

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>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm2010085553>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms011072>

Prepared by Michael McElderry

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Collection Summary

Title: Katherine Anne Porter Papers

Span Dates: 1935-1974

ID No.: MSS85553

Creator: Porter, Katherine Anne, 1890-1980

Extent: 200 items

Extent: 1 container

Extent: .4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm2010085553>

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 LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

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.

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The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Katherine Anne Porter is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).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

Preferred Citation

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

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, <i>Fort Worth Critic</i>
1918	Reporter, <i>Rocky Mountain News</i>
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," <i>Century Magazine</i>
1926	Married Ernest Stock (divorced 1927)
1930	Published <i>Flowering Judas</i> . New York: Harcourt Brace and Co. Married Eugene Pressley (divorced 1938)
1930s	Moved to Europe, settling in Paris, France, as a member of the American expatriate literary community
1937	Published <i>Noon Wine</i> . Detroit: Schuman's
1938	Married Albert Russell Erskine, Jr. (divorced 1942)
1939	Published <i>Pale Horse, Pale Rider</i> . New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.
1944	Published <i>The Leaning Tower: and Other Stories</i> . New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co. 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 <i>Ship of Fools</i> . Boston: Little, Brown
1965	Published <i>Collected Stories</i> . New York: Harcourt, Brace and World
1966	Awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for fiction for <i>Collected Stories</i>
1967	Awarded the Gold Medal Award for fiction
1980, Sept. 18	Died, Silver Spring, Md.

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 in her stories and writings, she was equally adept at analyzing her own acclaim. The letters provide a rich and honest examination of the private and working life of a major literary artist.

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

Container	Contents
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	Letters to Marcelle Sibon, 1935-1974 (5 folders)
BOX 1	Miscellaneous, 1945-1950, 1961-1966, 1974
BOX 1	Miscellany, 1945-1947, 1958-1959, 1974