

Pearl S. (Pearl Sydenstricker) Buck:

An Inventory of Her Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Buck, Pearl S. (Pearl Sydenstricker), 1892-1973
Title:	Pearl S. (Pearl Sydenstricker) Buck Collection
Dates:	1930-1945
Extent:	2 boxes (.84 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Pearl S. Buck Collection consists of manuscripts of four works by Buck and six letters, dating from 1930 to 1945.
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 1964 (R1957)
Processed by:	Jamie Hawkins-Kirkham, 2010
Repository:	The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center

Biographical Sketch

Pearl S. Buck was born June 26, 1892, in Hillsboro, West Virginia, to Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker, two Presbyterian missionaries on leave of absence from missionary work in China. The family returned to China when their daughter was three months old and settled in Chanchiang, where Buck would remain until the age of 17. As a child, Buck gained knowledge of the Chinese language as well as traditional folk tales from her Chinese nurse. This bicultural, bilingual upbringing would later influence her writing.

In 1910, Buck returned to the United States to attend college at Randolph Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia. While attending college, she wrote for her school's newspaper and also began to independently write and publish short stories. After graduation, Buck took on a job as a teacher's assistant at her alma mater, but soon returned to China to care for her mother who had fallen ill.

While in China, Buck married John Lossing Buck, an agricultural economist who was in China to teach American farming methods. In 1920, Buck gave birth to a daughter, Carol, who suffered from a disease that affected her mental development. The couple returned to the United States to seek treatment for Carol and for both to attend graduate school at Cornell University. Prompted by the need to improve her financial situation to help care for her daughter, Buck determined to write professionally.

Buck's first novel, *East Wind: West Wind*, was published in 1930 and followed by *The Good Earth* in 1931. In 1938, Buck became the third American and the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature. Specifically mentioned by judges were the biographies of her mother(*The Exile*) and her father(*Fighting Angel*). Later works include *The Townsman*, which was published under the pseudonym John Sedges because Buck felt that her own name had become too closely associated with Chinese subjects.

Buck died on March 6, 1973.

Sources:

Gale, Thomas. "Pearl S(ydenstricker) Buck." *Contemporary Authors Online*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/> (accessed 15 September 2010).

Bitoni, Simmons Tracy. "Pearl S. Buck." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/GLD/> (accessed 15 September 2010).

Scope and Contents

The Pearl S. Buck Collection consists of manuscripts of four works by Buck and six letters, dating from 1930 to 1945. The material is arranged in two series: Series I. Works (1930-1945); and Series II. Letters (1932-1940). Part of this collection was previously accessible through a card catalog but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works series consists of four typed manuscripts (one biography, two novels, and one short story) and one fragment arranged alphabetically by title. Each typescript, excluding "Shanghai Scene," has handwritten revisions and *The Exile* (originally *American Woman*) and *The Townsman* (originally *Monument in Median*) show evidence of a previous title.

The Letters series consists of six letters written by Buck, one to Bertrand E. Buckmaster and five to Philip Moeller. The letters are arranged alphabetically by recipient.

Related Material

Additional manuscript material by Buck may be found in several other collections at the Ransom Center: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Sanora Babb, Margaret Cousins, Fannie Hurst, and Gloria Swanson. Photographs are included in the Literary File, Magnum Photos, Inc., and the New York *Journal-American* Collection in the Photography Collection. Clippings and other ephemera are in the Vertical File Collection. A comprehensive collection of Buck's books was purchased from her agent and is held by the Ransom Center's Library.

Other papers of Pearl S. Buck can be found at Pearl S. Buck International, Princeton University, Randolph Macon Woman's College, and West Virginian Wesleyan College.

Series I. Works, 1930-1945

East Wind: West Wind (1930), typescript with revisions, undated

Container
1.1-2

The Exile (1936), composite typed and carbon copy typescript with revisions, undated

Container
1.3-4

"Shanghai Scene" (1934), typescript, undated

Container 1.5

The Townsman (1945)

Handwritten manuscript with revisions, undated

Container 2.1-7

Typescript/fragment with revisions, undated

Container 2.8

Buck, Pearl S. (Pearl Sydenstricker), 1892-1973

Series II. Letters, 1932-1940

To Buckmaster, Bertrand E., 1940

Container 2.9

To Moeller, Philip, 1932-1934, undated