

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Phelps Putnam Papers

YCAL MSS 429



by Michael L. Forstrom

2010

P. O. Box 208330
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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 429

CREATOR: Putnam, Phelps, 1894-1948

TITLE: Phelps Putnam papers

DATES: 1914-1951

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5.21 linear feet (13 boxes) + 1 broadside folder

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Phelps Putnam papers contain correspondence, writings, and personal papers documenting the life and work of poet Howard Phelps Putnam. Correspondence in the collection features letters with family, Yale college friends, including Russell Cheney, Farwell Knapp, Donald Ogden Stewart, and Charles Walker, and other authors, including Paul Rosenfeld, Allen Tate, and Stark Young. Writings contains drafts for poems and short prose pieces dating from 1914 to the late 1940s. Other materials in the collection include biographical notes, clippings relating to Putnam, a last will, photographs, and a remembrance by his wife Una (Fayerweather) Putnam.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.putnamp>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.putnamp>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Charles Walker, 1951. Additional gifts and purchases acquired from 1953 to 1977.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Phelps Putnam papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Phelps Putnam Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Preliminary processing was done to the Phelps Putnam papers at an unknown date. During reprocessing of the collection in 2010, the arrangement of correspondence and writings was largely preserved in Series I and II, and other materials were consolidated in Series III.

Formerly classed as Za Putnam.

Howard Phelps Putnam (1894-1948)

Born in Massachusetts in 1894, Putnam attended Philips Exeter Academy before enrolling at Yale. A member of the secret society Skull and Bones, Putnam has been named among the Renaissance generation at Yale, which includes Stephen Vincent Benét, Henry R. Luce, Archibald MacLeish, Cole Porter, and Thornton Wilder. Following graduation, Putnam traveled to Europe and worked a series of jobs, including a period as an assistant editor for The Atlantic Monthly Press and writing advertising copy for an insurance company. Putnam's first book of poems, *Trinc*, was published in 1927. Following publication of *Trinc*, Putnam set to work on an epic, to be titled "The Earthly Comedy," which would recount modern life and feature characters such as Bill Williams and his alter ego Bigelow Hasbrouck. The publication of *The Five Seasons* (1931) features these characters and marks the beginning of Putnam's work towards producing "The Earthly Comedy". Putnam never completed the work before his death in 1948, however, thwarted perhaps by ill health (asthma and alcoholism) and the paralyzing ambition of his plans. As F.O. Matthiessen acknowledges in his essay "To the Memory of Phelps Putnam," "he sketched a poem too vast ever to be able to shoulder the weight of writing it".

Putnam married twice, to Ruth Peters and Una Fayerweather, and had numerous affairs, including trysts with Katharine Hepburn and painter Russell Cheney.

Summary information on Howard Phelps Putnam taken from an October 2007 description of the Farwell Knapp Papers in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library poetry blog (see <http://beineckepoetry.wordpress.com/2007/10/>).

Scope and Contents

The Phelps Putnam papers contain correspondence, writings, and personal papers documenting the life and work of poet Howard Phelps Putnam. Correspondence in the collection features letters to and from family, Yale college friends, including Russell Cheney, Farwell Knapp, Donald Ogden Stewart, and Charles Walker, and other authors, including Paul Rosenfeld, Allen Tate, and Stark Young. Writings contains drafts for poems and short prose pieces dating from 1914 to the late 1940s. Other materials in the collection

include biographical notes, clippings relating to Putnam, a last will, photographs, and a remembrance by his wife Una (Fayerweather) Putnam.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Correspondence, 1915-1951. II. Writings, 1914-1947. III. Personal Papers, 1923-1946.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1915-1951

3.55 linear feet (9 boxes)

Series I, Correspondence, features correspondence with Yale college friends Russell Cheney, Farwell Knapp, Donald Ogden Stewart, and Charles Walker, and with family and other authors, including Paul Rosenfeld, Allen Tate, and Stark Young.

Unsorted correspondence is located at the end of the alphabetical run.

Arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

b.1	Agee, James	1932, undated
b.1	Austin, Mary	1930, 1932
b.1	Bellinger, Alfred	1916-1919
b.1	Benét, Stephen Vincent	1920, undated
b.1	Benét, William Rose	1929 December 6
b.1	Beston, Henry	1927-1946, undated
b.1	Bynner, H.Witter	1930
b.1	Cheney, Russell <i>6 Folders</i> Includes photographs	1916-1931
b.2	Cheney, Russell <i>4 Folders</i>	1931-1945, undated
b.2	Cheney, Russell (outgoing) <i>3 Folders</i>	1916-1918
b.3	Cheney, Russell (outgoing) <i>9 Folders</i>	1919-1932
b.4	Cheney, Russell (outgoing) <i>5 Folders</i>	1932-1941
b.4	Cutting, Bronson <i>2 Folders</i>	1930-1933
b.4	Darling, A. B.	1916-1927, undated
b.4	Davenport, Marcia	1928
b.4	Davenport, Russell	1931-1947
b.4	Draper, Muriel	1930, undated
b.5	Eliot, T. S.	1927

