

Erwin Swann Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2016

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

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Prepared by Manuscript Division staff

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Collection Summary

Title: Erwin Swann Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1949-1976

Bulk Dates: 1968-1973

ID No.: MSS60574

Creator: Swann, Erwin, 1906-1973

Extent: 10,000 items

Extent: 26 containers

Extent: 10.4 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

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

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm83060574>

Summary: Art collector, film producer, and advertising executive Correspondence, play scripts, financial and legal papers, calendars, clippings, printed material, and photographs pertaining primarily to Swann's business activities as a producer of art and cultural films and as a collector of caricature and cartoon art, modern European and American art, French impressionist art, and Indic and Far Eastern art.

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

Bacon, Peggy, 1895-1987--Correspondence.

Baginski, Frank--Correspondence.

Blatas, Arbit--Correspondence.

Dancigers, Oscar--Correspondence.

Darcy, Tom Francis, 1932-2000--Correspondence.

Digby-Day, Richard--Correspondence.

Dodd, Alison. Alison Dodd writings.

Dunlop, Frank, 1927- --Correspondence.

Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973--Correspondence.

MacNelly, Jeff--Correspondence.

McCleery, Albert--Correspondence.

Nichol, Robert C.--Correspondence.

Nupen, Christopher--Correspondence.

Pinter, Harold, 1930-2008--Correspondence.

Porges, Paul Peter--Correspondence.

Richter, Mischa, 1910-2001--Correspondence.

Swann, Caroline Berg. Caroline Berg Swann papers.

Swann, Erwin, 1906-1973.

Tomblin, Barry--Correspondence.

Wood, Audrey, 1905- --Correspondence.

Organizations

Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon.

Swannsway Productions Ltd.

Subjects

Art, American.

Art, East Asian.

Art, European.

Art, French.

Art, Indic.

Art--Collectors and collecting.
Art--Private collections.
Caricatures and cartoons--Collectors and collecting.
Caricatures and cartoons--Private collections.
Impressionism (Art)--France.
Motion pictures--Distribution.
Motion pictures--Production and direction.

Occupations

Advertising executives.
Art collectors.
Motion picture producers.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Erwin Swann, advertising executive, film producer, and art collector, were given to the Library of Congress in 1974. They were transferred from the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library to the Manuscript Division in 1982.

Processing History

The papers of Erwin Swann were processed in 1988 by Connie L. Cartledge. The finding aid was revised in 2016.

Transfers

Sound recordings have been transferred to the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound of the Library where they are identified as part of these papers.

Related Material

The Prints and Photographs Division of the Library holds a Caroline and Erwin Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Erwin Swann in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress is controlled by the estate of Erwin Swann.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Erwin Swann 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, Erwin Swann Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1906, Dec. 9	Born, New York, N.Y.
1919-1921	Attended University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va., University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis., and New York University, New York, N.Y.
1940-1946	Editor and contributor, <i>The Countrybrook</i>
1948-1955	Vice president, Bio. Co., Inc.
1952-1953	Vice president, Melrose Distillers, Inc.
1954-1957	Vice president, Schenley Distillers, Inc.
1958	Executive vice president and general manager, L. H. Hartmen Co.
1959-1962	Vice president of member accounts management committee for Warrick & Legler, Inc., advertising agency
1962-1965	Vice president for advertising, Revlon, Inc.
1965-1973	Devoted activities to his art collections, film company, and other business interests
1973, Dec. 23	Died, New York, N.Y.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Erwin D. Swann (1906-1973) span the years 1949-1976, with the majority of the items concentrated in the years 1968-1973. Most of the papers pertain to Swann's business activities as a producer of art and cultural films, collector of caricature and cartoon art, and collector of modern art. Also interfiled throughout the collection are a few items of correspondence, business papers, and other material of his wife, Caroline Berg Swann. In addition, there are many items written by Allison Dodd, Swann's assistant and the curator of the Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon. The papers consist of four series: [Financial and Legal Papers](#), [Art Collection Files](#), [Writings File](#), and [Scheduling File](#).

The [Financial and Legal Papers](#) (1956-1976) constitute almost half of the collection and pertain chiefly to Swann's business activities from 1970 through 1973. This series is divided into three subseries: [Swannsway Productions Ltd. Papers](#), [General Papers](#), and [Estate Papers](#).

The [Swannsway Productions Ltd. Papers](#) (1967-1976) document the activities of a corporation that Swann established to create, produce, and distribute art and cultural films. Designed to be both educational and entertaining, these films were produced to fill a gap between documentaries and commercial network programming. These papers relate primarily to two films: "Carmen," a backstage view of a 1972 Hamburg State Opera production, and an Indian art film entitled "My Hands Are the Tools of My Soul." The files pertaining to the latter film, however, were labeled by Swann's staff "Indian art film" and by the working titles "The Far North" and "Mask and Drum." "Carmen" received critical acclaim and was telecast as a Public Broadcasting System special on 3 March 1975. Other papers in this subseries concern ideas for new films and for marketing Swannsway productions. Additional information describing the type of films produced by Swannsway is located in the folder labeled "General."

