

Guide to the Percy Marks Papers

YCAL MSS 4



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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 4

CREATOR: Marks, Percy, 1891-1956

TITLE: Percy Marks papers

DATES: 1900-1976

BULK DATES: 1920-1940

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5.21 linear feet (13 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Percy Marks Papers contain manuscripts, correspondence, and personal papers documenting aspects of the life and career of Percy Marks.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.marks>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.marks>.

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

The Papers were donated to The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library by the author's widow, Mrs. Bernard Barton, in November 1962.

November 2019 acquisition: gift of the Estate of Sally Jean Marks, 2018.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Restricted Fragile Papers in boxes 9 and 10 may only be consulted with permission of the appropriate curator. Preservation photocopies for reference use have been substituted in the main files.

Conditions Governing Use

The Percy Marks Papers are 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

Percy Marks Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

PERCY MARKS (1891-1956)

Percy Marks was born in Covelo, California, on September 9, 1891. He received a Bachelor of Letters degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1912 and a Master of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1914. Over the next decade he served successively as supervisor of education at Tewksbury (Massachusetts) State Infirmary, and as instructor of English at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dartmouth College, and Brown University. In 1925 he gave up his teaching career in order to devote himself to writing and lecturing. Between 1925 and 1949 most of his major works were written. In the latter year he resumed teaching as instructor of English and literature at the University of Connecticut at Waterbury, a post he held until shortly before his death.

Marks wrote some twenty books, mostly novels, and contributed short stories and essays to several prominent American literary magazines. His major works include *Martha*, *Lord of Himself*, *A Tree Grown Straight*, *And Points Beyond*, *The Days Are Fled*, *Between Two Autumns*, *Knave of Diamonds*, *Shade of Sycamore*, *Blair Marriman*, *The Craft of Writing*, and his most famous novel, *The Plastic Age*.

During World War I, Marks served as second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He was married to Margaret Ellen Gates in Gardena, California, on December 17, 1927; they had one daughter, Sally Jean. Percy Marks died in New Haven, Connecticut, on December 27, 1956.

For further biographical information, see the *National Cyclopadeia of American Biography*, Vol. 46, pp. 321-22, as well as folders 131-33 of this collection.

Scope and Contents

The Percy Marks Papers contain manuscripts, correspondence, and personal papers documenting aspects of the life and career of the author of *The Plastic Age*. The material spans the years 1900 to 1961, with the bulk falling between 1920 and 1940.

The papers are housed in thirteen boxes and are divided into five series. The bulk of the collection consists of typewritten manuscripts, some original and some carbon copies, of Percy Marks's novels and short stories. Associated with these manuscripts is a considerable amount of fan mail. In addition, there is general correspondence unrelated to literary works and a miscellaneous section of disparate personal papers.

[Series I, Writings](#), is divided into two sections, *Books* and *Shorter Works*. *Books*, which comprises roughly three quarters of the entire collection, is composed primarily of material relating to Marks's novels, but also includes correspondence regarding one of the two classroom textbooks he wrote. Manuscripts for

nine of his twenty books are included in the collection: *And Points Beyond*, *Blair Marriman*, *The Days Are Fled*, *Full Flood*, *The Knave of Diamonds*, *No Steeper Wall*, *Shade of Sycamore*, *A Tree Grown Straight*, and *The Unwilling God*. The collection has typed notes but no manuscript for Marks's first novel, *The Plastic Age*, published during the height of the Roaring Twenties. There are also sixteen folders of fan mail, which reveal the widely varying public reaction to this provocative work. The Beinecke Library owns inscribed first edition copies of many of Marks's works.

The second section, *Shorter Works*, consists mainly of short stories, but also includes essays, articles, and a book review. Of interest is his essay on Brown University, in which he extols the institution for its traditions and dedication to excellence. Marks was on the faculty of the English Department at Brown when he wrote *The Plastic Age*.

