

Guide to the Sidney A. Olson Papers

GEN MSS 2146



by Janet Lopes

December 2024

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 2146

CREATOR: Olson, Sidney A., author

TITLE: Sidney A. Olson papers

DATES: 1923-2024

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6.42 linear feet (14 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Sidney A. Olson papers contain writings, notes, logs, correspondence, photographic prints, newspaper clippings, and other papers by, or related to, the work of journalist Sidney A. Olson. The papers reflect Olson's life and career beginning in the 1920s as a young adult entering the University of Utah. There are examples of Olson's early writings under the pen name Incamusket, as well as his interests in books and the creative process. Papers during this period include diaries along with detailed notes on his social life.

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To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Margot Clark-Junkins, 2024.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is restricted until January 1, 2026.

Conditions Governing Use

The Sidney A. Olson papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Sidney A. Olson papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Biographical / Historical

Sidney A. Olson (1908-1995) was an American journalist and writer, born and raised in Utah. During World War II, he served as a war correspondent for *TIME*, covering the German front from December 1944 to May 1945. He was a Senior Editor for *TIME*, *LIFE*, and *Fortune*. He was a staff writer, White House correspondent, and City Editor at *The Washington Post* and spent the end of his career in advertising.

In April of 1945, Olson was one of the first people to enter the Dachau concentration camp as it was being liberated. His World War II dispatches written for *TIME* and *LIFE* were touted for their detail, insights about military strategy, and observations about human suffering.

Olson--along with other correspondents--was honored for his work by U. S. Forces and the U. S. Secretary of War.

After the war, Olson co-anchored the first live televised broadcast of the 1948 Presidential race. In the 1950s, Olson turned to Hollywood, public relations, and advertising.

Olson's legacy reflects a rich history of work for the *Washington Post*, with a byline on more than 700 articles, mostly about politics. His second career in advertising spanned more than 20 years before his retirement in 1973.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in the 1980s, Olson died in 1995 in Darien, Connecticut.

Content Description

The Sidney A. Olson papers contain writings, notes, logs, correspondence, photographic prints, newspaper clippings, and other papers by, or related to, the work of journalist Sidney A. Olson. The papers reflect Olson's life and career beginning in the 1920s as a young adult entering the University of Utah. There are examples of Olson's early writings under the pen name Incamusket, as well as his interests in books and the creative process. Papers during this period include diaries along with detailed notes on his social life.

From the 1930s-1940s, there are many examples of Olson's work at *The Washington Post* and, ultimately, *TIME*. A large amount of correspondence details his observations as a White House journalist and, later on, as a WWII correspondent, revealed in letters and cables to *TIME* co-founder, Henry Luce and news bureau chief David Hulburd.

Highlights of his pre-war reporting include a memo from John McCloy who would go on to be U. S. administrator of postwar Germany. Of note is Olson's reporting on the liberation of Nuremberg and the Dachau Concentration Camp.

Arrangement

Arranged into two series: I. Writings, notes, correspondence, and clippings, 1923-2024; and II. Photographic prints: 1934-1948.

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, notes, correspondence, and clippings, 1923-2024

5 linear feet (12 boxes)

Contains writings from Olson's college years in the 1920s and well as into his journalism career and beyond throughout the 1950s. Other papers include diaries, clippings, correspondence detailing Olson's coverage of WWII and politics.

Material is arranged chronologically.

b. 1, f. 1	High school diploma, college transcript, and ROTC certificate	1923-1928
b. 1, f. 2-3	Reading logs 2 Folders	1925
b. 1, f. 4	Short stories and phonebook	1926
b. 1, f. 5-8	College writing 4 Folders	1926-1929
b. 1, f. 9	Daybook	1928
b. 1, f. 10	Directory and art by girlfriend, Fran Rager	1928-1929
b. 1, f. 11	Early diaries	1928-1933
b. 1, f. 12	Clipping	1928-1934
b. 2, f. 13	Diary	1929-1930
b. 2, f. 14-15	"Yearbook" and diary entries 2 Folders	1933
b. 2, f. 16	Plane crash clipping	1934
b. 2, f. 17	Diary entry, correspondence and other papers	1934
b. 2, f. 18	Diaries and correspondence	1935
b. 2, f. 19	Correspondence and clippings	1936
b. 2, f. 20	<i>The Washington Post</i> clippings	1936
b. 2, f. 21	Marriage license, FDR inauguration, and other papers	1937
b. 2, f. 22	FDR and press	1933-1937
b. 2, f. 23	Clippings	1935-1939
b. 2, f. 24	Diaries, correspondence, and clippings	1938-1939
b. 3, f. 25-26	Correspondence 2 Folders	1939
b. 3, f. 27	Correspondence	1939-1940
b. 3, f. 28	Alfalfa Club menu	undated

