

Sherwood Anderson:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Anderson, Sherwood, 1876-1941
Title:	Sherwood Anderson Collection
Dates:	1922-1945
Extent:	1 box (.42 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Sherwood Anderson Collection contains about 100 letters either from or to Anderson, ranging in date from 1922 to 1945.
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases, 1968-1973 (R4498, R5102, R6030)
Processed by:	Michael Ramsey, 2010
Repository:	The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center

Biographical Sketch

Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, on September 13, 1876, as the third of seven children. His parents, Irwin M. and Emma Anderson, moved from town to town frequently after the failure of Anderson's father's business. Anderson attended school only intermittently in order to help his family's finances by working a variety of odd jobs including stable boy, house painter, and newsboy. He left school at the age of 14. His father (a former Union soldier) worked as a harness maker and house painter after the family finally settled down in Clyde, Ohio. Anderson moved to Chicago, Illinois, at the age of 17, where he worked in a factory by day and was a business student by night. He joined the National Guard in 1895 at the age of 19 and fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American war. After his service ended, Anderson returned to Ohio and finished a final year of schooling at Wittenberg College in Springfield.

Anderson moved around Ohio frequently until 1904 when he married Cornelia Lane, a woman of good education and background, and fathered three children. He began to write fiction while working in a manufacturing plant in Elyria. Anderson left Lane and his children and moved back to Chicago after suffering an emotional collapse in 1912, and stayed there working as a copy writer for the Taylor-Critchfield Advertising Company. While in Chicago he also joined the "Chicago Group," which included other writers such as Theodore Dreiser and Carl Sandburg. In 1916, Anderson divorced Lane; he later claimed that she had been unsympathetic to his attempts at writing. He then married sculptor and musician Tennessee Mitchell.

Shortly after his divorce, Anderson wrote his first two novels, *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916) and *Marching Men* (1917). In 1919, he began writing what would eventually become his most famous work, *Winesburg, Ohio*, a collection of related short stories. His short stories were soon successful, and he published additional collections such as *The Triumphs of the Egg* (1921), *Horses and Men* (1923), and *Death in the Woods* (1933). Between 1920 and 1922, he wrote the novel *Poor White* (1920) and various other works and ended his marriage to Mitchell.

In 1923, Anderson published the novel *Many Marriages*, which was a moderate success and was praised by other authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald. Anderson married Elizabeth Prall and moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1924. It was here that he wrote his best-seller, *Dark Laughter* (1925). Anderson's third marriage was beginning to break down but was sustained with the help of Eleanor Copenhaver, a social worker who was also his future wife.

Anderson moved to Marion, Virginia, where he built a house and worked on his farm and also edited two newspapers he had purchased in 1927. He also wrote for the newspapers (*Smyth County News* and the *Marion Democrat*) under the pen name of Buck Fever and even lectured to earn extra income. Anderson finally separated from Prall in 1929 (officially divorced in 1932) and married Copenhaver in 1933.

Anderson died March 8, 1941, at the age of 64 of peritonitis while on a ship in the Panama area. It was discovered in an autopsy that he had swallowed a toothpick from a martini which perforated his colon. He is buried in Round Hill Cemetery in Marion, Virginia.

Sources:

"Sherwood Anderson." Encyclopedia.com, http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Sherwood_Anderson.aspx (accessed 22 September 2010).

"Sherwood Anderson." Pegasos, <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/sanders.htm> (accessed 22 September 2010).

"Sherwood Anderson." Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sherwoodanderson> (accessed 22 September 2010).

Scope and Contents

The Sherwood Anderson Collection contains about 100 letters either from or to Anderson, ranging in date from 1922 to 1945. The material is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. This collection was previously accessible only through a card catalog, but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The correspondence mainly consists of letters from Anderson to the woodcut artist J. J. Lankes. Also in the collection are correspondence to and from playwright H. S. Kraft, postcards from spouse Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson, and several other letters from Anderson to other correspondents. All correspondent names are noted in the Index of Correspondents in this finding aid.

Related Material

Additional Sherwood Anderson manuscripts are included in several other collections at the Ransom Center: James Donald Adams, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Artine Artinian, *Contempo*, Alice Corbin Henderson, Joseph Hergesheimer, Glenn Arthur Hughes, Spud Johnson, Edgar Lee Masters, Philip Moeller, Evelyn Scott, Thomas Seltzer, Stanley Young, and Stark Young. Photographs of Anderson are included in the Carlton Lake Collection and the Literary File Collection in the Photography Collection. The Vertical File Collection includes clippings and other printed ephemera concerning Anderson.

A major collection of Anderson papers is available at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

Correspondence

Anderson, Eleanor, 1944-1945

Container 1.1

Anderson, Sherwood

Outgoing

A-Z

Container 1.2

Kraft, H. S. (Hyman Solomon), 1932

Container 1.3

Lankes, Julius J., 1927-1941

Container 1.4-5

Incoming

Kraft, H. S. (Hyman Solomon), 1932-1933

Container 1.6

Sergel, Roger L., not dated

Container 1.7

Index of Correspondents

- Anderson, Eleanor Copenhaver, d. 1945 --1.1 (2 to John Valentine)
- Anderson, Sherwood, 1876-1941 --1.2-1.5
- Cournos, John, 1881-1966 --1.2 (4 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Dickstein, Louis --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Groves, John Stuart --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Kendrick, John F. --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Kraft, H. S. (Hyman Solomon), 1899-1975 --1.3 (10 from Sherwood Anderson); 1.6 (9 to Sherwood Anderson)
- Lankes, Julius J., 1884-1960 --1.4-5 (46 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Mason, Harold T. (Centaur Book Shop)--1.2 (10 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Moulton, Thomas --1.2 (5 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Phillips, Miriam --1.2 (2 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Sergel, Roger L., b. 1894 --1.7 (1 to Sherwood Anderson)
- Smith, T. R (Liveright Publishing Corporation)--1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Stevens, George --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson declining invitation to be guest of honor at the International PEN Congress, June, no year)
- Valentine, John --1.1 (2 from Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson)
- _____, Ben --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- _____, Darwell --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- _____, Leigh --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)
- Unidentified recipient --1.2 (1 from Sherwood Anderson)