Within this series, material related to a specific literary work is grouped in the following order: notes, manuscripts, fan mail, reviews, and publicity, although not all types of material are included for every work. Some manuscripts contain penciled changes in the margins, but for the most part these typescripts are carbons of final copies sent to the publisher.

[Series II, Correspondence](#), consists primarily of personal and professional letters written to Marks, with a few copies of replies. Of interest are letters from family members, personal and professional friends, publishers, critics, authors, and former professors. The oldest item in the series is a letter from Marks's mother, written while he was a student at the University of California. The correspondence of Paul R. Reynolds, Marks's publisher during the twenties, provides insight into the author's successes and failures during the first decade of his career. Isabel Paterson, critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* during the twenties, writes a letter challenging Marks's philosophy on education and culture. Literary correspondents include Carl Van Doren (1 letter), Upton Sinclair (2 letters), and H.L. Mencken (24 letters). The letters of Van Doren and Sinclair make reference to recent publications by Marks. The letters of Mencken, written for the most part while he was an editor at *The Smart Set* and *The American Mercury*, cover a twenty-three-year period and present some insightful comments on Marks's works. Until their deaths, Marks maintained correspondence with L. B. R. Briggs and Bliss Perry, two of his professors at Harvard.

[Series III, Personal Papers](#), is divided into three sections. The first section, *Biographical Material*, contains numerous obituaries of Marks, as well as such disparate items as a poem, entitled "Susan Brown," written by Marks around the age of nine, his World War I draft card, and a diploma from the University of California, Berkeley. The second section, *Photographs*, contains one photograph each of Marks's mother and father, and eight of the author. The third section, *Textbook*, contains a copy of a cherished classroom textbook on English poetry used by Marks at Berkeley.

Series IV, Printed Material, contains a few early published stories by Marks.

Series V, November 2019 Acquisition, includes drafts of an unpublished manuscript titled "Round Valley Days," correspondence, printed material, a few photographs, and a pocket knife.

Arrangement

Organized into five series: I. Writings, 1915-1961. II. Correspondence, 1910-1954. III. Personal Papers, 1900-1957. IV. Printed Material, 1932, 1936. V. November 2019 Acquisition, 1914-1976.

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, 1915-1961

2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)

Boxes 1-6 contain Series I, *Writings*, which is divided into two sections, *Books* and *Shorter Works*. Both sections are arranged alphabetically by title and under title according to the hierarchy: notes, manuscripts, fan mail, reviews, and publicity. Fan mail that does not relate to any single work is placed at the end of each section.

BOOKS

And Points Beyond

b. 1, f. 1-5	Manuscript	1937
b. 1, f. 6	Fan mail	1937-40
b. 1, f. 7	Reviews	1937-38

Between Two Autumns

b. 1, f. 8	Fan mail	1941-44
b. 1, f. 9	Reviews	1941

Blair Marriman

b. 1, f. 10-14	Manuscript	1949
b. 1, f. 15	Reviews	1949

The Craft of Writing

b. 2, f. 16	Fan mail	1938
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The Days Are Fled

b. 2, f. 17-22	Manuscript	1939
b. 2, f. 23	Fan mail	1939-45
b. 2, f. 24	Reviews	1939

A Dead Man Dies

b. 2, f. 25	Reviews	n.d.
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Full Flood

b. 2, f. 26-30	Manuscript	n.d.
b. 2, f. 31	Fan mail	1942-46
b. 2, f. 32	Reviews	1942