b. 5	Farrar, John	1917-1930, undated
b. 5	Foster, E. [W.?.]	1934-1945
b. 5	Head, James L.	1919-1928
b. 5	Howe, M. A.	1927 September 18
b. 5	John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation	1930-1949
b. 5	Johnstone, H. W.	1917-1918
b. 5	Knapp, Farwell <i>4 Folders</i>	1917-1942, undated
b. 5	Kobbé, Philip	1927
b. 5	Kreymborg, Alfred	1928-1944
b. 5	Lytle, Andrew N.	1932-1933, undated
b. 6	MacLeish, Archibald	1932-1945, undated
b. 6	[Manning?]	1937-1947
b. 6	Masefield, John	1916-1921
b. 6	Matthiessen, F. O.	1928-1947
b. 6	Mumford, Lewis	1927, 1935
b. 6	Munger, Robert L.	1920-1928, undated
b. 6	Oler, Wesley, M.	1916-1944
b. 6	Parker, Dorothy	1930
b. 6	Perkins, Maxwell	1929-1944
b. 6	Putnam family (outgoing) <i>2 Folders</i>	1913-1937
b. 6	Putnam, Una (wife) (outgoing)	1930-1951, undated
b. 7	Rosenfeld, Paul <i>3 Folders</i>	1927-1938
b. 7	Roth, Samuel	1928 January
b. 7	Shepard, D. C.	1916-1920
b. 7	Spencer, Theodore	1927 October 13

b. 7	Stewart, Donald Ogden <i>2 Folders</i>	1916-1944, undated
b. 7	Tate, Allen <i>2 Folders</i>	1929-1946, undated
b. 8	Tate, Allen (outgoing) (photocopies)	undated
b. 8	Tener, George E.	1916-1920
b. 8	Troxell, Gilbert McCoy	1916-1943, undated
b. 8	Untermeyer, Louis	1927-1928
b. 8	Walker, Charles <i>3 Folders</i>	1917-1944
b. 8	Warren, Robert Penn	1935, 1938
b. 8	Wilson, Edmund	1927-1939
b. 8	Wolf, Max Includes clippings	1941-1947, undated
b. 8	Young, Stark <i>2 Folders</i>	1915-1927
b. 9	Unsorted correspondence <i>4 Folders</i>	1916-1950, undated

Series II: Writings, 1914-1947*1.58 linear feet (4 boxes)*

Series II, Writings, contains drafts, most corrected, for poems and short prose pieces. In addition to the title, physical formats (e.g. "holograph" and "typescript") are noted in folder headings below.

Unsorted poems can be found under the supplied heading [Poems] and at the end of the alphabetical run of titles.

Organized into two subseries, for poetry and prose, and arranged alphabetically by title (in quotes) or supplied heading (in brackets).

Poetry

b. 10	"100th Anniversary About Women," holograph	undated
b. 10	"About Women," typescript	undated
b. 10	"Address to the Fighting Forces," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 10	"The Africa-Livingston Case," holograph	undated
b. 10	"Alice and Beatrice," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 10	"Another Poem," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 10	"At Twenty," drafts, holograph and typescript, and printed version	1914
b. 10	"Authors Write Books," typescript	undated
b. 10	"Before the Lilacs Bloomed," holograph	undated
b. 10	"Bill," notes, holograph <i>8 Folders</i>	undated
b. 10	"Bill Williams," holograph	undated
b. 10	"Bill Williams," notebooks, holograph <i>7 Folders</i>	undated
b. 10	"Byron, Lord, Jr.," holograph	undated
b. 10	"Carlo Tresca," holograph and typescript	1943 February 16
b. 10	"Cause for Divorce," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 10	"Charles H. Roberts," holograph	undated
b. 10	"Cheney," holograph	undated
b. 10	"Concerning an Ancient American," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Country Boy," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Cutting," holograph	undated
b. 11	"The Daughters of the Sun," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"The Dawning," typescript	1914

Poetry (continued)

b. 11	"Death is the Very End," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"December 25, 1946," draft, holograph, and printed version	undated
b. 11	"Dirge for Hart Crane," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Dirge for the Use of Men," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Discharged Patient," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Diving Helmet," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Encouragement to the Greeks," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Les Enfants Apres Pendus," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Estimate of the Situation," holograph	1944
b. 11	"Fellow Traveller," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Folk-Tales," typescript	undated
b. 11	"For MacLeish," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Frank, in Praise of," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Girl's Curse," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Greece," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Hamilton Hadley," holograph	1940 December 31
b. 11	"Hands," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"He & She," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Hopeful Stuff," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Hymn," holograph	undated
b. 11	"I Am an Atheist," typescript	undated
b. 11	"I Am Feeling It Now," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"I Could Not Write These Songs No More," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Imitations," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Incident, 1946," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Indian Whistle," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Indolence, holograph	undated
b. 11	"Insomnia," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Irony Enough," [notes?], holograph	undated
b. 11	"The Ivy," typescript	undated

