

John Vachon Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



**Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2006**

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2005085246>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms007030>

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Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2007
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Collection Summary

Title: John Vachon Papers

Span Dates: 1913-1995

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1935-1959)

ID No.: MSS85246

Creator: Vachon, John, 1914-1975

Extent: 4,000 items

Extent: 12 containers

Extent: 4.6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2005085246>

Summary: Photographer. Correspondence, family papers, writings, and miscellaneous material relating primarily to Vachon's career as a photographer with the Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information, and *Look* magazine.

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

Lange, Dorothea.

Monroe, Marilyn, 1926-1962.

Rothstein, Arthur, 1915-1985.

Stryker, Roy Emerson, 1893-1975.

Vachon, Ann O'Hara--Correspondence.

Vachon, John, 1914-1975.

Vachon, Millicent--Correspondence.

Williams, Tennessee, 1911-1983.

Organizations

Catholic University of America--Students.

Standard Oil Company of New Jersey.

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

United States. Army.

United States. Farm Security Administration.

United States. Office of War Information.

Subjects

American periodicals--New York (State)--New York.

Authors.

Depressions--1929--United States.

Entertainers.

Jazz.

Motion pictures.

Photography--Poland.

Photography--United States.

Poverty--United States.

World War, 1939-1945.

Places

Camp Blanding (Fla.)

United States--Economic conditions--20th century.

United States--Politics and government--20th century.

United States--Social conditions--20th century.
United States--Social life and customs--20th century.
Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs.

Titles

Look.

Occupations

Photographers.

Provenance

The papers of John Vachon, photographer, were transferred from the Prints and Photographs Division to the Manuscript Division in 2005.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of John Vachon is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of John Vachon 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.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, John Vachon Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1914, May 19	Born, St. Paul, Minn.
1934	B.A., St. Thomas College, St. Paul, Minn.
1936-1937	Assistant messenger, Farm Security Administration, Washington, D.C.
1937-1940	Junior file clerk and unofficial photographer, Farm Security Administration, Washington, D.C.
circa 1938	Married Millicent ("Penny") Leeper (died 1960)
1940-1942	Junior photographer, Farm Security Administration, Washington, D.C.
1942-1943	Photographer, Office of War Information, Washington, D.C.
1943-1944	Photographer, Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey
1945	Served in United States Army
1945-1947	Photographer in New Jersey and Venezuela for <i>Jersey Standard</i>
1946	Photographic assignment, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, Poland
1947-1949	Staff photographer, <i>Life</i> magazine, New York, N.Y.
1947-1971	Staff photographer, <i>Look</i> magazine, New York, N.Y.
1961	Married Françoise Fourestier
1971-1975	Freelance photographer, New York, N.Y.
1975	Visiting lecturer in photography, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minn.
1975, Apr. 20	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of John Felix Vachon (1914-1975) span the years 1913-1995, with the bulk from 1935 to 1959, and consist of family papers, general correspondence, lecture notes, writings, financial papers, notes, clippings, and printed matter. The focus of the papers is Vachon's career as a photographer. The collection is arranged in three groups: family papers, general correspondence, and subject file.

The family papers consist chiefly of Vachon's letters to his mother, Ann O'Hara Vachon, and his first wife, Millicent "Penny" Vachon. These letters provide descriptions of many of Vachon's assignments as photographer chiefly for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), 1937-1942, the Office of War Information (OWI), 1942-1943, Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, 1943-1944, and *Look* magazine, 1947-1959. They document his extensive travels across America for FSA and OWI, focusing on rural areas and small towns during the Depression and the country's mobilization during World War II. The family correspondence reflects the variety of Vachon's assignments, including politics, religion, poverty, and stories about entertainers and writers such as Marilyn Monroe and Tennessee Williams. Also in the family papers are letters chronicling his student days at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., 1935-1936; descriptions of living in Washington from 1935 to 1939; detailed accounts of his training and duties while in the United States Army at Camp Blanding, Florida, 1945; and his work for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Poland, 1946. The correspondence conveys his passion for jazz music and movies and includes his observations about American social life and mores. The family papers also contain genealogical material relating to the Vachon family.