b. 3, f. 29	Diaries and correspondence	1940 April-July
b. 3, f. 30	Typescript report	1940 August
b. 3, f. 31	"Flickering Torch" typescript	1940 August
b. 3, f. 32	Pass to FDR's inauguration	1941 January 20
b. 3, f. 33	"The McCloy Memorandum on Production", typescript	1941 September 20
b. 3, f. 34	Note and clipping	1941 October
b. 3, f. 35	Teletype messages during WWII	1941 December
b. 3, f. 36	Correspondence	1942 January
b. 3, f. 37	Telegram	1942 January
b. 3, f. 38	Clippings	1942 March
b. 3, f. 39	<i>TIME</i> memo	1942 August
b. 3, f. 40	Memo to <i>Time</i> editors	1942 August
b. 3, f. 41	Correspondence	1943 January- July
b. 3, f. 42	Diary entries	1943 October
b. 3, f. 43	"Map Reading for the Soldier", booklet	1944
b. 3, f. 44	"Who's Who in America?", pages	1944-1945
b. 3, f. 45	Notes on Congress	1944 January 19-22
b. 3, f. 46	Memo	1944 March
b. 3, f. 47	Diary pages	1944 April
b. 3, f. 48	Henry Luce to editors	1944 August
b. 3, f. 49	Henry Luce memo	1944 September
b. 3, f. 50	Notes	1944 August- November
b. 3, f. 51	Cable excerpt	1944 November
b. 3, f. 52	<i>Fortune</i> article, copy	1944 December
b. 3, f. 53	Travel order	1944 December 9
b. 3, f. 54	Documents and inventory	1944 December 9-28

b. 3, f. 55	War Department agreement	1944 December 11
b. 3, f. 56	Diaries	1944-1945
b. 3, f. 57	Reading list	1944-1945
b. 3, f. 58	Military documents for planning	1945 January- May
b. 3, f. 59	Public relations agreement	1944 December 14-29
b. 3, f. 60	Correspondence, copies	1944 December
b. 3, f. 61	Correspondence from Olson to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1944 December 27
b. 3, f. 62	London cable	1944 December
b. 3, f. 63	WWII field notes	undated
b. 3, f. 64	Correspondence to parents	1945 January
b. 3, f. 65	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 January
b. 3, f. 66	Selective Service cards	1945 January
b. 4, f. 67	Eagle pin	undated
b. 5, f. 68	Eight correspondent patches	undated
b. 6, f. 69	Nine U. S. insignia and one patch	
b. 7, f. 70	Four German insignia	undated
b. 8, f. 71	Correspondence, copies	1945 January
b. 8, f. 72	Correspondence	1945 January
b. 8, f. 73	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren, and children	1945 January
b. 8, f. 74	V-mail from wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 January
b. 8, f. 75	V-mail to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 January
b. 8, f. 76	Cable, copy	1945 January
b. 8, f. 77	Cable from Henry Luce	1945 January
b. 8, f. 78	V-mail from wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 January
b. 8, f. 79	Notes for <i>TIME</i>	1945 January
b. 8, f. 80	Correspondence to Henry Luce, copies	1945 January
b. 8, f. 81	London cable to David Hulburd	1945 January
b. 8, f. 82	V-mails	1945 January

b. 8, f. 83	Letter of recommendation and press conference pass	1945 January
b. 8, f. 84	Orders to head out to Canadian front	1945 January
b. 8, f. 85	Notes	1945 January
b. 8, f. 86	Correspondence, copies	1945 January
b. 8, f. 87	Cables to David Hulburd	1945 February
b. 8, f. 88	V-mail to Zembra Holmgren	1945 January
b. 8, f. 89	Cables to David Hulburd	1945 February
b. 8, f. 90	Correspondence to wife Zembra Holmgren	1945 February
b. 8, f. 91	Cable to David Hulburd	1945 February
b. 8, f. 92	V-mail from wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 February
b. 8, f. 93	Cable via Navy Radio to <i>TIME</i>	1945 February
b. 8, f. 94	Notes for cables	1945 February
b. 8, f. 95	Cables to David Hulburd	1945 February
b. 8, f. 96	Clipping	1945 February
b. 8, f. 97	Cable to <i>TIME</i>	1945 February
b. 8, f. 98	Cable to David Hulburd	1945 February
b. 8, f. 99	Telegram draft from Henry Luce	1945 March
b. 8, f. 100	"A Thing of Beauty", copy and cable to David Hulburd	1945 March
b. 8, f. 101	Cable to David Hulburd	1945 March
b. 8, f. 102	Cable to David Hulburd, attention Henry Luce	1945 March
b. 8, f. 103	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 March
b. 8, f. 104	Cable to David Hulburd	1945 March
b. 8, f. 105	V-mail to Sidney A. Olson from his mother	1945 March
b. 8, f. 106	"Mission Impossible" copy and cable	1945 March
b. 8, f. 107	Cables to David Hulburd, copies	1945 March
b. 8, f. 108	SHAEF document	1945 March
b. 8, f. 109	V-mail to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 March
b. 8, f. 110	"A Letter from the Publisher", copy and cable	1945 March
b. 8, f. 111	"Getting the Story", copy and cable	1945 March
b. 8, f. 112	Correspondence from James Quirk to wife	1945 March