The Knave of Diamonds

b. 3, f. 33-35	Manuscript	n.d.
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BOOKS > The Knave of Diamonds (continued)

b. 3, f. 36	Fan mail	1943
<i>Martha</i>		
b. 3, f. 37	Fan mail	1925
<i>No Steeper Wall</i>		
b. 3, f. 38	Manuscript, first draft (incomplete)	n.d.
b. 3, f. 39-45	Manuscript	n.d.
b. 3, f. 46	Fan mail	1940
b. 3, f. 47	Reviews	1940
<i>The Plastic Age</i>		
b. 4, f. 48	Notes	n.d.
b. 4, f. 49-64	Fan mail	1923-30, n.d.
b. 4, f. 65	Reviews	1961
<i>Shade of Sycamore</i>		
b. 5, f. 66-70	Manuscript	1944
b. 5, f. 71	Fan mail	1944-45
b. 5, f. 72	Reviews	n.d.
<i>A Tree Grown Straight</i>		
b. 5, f. 73-77	Manuscript	1935
b. 5, f. 78	Fan mail	1938-44, n.d.
b. 5, f. 79	Reviews	1936-37
<i>The Unwilling God</i>		
b. 6, f. 80-83	Manuscript	n.d.
b. 6, f. 84	Reviews	1929
<i>What's a Heaven For</i>		
b. 6, f. 85	Fan mail	1938-39
b. 6, f. 86	Reviews	1938
Miscellaneous Fan Mail		
b. 6, f. 87	Fan Mail	1924-51, n.d.

SHORTER WORKS

"The Blind Date"

SHORTER WORKS > "The Blind Date" (continued)

b. 6, f. 88	Manuscript	n.d.
	"Brown University"	
b. 6, f. 89	Manuscript	n.d.
	"Dear Enemy"	
b. 6, f. 90	Fan Mail	1915
	"The Guilded Log"	
b. 6, f. 91	Manuscript	1932
	"Hood on His Hands"	
b. 6, f. 92	Manuscript	1949
	"Master of Donald Jamieson (Master of Himself)"	
b. 6, f. 93	Manuscript	n.d.
	"A Matter of Accent"	
b. 6, f. 94	Manuscript	n.d.
	"Miss Mooney"	
b. 6, f. 95	Manuscript	1948
	"Muddy Water"	
b. 6, f. 96	Manuscript	n.d.
	"Nancy Disposes"	
b. 6, f. 97	Manuscript	1930
	"Now and Forever Just"	
b. 6, f. 98	Manuscript	1946
b. 6, f. 99	Fan mail	1946
	"Old Lady Albright"	
b. 6, f. 100	Manuscript and printed version	1945
	"One Swell Airdale"	
b. 6, f. 101	Manuscript	1930
b. 6, f. 102	Fan mail	1930
	"Overworked Words and Trite Phrases"	
b. 6, f. 102a	Printed version	1935 Mar 2
	"Paint and Puffs"	

SHORTER WORKS > "Paint and Puffs" (continued)

b. 6, f. 103	Manuscript	1920
	"Retreating Barriers"	
b. 6, f. 104	Fan mail	1927
	Review	
b. 6, f. 105	Nuhn, Ferner, <i>The Wind Blew from the East</i>	1942 Sep 10
	"The Stoughton House"	
b. 6, f. 106	Manuscript	1924
	"What's a Fellow to Do about His Mother?"	
b. 6, f. 107	Manuscript	n.d.
	"The Wind's Will"	
b. 6, f. 108	Manuscript	1925
b. 6, f. 109	Fan mail	1925
	Miscellaneous Fan Mail	
b. 6, f. 110	Fan mail	n.d.

Series II: Correspondence, 1910-1954*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

Series II, *Correspondence*, is alphabetically arranged and unidentified correspondence is placed at the end of the series.

