

Guide to the Kenneth Roberts Papers

YCAL MSS 7



by T. Michael Womack

April 1987

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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
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 7

CREATOR: Roberts, Kenneth Lewis, 1885-1957

TITLE: Kenneth Roberts papers

DATES: 1906-1957 (inclusive)

BULK DATES: 1937-1940

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5 linear feet (9 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Kenneth Roberts Papers contain research notes, handwritten and typescript manuscripts, galley proofs, page proofs, maps, book covers, dust jackets, publicity, book reviews, study outlines, correspondence, biographical sketches, obituaries, photographs, and bibliographical material documenting aspects of the life and career of the author of Northwest Passage.

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

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.roberts>.

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 Kenneth Roberts Papers were purchased from Frank Stone in August 1964 on the Walter McClintock Memorial Fund, the William Robertson Coe American Studies Fund, and the Library Associates Fund.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Kenneth Roberts 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

Kenneth Roberts Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

KENNETH ROBERTS (1885-1957)

Kenneth Lewis Roberts was born in Kennebunk, Maine, on December 8, 1885. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell University in 1908, and over the next two decades served as a reporter, special writer, humor columnist, editor, correspondent, and foreign correspondent for various nationally known newspapers and magazines. During the 1920s he wrote several works of non-fiction, and in 1928 left journalism to become a full-time author.

Roberts felt strongly about historical accuracy and conducted extensive research to provide background for his novels. The backdrop for most of his fiction was northeastern America during the periods of the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812. His major works include *Arundel*, *The Lively Lady*, *Rabble in Arms*, *Northwest Passage*, *Oliver Wiswell*, and *Lydia Bailey*. Shortly before his death in 1957, Roberts received a special Pulitzer citation for his historical novels.

During World War I he served as a captain in the U.S. Army with the intelligence section of the Siberian Expeditionary Force. He was married to Anna Sieberling Mosser in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 14, 1911. Kenneth Roberts died childless in Kennebunkport, Maine, on July 21, 1957.

For further biographical information, see the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 48, pp. 82-83, as well as folders 87-96 of this collection.

Scope and Contents

The Kenneth Roberts Papers contain research notes, handwritten and typescript manuscripts, galley proofs, page proofs, maps, book covers, dust jackets, publicity, book reviews, study outlines, correspondence, biographical sketches, obituaries, photographs, and bibliographical material documenting aspects of the life and career of the author of *Northwest Passage*. The material spans the years 1906 to 1957, with the bulk falling between 1937 and 1940.

The papers, housed in nine boxes, are divided into three series. The bulk of the material consists of typewritten manuscripts, galley proofs, and page proofs of Kenneth Roberts's works. In addition, there is correspondence with Frank Stone (Roberts's bibliographer), Clara Claassen (his editor), and various book dealers, as well as biographical information on Roberts and bibliographical material about his works, compiled by Frank Stone. Oversize material is placed at the end of the collection.

[Series I, Writings](#), is divided into three sections, Books, Shorter Works, and Edited Works. Roberts was an exceedingly well organized and meticulous writer. His first four books were conceived and planned as a tetralogy known as "Chronicles of Arundel." These were *Arundel*, *Rabble in Arms*, *The Lively Lady*, and *Captain Caution*. They cover the periods of Benedict Arnold's march to and attack on Quebec, the

Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812. *March to Quebec* was compiled and annotated from journals of the members of Arnold's expedition while Roberts was conducting research for and writing the "Chronicles of Arundel." Roberts brought these various journals together, amplifying and clarifying them in his notes. In *Northwest Passage*, Roberts deals with the French and Indian War, taking as his central theme the career of Major Rogers. In *Oliver Wiswell*, Roberts again turns to the American Revolution with the loyalist Wiswell as hero. *Good Maine Food*, an eclectic cookbook of Maine origin, was compiled by Roberts's niece and personal secretary, Marjorie Mosser. It contains an introduction by Roberts in which he waxes eloquent about the joys of Maine cooking, recalling favorite dishes of his boyhood, prepared from recipes handed down over generations. *Trending into Maine* has the character of a humorous travelogue, describing the beauty and "superiority" of Maine. *For Authors Only* and *It Must Be Your Tonsils* also show the humorous side of an otherwise serious author. *I Wanted to Write* is autobiographical in nature, revealing Roberts's feelings towards his profession.