b. 8, f. 103	"Searching for the Heart", copy and cable	1945 April
b. 8, f. 104	Press clippings	1945 April
b. 8, f. 105	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 April
b. 8, f. 106	Cables to David Hulburd	1945 April
b. 9, f. 107	Cables to David Hulburd	1945 April
b. 9, f. 108	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 April
b. 9, f. 109	Notes for Nuremberg piece	1945 April 23
b. 9, f. 110	"The Collapse of the Nazi Empire is a Fantastic Show" annotated typescript	1945 April
b. 9, f. 111	"The Last Days", annotated typescript	1945 April
b. 9, f. 112	"RCA Version", typescript and copy	1945 April
b. 9, f. 113	Notes	circa 1945
b. 9, f. 114	Cables to David Hulburd	1945 April
b. 9, f. 115	Various articles and emails by others	1945-2020
b. 9, f. 116	Cable to David Hulburd	1945 May
b. 9, f. 117	Cable from Sidney A. Olson	1945 May
b. 9, f. 118	Clipping	1945 May
b. 9, f. 119	Correspondence to Olson from Henry Luce, copy	1945 May 5
b. 9, f. 120	"Opinions of Others", typescript and clipping	1945 May
b. 9, f. 121	Correspondence to Henry Luce, copy	1945 May
b. 9, f. 122	Correspondence from Henry Luce	1945 May
b. 9, f. 123	Cable to David Hulburd	1945 May
b. 9, f. 124	Press clipping	1945 May
b. 9, f. 125	Correspondence	1945 May
b. 9, f. 126	Dachau article, <i>TIME</i>	1945 May
b. 9, f. 127	Clippings	1945 May 14
b. 9, f. 128	Telegram to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 May
b. 9, f. 129	SHAEF travel orders	1945 June
b. 9, f. 130	Dachau article, <i>TIME</i>	1945
b. 9, f. 131	Press passes	1945 January- May
b. 9, f. 132	Maps and photographs	1945

b. 9, f. 133	"WWII: The Way It Was" clippings	1945-1986
b. 9, f. 134	WWII: clippings	1945
b. 9, f. 135	WWII background	1945
b. 9, f. 136	German deutschemarks	undated
b. 9, f. 137	Correspondence from George Warden, GS Chief	1945 June
b. 9, f. 138	Clippings	1945 June
b. 9, f. 139	Diary pages	1945 July
b. 9, f. 140	Diary pages	1945 July- August
b. 10, f. 141	<i>TIME</i> , "A Letter from the Publisher"	1945 July
b. 10, f. 142	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1945 July
b. 10, f. 143	Novel notes	1945 August
b. 10, f. 144	Correspondence to Henry Luce	1945 September
b. 10, f. 145	Diary pages	1945 September- October
b. 10, f. 146	Correspondents	1945-1949
b. 10, f. 147	Correspondence from Col. G. S. C. James C. Welch	1946 January
b. 10, f. 148	Correspondence from Ralph "Del" Paine of <i>TIME</i>	1996 March
b. 10, f. 149	Physical exam	1946 April 2
b. 10, f. 150	"The Boom", article in <i>Fortune</i>	1946 June
b. 10, f. 151	Diary	1946 July- October
b. 10, f. 152	War Department award certificate and article	1946 November
b. 10, f. 153	Notes for WWII novel and outlines	1946-1950
b. 10, f. 154	Novel notes	1947
b. 10, f. 155	Diary pages, clipping, and correspondence	1947 March- October
b. 10, f. 156	Correspondence from first army headquarters	1947 February- May
b. 10, f. 157	"The Republicans", <i>Fortune</i>	1947 April
b. 10, f. 158	"Capital Letter" column pitch for <i>LIFE</i>	1947 May-June
b. 10, f. 159	<i>TIME</i> newsletter, <i>Fortune</i> article and Christmas cards	1947 January
b. 10, f. 160	Paramount article, first draft and printed article	1947 June