The [General Papers](#) subseries (1956-1975) focuses on Swann's diverse business enterprises as gentleman farmer, securities investor, and theatrical producer. The majority of the papers consist of correspondence, bills, receipts, and financial reports. Some items from the 1950s and early 1960s pertain to Caroline Swann, including two pieces of correspondence in the miscellaneous folders exchanged between Mrs. Swann and Lyndon B. Johnson concerning the future president's 1960 vice-presidential nomination.

The [Estate Papers](#) subseries (1959-1976) contain documents related to tax and legal matters involving Erwin and Berg Swann's estates. Much of this material pertains to the appraisal and disposition of their art collections.

[The Art Collection Files](#) (1949-1976) reflect two areas that greatly interested the Swanns, cartoon and caricature art of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, and modern art. These papers are divided into two subseries according to those interests: [Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon](#); and [General Files](#).

The [Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon](#), founded by Erwin Swann, was a nonprofit and tax-exempt foundation established to acquire a definitive collection of original cartoon and caricature art. The papers (1962-1976) reflect Swann's

efforts to collect, display, and exhibit this type of art. The majority of correspondence is between Swann and private collectors, rare book dealers, antique shop owners, and museum staffs. There are also a few letters between Swann and the following artists: Peggy Bacon, Frank Bajinski, Tom Darcy, Jeff MacNelly, Paul Peter Porges, and Mischa Richter. In addition to correspondence, the papers include material that Swann collected about cartoon and caricature art and financial records pertaining to the purchase, shipment, and display of the collection.

Papers in the [General Files](#) subseries (1949-1973) represent the Swanns' shared interest in French impressionism, modern European and American art, and Indic and Far Eastern art. The early papers indicate that Caroline Swann handled most of the art purchases, correspondence, and records relating to their collection until her death in 1964. Many of the papers document the Swanns' efforts to acquire pieces of art and to donate artworks to various museums.

The final two series of the Swann papers are the [Writings File](#) (1956-1970) and the Scheduling File. The [Writings File](#) (1966-1973) contains playscripts and correspondence concerning playscripts written by Swann. The bulk of the material pertains to his play "Red Squares," formerly entitled "Little Golden Calf" and "There Are No Squares Like Red Squares." In addition, there are several articles, television scripts, and miscellaneous writings by Caroline Swann written for a variety of television programs in the 1940s and early 1950s. The [Scheduling File](#) consists of calendars documenting Swann's personal and business engagements.

The most prominent and frequent of Swann's correspondents are Arbit Blatas, Oscar Dancigers, Richard Digby-Day, Frank Dunlop, Albert McCleery, Robert Nichol, Christopher Nupen, Harold Pinter, Barry Tomblin, and Audrey Wood.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in four series:

- [Financial and Legal Papers, 1956-1976](#)
- [Art Collection Files, 1949-1976](#)
- [Writings File, 1956-1970](#)
- [Scheduling File, 1966-1973](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-12	<p><u>Financial and Legal Papers, 1956-1976</u></p> <p>Correspondence, bills, receipts, contracts, notes, wills, photographs, newspaper clippings, printed matter, and other material pertaining to Swann's business interests. The papers are arranged into three subseries: Swannsway Productions Ltd. Papers, General Papers, and Estate Papers.</p> <p>All subseries are arranged alphabetically by subject or name of correspondent.</p>
BOX 1-7	<p><u>Swannsway Productions Ltd. Papers, 1967-1976, undated</u></p>
BOX 8-11	<p><u>General Papers, 1956-1975</u></p>
BOX 11-12	<p><u>Estate Papers, 1959-1976, undated</u></p>
BOX 13-24	<p><u>Art Collection Files, 1949-1976</u></p> <p>Correspondence, bills, receipts, newspaper clippings, notes, photographs, printed matter, and other material pertaining to Swann's art collections. The papers are arranged into two subseries: Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon; and General Files.</p> <p>Arrangement of the files is alphabetical by subject or name of correspondent.</p>
BOX 13-20	<p><u>Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon, 1950-1976, undated</u></p>
BOX 21-24	<p><u>General Files, 1949-1973, undated</u></p>
BOX 25-26	<p><u>Writings File, 1956- 1970</u></p> <p>Playscripts and correspondence relating to playscripts written by Swann. Also included are several articles, television scripts, and miscellaneous writings by Caroline Berg Swann.</p> <p>Arrangement is by writer and then alphabetical by title.</p>
BOX 26	<p><u>Scheduling File, 1966-1973</u></p> <p>Calendars documenting Swann's personal and business activities.</p> <p>Arrangement is chronological.</p>

Container List

Container	Contents
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Financial and Legal Papers, 1956-1976

Container

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Financial and Legal Papers, 1956-1976

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Art Collection Files, 1949-1976

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Art Collection Files, 1949-1976

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	Playscripts and correspondence relating to playscripts written by Swann. Also included are several articles, television scripts, and miscellaneous writings by Caroline Berg Swann. Arrangement is by writer and then alphabetical by title.
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Writings File, 1956- 1970

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