Books comprises nearly half of the entire collection. There are manuscripts for *Northwest Passage* and *Trending into Maine*; galley proofs for *Good Maine Food*, *March to Quebec*, *Northwest Passage*, *Oliver Wiswell*, and *Trending into Maine*; and page proofs for *March to Quebec* and *Oliver Wiswell*. Corrections and comments in Roberts's hand can be found on many of the manuscripts, galley proofs, and page proofs. For almost all of the fourteen books represented in this collection, there is publicity in the form of notices, promotional material, and advertisements plus lengthy book reviews and brief publication blurbs. In addition, several titles also include maps and dust jackets. The Beinecke Library owns first edition copies of most of Robert's works.

The second section, *Shorter Works*, consists of one short story and two essays. Roberts wrote numerous shorter works, but only these are represented in the collection. "Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper," a supposedly unfinished and unpublished short story, appears from the typescript to have been written sometime during the 1930s or '40s. This short story bears striking resemblance to another story, presumably written by Roberts, entitled "Miss Ella Cinder...a Fairy-story for Students, Pikers, & Wee Folk...," which appeared in the April 1908 issue of *The Widow*, the student humor magazine at Cornell University. Roberts was editor-in-chief of the magazine at the time. "Far above Cayuga's Waters" was Roberts's contribution to *Our Cornell*, a collection of essays about his alma mater written by several well-known literary alumni. "Travels in Billboardia" is a representative example of Roberts describing the beauty and wonder of his native Maine.

The third section, *Edited Works*, consists of an incomplete run of *The Widow* for 1907-08.

[Series II, Correspondence](#), primarily reflects the exchange of letters between Frank Stone and Kenneth Roberts during the years Stone was compiling his bibliography of Roberts's works, from 1936 to 1942. Although the Correspondence series is relatively small, it nevertheless provides considerable information on how this collection came into existence.

Frank Stone, who worked for Chemical Bank and Trust Company in New York City, devoted his spare time to book collecting and the compilation of bibliographies. He had just finished a bibliography of the works of T. S. Stribling when he started working on the Roberts bibliography. (See Box 7, folder 78) In his first letter to Roberts on June 9, 1937, Stone reveals his plan to list Roberts's works and asks for help in this endeavor. The correspondence over the next five years follows the evolution of a friendly relationship between author and bibliographer. Roberts proved most helpful to Stone's project and provided him with pages of detailed information regarding changes from edition to edition. The correspondence includes personal notes, Christmas cards, and receipts for packages of smoked eel, of which Roberts was extremely fond.

The series also contains letters from Clara Claasen, Roberts's editor at Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc. Claasen was a major contributor in the Stone-Roberts collaboration and in many ways acted as liaison between the two: she provided Stone with many of the galley proofs, page proofs, and pieces of ephemera contained in the collection. In addition, the series contains scattered correspondence to and from book dealers and bibliophiles seeking information on various Roberts editions.

[Series III, Additional Papers](#), is divided into two sections. The first section, *Biographical Material*, contains several biographical sketches of Roberts. These are in the form of mimeographed sheets, articles from newspaper book review sections and literary publications, and two separate booklets, each containing

several sketches, published by Doubleday, Doran and Company. This section also contains a copy of the November 25, 1940, issue of Timemagazine, which has Roberts's picture on the cover and contains a lengthy article about him. There is as well a file of obituaries and a folder of photographs. Most of these were taken by Clara Claasen while visiting the Roberts's new house in Kennebunkport in April 1939. There are also two separate shots, which appeared in trade journals, showing Kenneth Roberts autographing copies of Northwest Passage at Brentano's in New York City in 1937 with Stone and Claasen standing behind him in the background.