Poetry (continued)

b. 11	"Knapp," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Lament for the American Legion," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Letter From Jefferson to Lenin," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Lines," holograph	undated
b. 11	"The Little Man," holograph	undated
b. 11	"The Long Fulsome Lines," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Luther," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Madame America as of 1943," typescript	[1943?]
b. 11	"Marseillaise II," typescript	1943 January
b. 11	"Marseilles," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Middle Class: Which Side Are You On?" holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Moral Problems," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Morning Song," typescript	undated
b. 11	"My Sisters," holograph	undated
b. 11	"The Naked King," holograph and typescript	1946
b. 11	"Note," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Note on Neutrons," draft, typescript, and printed version	undated
b. 11	"Note to Col. McCormick," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Ode to Food," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Ode to Pain," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Ode to Work," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Oh say does that star spangled..." holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"On Drink," drafts, typescript, and printed version	undated
b. 11	"On Reading the Contemporary Verse," holograph	undated
b. 11	"On Being Dead," typescript	undated
b. 11	"Opus 69," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 11	"Period Piece, 1932," holograph	1932
b. 11	"Pete & His Banjo," holograph	undated
b. 11	"Playthings," draft, typescript, and printed version	1915, undated
b. 11	[Poems] 3 Folders	1938-1942, undated

Poetry (continued)

b. 12	[Poems] 3 Folders	undated
b. 12	"Poems," plan for a book of poetry, holograph	[1925?]
b. 12	"Political Lyric," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Putnam Battle Cry," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"The Republican Picnic," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Safe Advice," holograph	[circa 1941]
b. 12	"Sensations of a Modern American by Degrees," holograph	undated
b. 12	"Ship of State and Grandpa," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"Six Sonnets," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"So Long, George Cory," holograph	undated
b. 12	"Soldiers' Marching Song," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Song for Poets and Betrayers," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Song of Grief," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Song of My [Heart?]," holograph	undated
b. 12	"Song of Words," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Sonnet for Emily Bronte," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Sonnet for Ruth," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Sonnet for Spring, 1947," typescript	[1947?]
b. 12	"Sonnet of a Troubador," typescript	1915 December
b. 12	"The Time of True Love," typescript	undated
b. 12	"To My Old Friend," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"To Some Young Poet," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"To the Last Reader of These Letters of D114," holograph and typescript	1918 September
b. 12	"To the Memory of Yale College," typescript	undated
b. 12	<i>Trinc</i> , printed version, corrected	1927
b. 12	"The Turquoise Ring," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"Una," holograph and typescript	1939
b. 12	"Violence," holograph and typescript	undated
b. 12	"Wallace," holograph	undated

Poetry (continued)

b. 12	"Yeats," holograph and typescript	1936-1940, undated
b. 12	"The Young Antiquity," typescript	undated
b. 12	"Young Hasbrouck's Impractical Dog," typescript	1939
b. 12	Unsorted manuscripts, holograph	undated
Prose		
b. 13	"A Defense of Suicide"	undated
b. 13	"Dog Story"	undated
b. 13	[Essays]	undated
b. 13	Hancock Life Insurance Company advertisements	undated
b. 13	"Hasbrouck, Bigelow"	undated
b. 13	"Joseph Conrad: An Incident"	undated
b. 13	"Making Money in Magazines"	undated
b. 13	"Manufacturers of N.E."	undated
b. 13	"Note of Moral Murder"	undated
b. 13	"Peter, the Fantast"	undated
b. 13	"Play," scenario	undated
b. 13	"The Poem of Patricia"	1915 April
b. 13	[Reviews]	1922-1925, undated
b. 13	"Roscoe, the Clerk"	undated
b. 13	"Rosenfeld"	1947
b. 13	"Self-Accusation of Cowardice"	undated
b. 13	"Thousands Now Living Will Never Die"	undated
b. 13	"True History"	undated
b. 13	Unsorted writings <i>2 Folders</i>	1944, undated

Series III: Personal Papers, 1923-1946*7 Folders*

Series III, Personal Papers, includes biographical notes, clippings relating to Putnam, a last will, several photographs, and a remembrance by his wife Una (Fayerweather) Putnam.

Arranged alphabetically by material type.

b. 13	Biographical notes	undated
b. 13	Clippings <i>3 Folders</i>	1923-1945
b. 13	Last will	1946 July 5
b. 13	Photographs Includes photographs of Phelps and Una Putnam, Bronson Cutting, and others	undated
b. 13	"Some Further Notes on Phelps Putnam By His Wife"	undated
	Work plans for unidentified work(s) Stored in: Oversize, broadside cabinets, container 14	undated

Oversize, undated

1 Folder

b. 14 (Broadside) Work plans (In Series III)

undated

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.

Subjects

American literature -- 20th Century
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives

Genres / Formats

Photographic prints

Occupations

Authors

Names

Cheney, Russell, 1881-1945
Knapp, Farwell, 1893-1942
Putnam, Phelps, 1894-1948
Putnam, Una
Rosenfeld, Paul, 1890-1946
Stewart, Donald Ogden, 1894-1980
Tate, Allen, 1899-1979
Walker, Charles R. (Charles Rumford), 1893-1974
Young, Stark, 1881-1963