

# Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence



**American Folklife Center, Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.  
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Prepared by Sarah Bradley Leighton

Encoded by Amarantha Dyuaaxchs, August 2006  
Revised January 2022

## Collection Summary

**Title:** Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence

**Inclusive Dates:** February 1952 -- September 1953

**Call No.:** AFC 2005/006

**Creator:** Lindsay, Ken, 1923-2001

**Extent:** 29 items (34 leaves)

**Extent:** 2 boxes

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**LC Catalog record:** <https://lccn.loc.gov/2004659958>

**Summary:** This collection contains unpublished correspondence between Woody Guthrie, two of his wives, and British recording distributor, Ken Lindsay.

## Provenance

The American Folklife Center acquired the collection on June 7, 2005, from Wendy Lindsay, daughter of Ken Lindsay, and her siblings.

## Processing History

The Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence was processed by Sarah Bradley Leighton in June 2005. This finding aid was encoded by Amarantha Dyuaaxchs in August 2006 and updated by Nora Yeh in March 2010.

## Related Material

Alan Lomax Collection of Woody Guthrie Recordings, AFS 3407-3423

Alan Lomax CBS Radio Series Collection, AFC 1939/002

Almanac Singers Audition for Wm. Morris & Co., AFS 6100-6105 (Recorded in January 1942)

Songs by Woody Guthrie, AFS 4491 (Recorded on January 4, 1941)

[Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection](#), AFC 1940/004

Woody Guthrie Concert and Conversation, AFC 1991/003 (Recorded on April 14, 1951)

## Copyright Status

Duplication of collection materials may be governed by copyright and other restrictions.

## Access and Restrictions

The Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence is open to research. To request materials, please contact the Folklife Reading Room at <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.contact>

Certain restrictions to use or copying of materials may apply.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item, date, container number], Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence (AFC 2005/006), American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

**Ken Lindsay (1923-2001)** was a founding partner in the Challenge Jazz Club, the first sizable jazz club in London after World War II. As a jazz and folk enthusiast, Lindsay was connected with the jazz revival and folk movement of the 1950s in the United Kingdom, and made a career of promoting such musicians and organizing performances. Lindsay also worked for the International Bookshop where he oversaw the department that would import records from America and Europe and sell them by mail. This was the period during which he established a correspondence relationship with Woody Guthrie. Lindsay went on to work for other record shops and continued to manage bands, lecture on music at universities, and write articles for such music publications as *Melody Maker* and *Music Mirror*.

**Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Guthrie (1912-1967)** was a singer, songwriter, and social activist who influenced twentieth-century American music and culture. Having lived through the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl Migration, World War II, and the political upheavals that resulted in the labor union movement, Guthrie called upon these experiences as he expressed the plight of common people through his songs, prose, and poetry. He was a seminal figure in the folk music revival of the 1950s, and his songs and philosophy had a profound impact on society and on contemporary musicians such as Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen.

## Scope and Content

The correspondence between Ken Lindsay and Woody Guthrie began in 1952, while Lindsay was responsible for the mail order record department at the International Bookshop on Charing Cross Road in London, England. Lindsay first wrote to Guthrie encouraging him to write and record material for the European market. Although the recording projects and the European tours discussed in their letters never materialized, this correspondence (1952-1953) captures the development of a special relationship between two men who never met, but shared a passion for music. The correspondence also provides a glimpse at the creative flair and the personal challenges that shaped this period of Guthrie's life.

In his letters to Lindsay, Guthrie discusses music, politics, and family relationships and reveals his struggle with alcoholism and the disease that claimed his life, Huntington's chorea. The letters also document Guthrie's whereabouts during these years as he writes from Brooklyn, New York; Jacksonville, Florida; and Topanga, California. Additionally, there is correspondence from Guthrie's second and third wives, Marjorie Mazia Guthrie and Anneke Van Kirk, who communicate details about Guthrie's personal health and professional endeavors to Lindsay. Letters MS01, MS03, MS04, and MS24 are even embellished with sketches made by Guthrie and Anneke Van Kirk.

Interestingly, Guthrie concluded many of his letters with the number "30." This symbol is often found at the closing of a press release and is believed to have descended from the practice of typing "XXX" at the conclusion of telegraph transmissions during the Civil War.

There are fifteen letters written by Ken Lindsay, seven written by Woody Guthrie, two written by Marjorie Guthrie (Guthrie's second wife), and two written by Anneke Van Kirk (Guthrie's third wife). In addition to the letters, there are four pages of song lyrics written by Woody Guthrie that he sent to Ken Lindsay with his letters. Some of the letters and song lyrics are embellished with drawings. The letters written by Ken Lindsay are carbon copies that Lindsay kept of his original letters.