The second section, Bibliographical Material, contains the data Frank Stone compiled on the works of Kenneth Roberts. Stone gathered this data on three-page forms he devised for the project (See folder 117). There are files for fourteen of Roberts's works as well as four for works to which he contributed. A bibliographical checklist may be found in folder 97. The folder also includes a brief handwritten note by Stone discussing his bibliographic "philosophy."

Box 9 contains the Oversize material. Included are maps and publicity for three of Roberts's works, the original 1939 manuscript of "Far above Cayuga's Waters," and a copy of "900 Men Who Shook an Empire." This last essay was clipped from the August 17, 1956, issue of Collier's magazine. Dissatisfied with this version, Roberts wrote a longer version entitled Cowpens: The Great Morale-Builder, published as a small book after his death in 1957. Additional oversize material includes a 1906 issue of Cornell Deadly Sin, a parody newspaper issue, of which Roberts was editor-in-chief, three issues of The Saturday Evening Post with articles by Roberts, galley and page proofs of two biographical booklets on Kenneth Roberts published by Doubleday, Doran and Company, and three 1940 newspaper advertisements, bearing the endorsement of Kenneth Roberts, John Erskine, Ida Tarbell, Booth Tarkington, and other prominent American writers. These advertisements expressed opposition to the election of Franklin Roosevelt to the presidency for a third term.

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, 1907-56

2.25 linear feet (6 boxes)

Boxes 1-6 contain Series I, Writings, which is divided into three sections, Books, Shorter Works, and Edited Works. The first two sections are arranged alphabetically by title in the following sequence: research notes, manuscript fragments, manuscripts, galley proofs, page proofs, maps, book covers, dust jackets, publicity, book reviews, and study outlines. The third section is arranged chronologically by date of publication.

BOOKS

Arundel

b. 1, f. 1	Research notes	n.d.
b. 1, f. 2	Maps See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 118	n.d.
b. 1, f. 3	Dust jacket	n.d.
b. 1, f. 4	Book reviews	1937
b. 1, f. 5	Study outlines	1937
Boon Island		
b. 1, f. 6	Book reviews	1956
Captain Caution		
b. 1, f. 7	Dust jacket	n.d.
b. 1, f. 8	Book reviews	n.d.
For Authors Only		
b. 1, f. 9	Dust jacket	n.d.
b. 1, f. 10	Book reviews	n.d.
Good Maine Foodby Marjorie Mosser: introduction by Kenneth Roberts		
b. 1, f. 11	Galley proofs	n.d.
b. 1, f. 12	Book reviews	1939-41, n.d.
I Wanted to Write		
b. 1, f. 13	Book reviews	1949
It Must Be Your Tonsils		
b. 1, f. 14	Publicity	n.d.
b. 1, f. 15	Book reviews	n.d.

BOOKS (continued)

	Lydia Bailey	
b. 1, f. 16	Publicity	1947
b. 1, f. 17	Book reviews	1947
	March to Quebec	
b. 1, f. 18	Casualty list of the Americans who attacked Quebec	n.d.
b. 1, f. 19	Bibliographical & research notes	n.d.
b. 1, f. 20	Bibliographical references: galley proofs	n.d.
b. 1, f. 21	Research notes	n.d.
b. 1, f. 22	Map material	n.d.
b. 1, f. 23	Presentation: manuscript	n.d.
b. 1, f. 24	Presentation: galley proofs, corrected	1938
b. 1, f. 25	Half titles: page proofs, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 26	Page proofs for pp. 44a & 44b	n.d.
b. 1, f. 27	Page proofs, various	n.d.
b. 2, f. 28	Vol. I: page proofs	n.d.
b. 2, f. 29	Vol. II: page proofs	n.d.
b. 2, f. 30	Index: galley proofs	n.d.
b. 2, f. 31	Index: page proofs	n.d.
b. 2, f. 32	Book covers	n.d.
b. 2, f. 33	Dust jackets	n.d.
b. 2, f. 34	Publicity	1938
b. 2, f. 35	Book reviews	1938
	Moreau de Méry's American Journey [1793-1798] translated and edited by Anna Roberts and Kenneth Roberts	
b. 2, f. 36	Book reviews	1947
	Northwest Passage	
b. 2, f. 37-39	Manuscript fragments	n.d.
b. 3, f. 40-43	Manuscript fragments	n.d.
b. 3, f. 44	Vol. I, Book I: galley proofs	n.d.
b. 3, f. 45	Vol. I, Book II: galley proofs	n.d.
b. 3, f. 46-47	Vol. II: galley proofs	n.d.