b. 7, f. 111	Allen, Frederick L.	1924
b. 7, f. 111	Andrews, Frank D.	1954 Mar 30
b. 7, f. 111	Ashbey, George R. (Reg)	1943 Mar 29
b. 7, f. 112	Benefield, Barry	1924 Sep 11
b. 7, f. 113	Briggs, L. B. R.	1924-32
b. 7, f. 114	Brush, Katharine	1939 Dec 13
b. 7, f. 114	Burgess, Eugene S.	1943-44
b. 7, f. 114	Canby, Henry S.	1933 April 19
b. 7, f. 115	Dallas, John T.	1938 Dec 13
b. 7, f. 115	De Voto, Bernard	1937 Mar 24
b. 7, f. 116	Hart, Walter Harris	1913 Dec 12
b. 7, f. 116	Hawksley, Clara W.	1942, 1943
b. 7, f. 116	Howland, Clarke	1930 Jul 21
b. 7, f. 117	Jensen, Carl J.	1955 Dec 29
b. 7, f. 118	Kapstein, I. J.	1938, 1944
b. 7, f. 119	Lamson, Carl	1939 Nov 16
b. 7, f. 119	Lando, Edward	1938 Oct 19
b. 7, f. 120	Marks, Emma	1949 Mar 6
b. 7, f. 120	Marks, J. Paul	1929 Mar 3
b. 7, f. 120	Marks, Sarah Lando	1910 May 6
b. 7, f. 121	Mencken, H. L.	1922-45
b. 7, f. 122	Morley, F. V.	1928 Nov 14
b. 7, f. 123	Neill, William	1940 Nov 11
b. 7, f. 124	Paterson, Isabel	1927 May 10
b. 7, f. 124	Paxton, Helen and William	1938
b. 7, f. 125	Perry, Bliss	1916-49
b. 7, f. 126	Reynolds, Paul R.	1926-30

b. 7, f. 127	Seawell, Lucy	1924 Feb 3
b. 7, f. 127	Sinclair, Upton	1924, 1926
b. 7, f. 127	Soulé, Elizabeth	1950 Feb 8
b. 7, f. 128	Van Doren, Carl	1938 Oct 15
b. 7, f. 129	Wheeler, John N.	1925 Jan 5
b. 7, f. 129	Williams, George V.	1943 Oct 10
b. 7, f. 130	Unidentified	1938, n.d.

Series III: Personal Papers, 1900-1957*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

Box 8 contains Series III, *Personal Papers*, which is divided into three sections, *Biographical Material*, *Photographs*, and *Textbooks*.

b. 8, f. 131	Biographical material	1913-57
	Photographs	
b. 8, f. 132	Marks, Henry and Sarah Lando	ca. 1900
b. 8, f. 133	Marks, Percy	1910-35
	Textbook	
b. 8, f. 134	Gayley, Charles Mills and Clement C. Young, <i>The Principles and Progress of English Poetry</i>	1905

Series IV: Printed Material, 1932, 1936

0.25 linear feet (1 box)

b. 11, f. 158-159 *"The Gilded Log," California Monthly*
2 Folders

1932 May

b. 11, f. 160 *"Master of Himself," College Humor*

1936 August

Restricted Fragile Papers

0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

Boxes 9 and 10, *Restricted Fragile Papers*, contain fragile originals. The material is arranged in folder order.

b. 9, f. 135-145 Box 3, folders 33-35, 38-45

b. 10, f. 146 Box 4, folder 48

b. 10, f. 147-157 Box 6, folders 91-92, 95, 97-98, 100-101, 103, 106-108

Series V: November 2019 Acquisition, 1914–1976, undated

1.21 linear feet (2 boxes)

This series consists chiefly of writings by Percy Marks, including multiple corrected drafts of an unpublished manuscript, "Round Valley Days." Also present are papers and correspondence relating to his wife Margaret's management of his estate and efforts to find a publisher for "Round Valley Days"; other personal papers relating to the Marks family, such as photographs and his grandmother's pocket knife; and a small amount of printed material, including obituaries of Marks.

Materials are arranged roughly in the order they were received.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Authors, American
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives
Best sellers

Occupations

Authors -- United States -- 20th Century

Genres / Formats

Photographs
Pocket knives

Names

Briggs, Le Baron Russell, 1855-1934
Marks, Percy, 1891-1956
Mencken, H. L. (Henry Louis), 1880-1956
Perry, Bliss, 1860-1954
Reynolds, Paul Revere, 1864-1944

Corporate Body

Brown University