The subject file reflects Vachon's lifelong desire to be a writer and consists chiefly of his articles, essays, short stories, and poetry. Also located in this file is a transcript of a conversation in 1952 between Roy Emerson Stryker, the director of the FSA project, and FSA photographers, including Dorothea Lange, Arthur Rothstein, and Vachon, discussing their work.

Related Materials

The Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress has custody of John Vachon's photographic collection of prints and negatives. His work is also represented in that division's Farm Security Administration Collection and *Look* Magazine Photograph Collection.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Family papers
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Originals
BOX 1	Miscellaneous relatives, 1938, undated
BOX 1	Vachon, Ann O'Hara (mother)
BOX 1	1935-1938 (13 folders)
BOX 2	1939-1944 (14 folders)
BOX 3	1945-1962 (14 folders)
BOX 3	Undated (4 folders)
BOX 4	(5 folders)
BOX 4	Vachon, Henry (father), 1935-1943
BOX 4	Vachon, Millicent ("Penny") (wife) <i>See also Containers 9-10, Transcripts</i>
BOX 4	1936-1940 (12 folders)
BOX 4	1941
BOX 4	Jan.-June (2 folders)
BOX 5	July-Aug. (3 folders)
BOX 5	1942
BOX 5	Jan.-Oct. (14 folders)
BOX 6	Nov. (2 folders)
BOX 6	1943-1945 (18 folders)
BOX 6	1946
BOX 6	Jan.-Feb. (3 folders)
BOX 7	Mar.-Aug. (6 folders)
BOX 7	1947-1950 (19 folders)
BOX 8	1951-1957 (19 folders)
BOX 8	1958
BOX 8	Jan.-Mar. (2 folders)

Container List

Container	Contents
BOX 9	Apr.-Dec. (8 folders)
BOX 9	1959 (7 folders)
BOX 9	Vachon, Robert (brother), 1935-1945, 1955, undated
BOX 9	Transcripts, Millicent ("Penny") Vachon <i>See also Containers 4-6, Vachon, Millicent ("Penny")</i>
BOX 9	1940-1941 (2 folders)
BOX 9	1942
BOX 9	Jan.-Mar. (2 folders)
BOX 10	Apr.-Nov. (4 folders)
BOX 10	1943
BOX 10	Other papers
BOX 10	Miscellaneous, 1913-1918, 1944, 1952, 1962, undated
BOX 10	Vachon, Ann O'Hara, 1939-1948, 1954-1959, undated
BOX 10	Vachon, Brian (son), 1979, 1991, undated
BOX 10	General correspondence, 1936-1937, 1944-1946, 1957, 1965
BOX 10	Subject file
BOX 10	Exhibitions of Vachon's photographs, 1993-1995
BOX 10	Farm Security Administration, transcript of conversation with Roy Emerson Stryker and photographers, [1952]
BOX 10	Financial papers, 1937-1938, undated
BOX 10	Lecture notebook, 1974
BOX 10	<i>Look</i> magazine, 1969
BOX 10	Miscellany, 1985, undated
BOX 10	Travel notebook, circa 1974
BOX 10	Travel notes, 1942
BOX 10	Writings by others
BOX 10	About Vachon, 1943, 1960-1965, 1971, 1979, 1989
BOX 10	Miscellaneous, 1954-1957
BOX 11	Writings by Vachon
BOX 11	Articles, essays, short stories, and other writings, 1933-1934, 1973, undated (7 folders)
BOX 11	Correspondence with publishers and readers, 1956-1966, 1972, undated (3 folders)
BOX 11	Notes and jottings, undated (3 folders)
BOX 12	(2 folders)
BOX 12	Poetry, undated