4 f.1 1982-1984, undated
- b.4 f.2 Fan Mail, 1962-1985
- b.4 f.3 Newsbreaks, 1963-1982
- b.4 f.4 Memorial Service, 1985
- b.4 f.5-6 News Clippings, 1963-1984
- b.4 f.7 Reprint Requests and Office Procedures, 1959-1985
- b.5 f.1 Reprint Requests and Office Procedures, 1959-1985
- b.5 f.2 Travel Arrangements, 1979-1984
- b.5 f.3 White, Joel, 1984-1985
Includes correspondence between Walden and Joel White's secretary Pat Fowler.
- White, Katharine Sergeant
- b.5 f.4 General, 1959-1978
- b.5 f.5-7 Correspondence, 1956-1977
- b.6 f.1 Correspondence, 1956-1977
- b.6 f.2 Wilson, Edmund, 1966-1972
- b.6 f.3-6 Letters and Cards from New Yorker People, 1960-1989