## Arrangement

The letters are arranged in chronological order to represent the development of communication between Ken Lindsay and Woody Guthrie. Each letter was assigned a unique manuscript (MS) number and the recto and verso of the letter's leaves

were assigned decimal derivations of that unique manuscript number. For example, in the number "MS01.02," "MS01" represents the first item of correspondence in the collection and ".02" signifies the verso of the first leaf of the item. Decimal derivations were not assigned if the side of an item is blank.

## Collection Concordance by Format

Quantity	Physical Extent (original)	Location	Item Numbers
<b>Manuscript Materials</b> 29 items	34 leaves of paper	Boxes 1-2	MS01-MS29

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

### People

Guthrie, Marjorie--Correspondence.

Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967--Correspondence.

Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967.

Lindsay, Ken

Van Kirk, Anneke--Correspondence.

### Titles

*Hard travelin'*

*Love says no*

*Sunny sun sun*

*Un Americans*

*Woody Guthrie correspondence, 1952-1953*

## Description of Series

Container

Series

Manuscripts

# Container List

Container	Contents
	<b>Manuscripts</b>
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 1</b>	Finding Aid. 7 leaves.
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 2</b>	MS01. February 15, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 2 leaves. MS01.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS01.02 [leaf 1, verso] MS01.03 [leaf 2, recto] MS01.04 [leaf 2, verso]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 3</b>	MS02. February 26, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 2 leaves. MS02.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS02.02 [leaf 2, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 4</b>	MS03. February 21, 1952. Song lyrics, "Un Americans," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. [EMPTY FOLDER: See Oversized Box 2 of 2, Folder 31]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 5</b>	MS04. February 21, 1952. Song lyrics, "Sunny Sun Sun," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. [EMPTY FOLDER: See Oversized Box 2 of 2, Folder 31]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 6</b>	MS05. February 1952. Song lyrics, "Love Says No," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. [EMPTY FOLDER: See Oversized Box 2 of 2, Folder 31]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 7</b>	MS06. March 14, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 2 leaves. MS06.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS06.02 [leaf 1, verso] MS06.03 [leaf 2, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 8</b>	MS07. March 27, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS07.01 [leaf 1, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 9</b>	MS08. May 1, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS08.01 [leaf 1, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 10</b>	MS09. May 31, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS09.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS09.02 [leaf 1, verso]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 11</b>	MS10. June 18, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS10.01 [leaf 1, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 12</b>	MS11. June 26, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS11.01 [leaf 1, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 13</b>	MS12. July 17, 1952. Letter from Marjorie Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS12.01 [leaf 1, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 14</b>	MS13. July 21, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Marjorie Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS13.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS13.02 [leaf 1, verso]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 15</b>	MS14. July 31, 1952. Letter from Marjorie Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS14.01 [leaf 1, recto]
<b>BOX 1 FOLDER 16</b>	MS15. August 8, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Marjorie Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS15.01 [leaf 1, recto]

## Manuscripts

### Container

### Contents

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BOX 1 FOLDER 17	MS16. September 23, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS16.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS16.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 18	MS17. September 30, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS17.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 19	MS18. September 30, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 2 leaves. MS18.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS18.02 [leaf 2, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 20	MS19. September 31, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS19.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS19.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 21	MS20. November 10, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS20.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS20.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 22	MS21. April 16, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS21.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS21.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 23	MS22. April 17, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Marjorie Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS22.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 24	MS23. June 18, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS23.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 25	MS24. June 22, 1953. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay dictated to Anneke Van Kirk. Accompanied by letter from Anneke Van Kirk to Ken Lindsay. 2 leaves. MS24.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS24.02 [leaf 2, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 26	MS25. July 7, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS25.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS25.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 27	MS26. September 13, [1953]. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie and Anneke Van Kirk. 1 leaf. MS26.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS26.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 28	MS27. [September 15, 1953]. Letter from Anneke Van Kirk to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS27.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS27.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 29	MS28. September 16, 1953. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS28.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 30	MS29. September 1953. Song lyrics, "Hard Travelin'," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS29.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX <b>oversize 2</b> FOLDER 31	MS03 and MS04 February 21, 1952, and MS05 February 1952.  Song lyrics, "Un Americans," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS03.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS03.02 [leaf 1, verso] Song lyrics, "Sunny Sun Sun," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS04.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS04.02 [leaf 1, verso] Song lyrics, "Love Says No," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS05.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS05.02 [leaf 1, verso]