b. 10, f. 161	Correspondence to Henry Luce	1947 July
b. 10, f. 162	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1947 July
b. 10, f. 163	Novel notes	1948
b. 10, f. 164	Clippings regarding GOP convention, television	1948 June-July
b. 10, f. 165	"Berlin Airlift", first draft	1948 August
b. 10, f. 166	<i>LIFE</i> reports	1948
b. 10, f. 167	Travel permits and other papers relating to the Berlin airlift	1948 August- September
b. 10, f. 168	Correspondence to wife, Zembra Holmgren	1948 August
b. 10, f. 169	Correspondence to Alex Olson	1948 August
b. 10, f. 170	Correspondence to Henry Luce	1948 November
b. 10, f. 171	"F.Y.I." newsletter	1948 November
b. 10, f. 172	Diary pages	1948 December
b. 10, f. 173	Diary pages	1949
b. 10, f. 174	<i>Fortune</i> articles	1949 May- November
b. 11, f. 175	Diary entry, copy	1949 September
b. 11, f. 176	"Isbrandtsen", article	1950 February 16
b. 11, f. 177	Billings' diary account of firing Olson	1950 February 16-17
b. 11, f. 178	Correspondence to Henry Luce and severance stub	1950 February 17
b. 11, f. 179	Correspondence from Henry Luce regarding Olson's firing	1950 February 17
b. 11, f. 180	Correspondence from Paramount	1950 February
b. 11, f. 181	Page from Bob Elson's book regarding Olson, copy	1950
b. 11, f. 182	Correspondence, clippings, and notes related to Paramount	1950
b. 11, f. 183	<i>TIME</i> history	1948, undated
b. 11, f. 184	Correspondence to Henry Luce	1950 March
b. 11, f. 185	Correspondence from Henry Luce	1950 March
b. 11, f. 186	Correspondence to Charles Brackett	1950 April
b. 11, f. 187	Correspondence to George Frazier	1950 April
b. 11, f. 188	Screenplay for Paramount	1950 June
b. 12, f. 189	Clipping of interview	1979

b. 12, f. 190	FBI	2024
b. 12, f. 191	Biography scraps or "mems"	undated

Series II: Photographic prints, 1934-1948*1.67 linear feet (3 boxes)*

Includes photographs related to political conventions, newsroom activities, Olson's time at *The Washington Post* and *TIME* and as a war correspondent.

Maintains order found at the time of acquisition.

b. 12, f. 192	Photograph inventory	undated
b. 12, f. 193	<i>TIME</i> writers	undated
b. 12, f. 194	Passport photograph	1948
b. 12, f. 195	NBC photograph	circa 1948
b. 12, f. 196	Convention coverage, NBC photograph	1948
b. 12, f. 197	Televised convention	1948 December 1
b. 12, f. 198	Democratic Convention	1948
b. 12, f. 199	Election night, Sidney A. Olson interviewing Jim Farrelly	1948 November
b. 12, f. 200	Election night coverage, NBC	1948
b. 12, f. 201	Philadelphia Convention	1948
b. 12, f. 202	Sidney Olson with mother Sigrid, daughter Whitney, and son John	1945 June
b. 12, f. 203	Clare Booth Luce with Sidney Olson in Heidelberg	1945 April
b. 12, f. 204	390th Bomber group	1945 January
b. 12, f. 205	<i>TIME, Inc.</i> newsletter	1944
b. 12, f. 206	Sidney Olson at Windsor	1944 December
b. 12, f. 207	Sidney Olson, war correspondent, profile picture	undated
b. 12, f. 208	War Department identification card	1944 December
b. 12, f. 209	Sidney Olson, assistant managing editor at <i>TIME</i>	1943
b. 12, f. 210	Reporters at State Department	1938 September 28
b. 12, f. 211	Claude Mahoney of <i>Wall Street Journal</i> with Sidney Olson	1936 July 10
b. 12, f. 212	Henry Morgenthau with Sidney Olson	1937 June 17
b. 13, f. 213	Newsroom photograph	1937
b. 13, f. 214	William Lemke meeting with reporters on farm bill	1936 February 17
b. 13, f. 215	William E. Borah	circa 1936-1937
b. 13, f. 216	Reporters at Chesapeake Bay meeting with FDR	1937 June 26
b. 13, f. 217	District (gerrymandering) for <i>The Washington Post</i>	1936

b. 13, f. 218	<i>The Washington Post</i> newsroom	circa 1936
b. 13, f. 219	Sidney A. Olson traveling from Utah to Washington	circa 1934
b. 14, f. 220	Wallace Kirkland photographs for <i>LIFE</i> , likely at GOP Convention	1944 June-July