Katherine Anne Porter Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2011

Contact information:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Additional search options available at:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms011072

LC Online Catalog record:
http://lccn.loc.gov/mm2010085553

Prepared by Michael McElderry
Collection Summary
Title: Katherine Anne Porter Papers
Span Dates: 1935-1974
ID No.: MSS85553
Creator: Porter, Katherine Anne, 1890-1980
Extent: 200 items ; 1 container ; .4 linear feet
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: Journalist, author, and political activist. Correspondence chiefly from Porter to Marcelle Sibon, Porter's French translator, along with other papers relating to Porter's personal and private affairs, her work as an author, and literary topics in general.

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.

People
Ashford, Gerald, 1907- --Correspondence.
Gossett, Louise Y.--Correspondence.
Porter, Katherine Anne, 1890-1980--Political and social views.
Porter, Katherine Anne, 1890-1980.
Sibon, Marcelle--Correspondence.

Subjects
History, Modern--20th century.
Literature.
Poetry.

Places
Texas--Social life and customs.
United States--History--20th century.

Occupations
Authors.
Journalists.
Political activists.

Administrative Information
Provenance
The papers of Katherine Anne Porter, journalist, author, and political activist, were purchased by the Library of Congress in 2010. A small addition of photocopies of correspondence was also transferred to the collection from the Manuscript Division's administrative case files in 2010.

Copyright Status
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Katherine Anne Porter is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Katherine Anne Porter are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.
Biographical Note

Date | Event
--- | ---
1890, May 15 | Born Callie Russell Porter, Indian Creek, Tex.
1906 | Married John Koontz (divorced 1915)
1915 | Changed name to Katherine Anne Porter
1915-1917 | Diagnosed with tuberculosis and spent two years in sanatoria during which she decided to become a writer
1917 | Drama critic and gossip reporter, *Fort Worth Critic*
1918 | Reporter, *Rocky Mountain News*
1920-1930 | Traveled between New York City and Mexico, became involved in Mexican revolutionary politics, and began to publish short stories and essays
1922 | Published first short story, "Maria Concepcion," *Century Magazine*
1926 | Married Ernest Stock (divorced 1927)
1930s | Married Eugene Pressley (divorced 1938)
1937 | Published *Noon Wine*. Detroit: Schuman's
1938 | Married Albert Russell Erskine, Jr. (divorced 1942)
1939 | Published *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.
1949-1959 | Fellow of Regional American Literature in the Library of Congress
1949-1959 | Writer-in-residence and guest lecturer on literature at various universities
1962 | Published *Ship of Fools*. Boston: Little, Brown
1965 | Published *Collected Stories*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World
1966 | Awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for fiction for *Collected Stories*
1967 | Awarded the Gold Medal Award for fiction
Scope and Content Note

The papers of Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980) span the years 1935-1974 and chiefly consist of autograph and typescript letters written and signed by Porter to Marcelle Sibon, her French translator. The letters begin in 1935 which finds Porter living in Paris where she resided until October of the following year as part of the American expatriate literary community. From then until 1974, Porter wrote regularly to Sibon, who became not only Porter’s associate but also her friend and confidante. A letter to Sibon, September 21, 1946, includes as an attachment a copy of the quarterly review *Accent* containing Porter’s story “The Stranger,” described as a passage from her novel in progress “No Safe Harbor,” later retitled *Ship of Fools*. Throughout the correspondence, Porter keeps Sibon posted on the progress of her stories and writings from original idea to publication often disclosing her artistic frustrations with all aspects of the creative process, including the long period of gestation until her only novel, *Ship of Fools*, was published in 1962.

Porter was personally acquainted with some of the major writers and poets of her time, lending an authentic quality to her personal opinions and critical observations of their work. In addition, the letters cover a wide range of other topics including Porter’s political beliefs, current events and the state of world affairs, domestic routines and private grievances, and various travel plans and agenda. Despite her public appearances as a major American literary figure and accomplished short story writer, Porter bristled at the daily distractions which deprived her of the solitude she needed to write and voiced a constant desire for “. . . solitude and silence, my old faithful allies who never failed me yet!” With the publication of *Ship of Fools* and *Collected Stories*, 1965, Porter suffered a new level of discomfort at the service of fame and complains that it ”. . . brings out the most contemptible traits in human nature—those people whose sole interest in anybody is their fame or notoriety.” Known for her penetrating insight into human nature—those people whose source material for her 1937 novella *Noon Wine*.

In addition to Porter’s letters to Sibon, the collection also contains several items of miscellaneous correspondence addressed to both Porter and Sibon from various publishers and four photocopied letters from Porter to Gerald Ashford and Mrs. Thomas F. Gossett which provide biographical details of her early life in Texas, memories used as source material for her 1937 novella *Noon Wine*.

A small collection of miscellany includes printed matter, photographs, and a copy of a section from *Ship of Fools* published in *Mademoiselle*, 1958, with a promise that the book would be forthcoming later that year.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material and therein chronologically.
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Correspondence</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOX 1</td>
<td>Letters to Marcelle Sibon, 1935-1974 (5 folders)</td>
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</tbody>
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