BOOKS > Northwest Passage (continued)

b. 4, f. 48	Publicity	1937
b. 4, f. 49	Book reviews	1937
Oliver Wiswell		
b. 4, f. 50	Books IV (partial), V, VI: galley proofs	n.d.
b. 4, f. 51	Books I-II: page proofs	n.d.
b. 4, f. 52	Books III-VI: page proofs	n.d.
b. 4, f. 53	Publicity See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 119	1940
b. 4, f. 54	Book reviews	1940
Rabble in Arms		
b. 5, f. 55	Publicity See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 120	n.d.
b. 5, f. 56	Book review	1935, n.d.
Trending into Maine		
b. 5, f. 57	Manuscript fragments	n.d.
b. 5, f. 58	Manuscript fragments [ch. 14]	n.d.
b. 5, f. 59	Manuscript, chs. 1, 2, 4	n.d.
b. 5, f. 60	Manuscript, chs. 5, 6	n.d.
b. 5, f. 61	Manuscript, chs. 7, 8, 9a, 9b	n.d.
b. 5, f. 62	Manuscript, chs. 12, 13	n.d.
b. 5, f. 63	Manuscript, chs. 14, 15	n.d.
b. 5, f. 64	Galley proofs	n.d.
b. 5, f. 65	Publicity	1938
b. 5, f. 66	Book reviews	1938
b. 5, f. 67	Miscellaneous research notes	n.d.
SHORTER WORKS		
"Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper"		
b. 5, f. 68	Manuscript	n.d.
"Far above Cayuga's Waters"		
b. 5, f. 69	Manuscript See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 121	n.d.

SHORTER WORKS (continued)

"Travels in Billboardia"

b. 5, f. 70	Manuscript	n.d.
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EDITED WORKS

The Saturday Evening Post

[See: Oversize, Box 9, folders 123-126](#)

The Widow

b. 6, f. 71	Vol. XV, nos. 2, 5	1907 Oct, Dec
b. 6, f. 72	Vol. XVI, nos. 6, 7	1908 Jan, Feb
b. 6, f. 73	Vol. XVI, nos. 8, 9	1908 Mar
b. 6, f. 74	Vol. XVI, nos. 9 [sic], 10	1908 Apr, May
b. 6, f. 75	Vol. XVI, nos. 11, 12	1908 May, Jun

Series II: Correspondence, 1936-49

0.5 linear feet (1 box)

Series II, Correspondence, is chrono- logically arranged.

b. 7, f. 76-78	Correspondence	1937
b. 7, f. 79-81	Correspondence	1938
b. 7, f. 82	Correspondence	1939
b. 7, f. 83	Correspondence	1940-42
b. 7, f. 84	Correspondence	1943-49
b. 7, f. 85	Correspondence	n.d.
b. 7, f. 86	Correspondence, unfinished drafts of Kenneth Roberts	1936, n.d.

Series III: Additional Papers, 1937-57*0.5 linear feet (1 box)*

Series III, Additional Papers, is divided into two sections, Biographical Material and Bibliographical Material. The first section is basically arranged in chronological order. The second section is arranged alphabetically by title.

BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL

b. 8, f. 87	Biographical Sketches	1938-40
b. 8, f. 88	Leonard, Chilson H., Kenneth Roberts: A Biographical Sketch, An Informal Study, His Books and Critical Opinions: booklet See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 127	1936
	Kenneth Roberts: An American Novelist	
b. 8, f. 89-90	Manuscript See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 128	1938
b. 8, f. 91	Page proofs See also: Oversize, Box 9, folder 129	1938
b. 8, f. 92	Booklet	1938
b. 8, f. 93	Book reviews	1938
b. 8, f. 94	Timemagazine - issue with Kenneth Roberts on cover	1940 Nov 25
b. 8, f. 95	Obituaries	1957
b. 8, f. 96	Photographs	1937-40

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL

b. 8, f. 97	Stone, Frank, "Bibliographical Checklist": holograph notes and typescript, carbon draft	1937-38
b. 8, f. 98	Arundel	1937-38
b. 8, f. 99	Black Magic	n.d.
b. 8, f. 100	The Brotherhood of Man	1937
b. 8, f. 101	Captain Caution	1937
b. 8, f. 102	Europe's Morning After	1937
b. 8, f. 103	Florida Loafing	1937
b. 8, f. 104	Good Maine Food by Marjorie Mosser: introduction by Kenneth Roberts	1939
b. 8, f. 105	The Happy End by Ben Ames Wilson: introduction by Kenneth Roberts	n.d.
b. 8, f. 106	The Lively Lady	1937-38
b. 8, f. 107	Long Live the Kaiser	1940-41

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL (continued)

b. 8, f. 108	Modern Book Collecting for the Impe- cunius Amateurby Herbert Faulkner West: contains copy of letter by Kenneth Roberts	1938
b. 8, f. 109	Northwest Passage	1937-38
b. 8, f. 110	Oliver Wiswell	1941
b. 8, f. 111	Our Cornellin which appears "Far above Cayuga's Waters" by Kenneth Roberts	1939-40
b. 8, f. 112	Rabble in Arms	1937
b. 8, f. 113	So Red the Nose	1942
b. 8, f. 114	Songs of Cornellof which "Fight for Cornell" and "Carnelian & White" were written by Kenneth Roberts	1941
b. 8, f. 115	Trending into Maine	1938
b. 8, f. 116	Why Europe Leaves Home	1937
b. 8, f. 117	Bibliography Forms	n.d.

Oversize, 1906-56*1.75 linear feet (1 box)*

The Oversize material contains papers from Series I and III and is arranged in the same order as material in those series.

b. 9, f. 118	Arundel: Maps	n.d.
b. 9, f. 119	Oliver Wiswell: publicity	n.d.
b. 9, f. 120	Rabble in Arms: publicity	n.d.
b. 9, f. 121	"Far above Cayuga's Waters": holograph manuscript	1939
b. 9, f. 122	"900 Men Who Shook an Empire"	1956 Aug 17
b. 9, f. 123	Cornell Deadly Sin: vol. XXII, no. 1	1906
The Saturday Evening Post		
b. 9, f. 124	Vol. 194, no. 31	1922 Jan 28
b. 9, f. 125	Vol. 194, no. 37	1922 Mar 11
b. 9, f. 126	Vol. 206, no. 46	1934 May 12
b. 9, f. 127	Leonard, Chilson H., Kenneth Roberts: A Biographical Sketch, An Informal Study, His Books and Critical Opinions: page proofs	[1936]
Kenneth Roberts: An American Novelist		
b. 9, f. 128	Galley proofs	1938
b. 9, f. 129	Page proofs (illustrations only)	1938
b. 9, f. 130	Petitions in opposition to President Roosevelt	1940

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
Best sellers
Bibliographers -- United States
Editors -- United States
Publishers and publishing

Geographic Names

Maine -- History -- Fiction
New England -- History -- Fiction
United States -- History -- Fiction

Names

Claasen, Clara
Roberts, Kenneth Lewis, 1885-1957
Stone, Frank, 1800-1859

Corporate Body

Cornell University -- Class of 1908