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Martha Ramsey Papers

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- [About SCUA](#)
 - [SCUA home](#)
 - [Credo digital](#)
- [Scope](#)
- [Overview](#)
 - [Series 1. Memoir](#)
 - [Series 2. Writings](#)
 - [Series 3. Personal](#)
 - [Series 4. Family](#)
- [Inventory](#)
 - [Series 1. Memoir](#)
 - [Series 2. Writings](#)
 - [Series 3. Personal](#)
 - [Series 4. Family](#)
- [Admin info](#)
- [Download](#)
 - [xml version](#)
 - [print version \(pdf\)](#)

[Read collection overview](#)

Martha Ramsey is the author of *Where I Stopped*, a memoir of rape in adolescence, and *Blood Stories*, a book of poems. Ramsey grew up in Flemington, New Jersey, a farming community 65 miles southwest of New York City. She had unusually creative, bohemian-minded, arts-oriented parents; her father was a pioneering jazz historian; both became alcoholics. She was a precociously intelligent child and was skipped two grades at her local elementary school; she escaped from the resulting loneliness and social insecurity into books and nature. She was happier as a day student at Solebury School, a progressive high school nearby in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. On a summer day in 1968, at age 13, while she was walking her bike up a back road near her home, she was attacked and raped by a 28-year-old man, a stranger. She insisted that her parents call the police immediately, "so it won't happen to anyone else." Her parents soon heard from neighbors that before Martha, the rapist had "molested other girls." She endured a confrontation with him at the police barracks and giving testimony at the trial that resulted in his conviction and sentence of 15 years. Five years later she also endured the shock of learning on a visit home from college that he had, while released on parole, sexually assaulted and murdered a 16-year-old girl near the girl's family's farm, on the anniversary of the rape. This time he was sentenced to life. *Where I Stopped*, written when Ramsey was in her thirties, tells this story in detail and follows her attempts to understand what had happened to her and how it was affecting her over the years as she grew into adulthood, pursued her calling as a poet, and married. The memoir also chronicles her decision to return to the place where she grew up to

speak with people who remembered the crime and who had participated in the trial and to unearth the police and trial records—all part of her effort to come to terms with what she remembered.

A powerful collection documenting the writing of her memoir, *Where I Stopped*, Ramsey's papers include audio recordings of statements she and others made to the police shortly after her rape; a transcript of the trial; Ramsey's notes from interviews she conducted with individuals who remembered the crime; and drafts of her memoir, containing comments from early readers and material cut from the final version. Ramsey's unpublished writings, journals, and correspondence document her intellectual and emotional life from her teenage years forward, including the drafts of all her published and unpublished poems. Family papers focus on the author's father, Frederic Ramsey, a noted jazz historian; they include correspondence, photographs, and the unpublished autobiography of Ethel Ramsey (1884-1965)—textile designer, painter, and participant in the artists' colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania—that contains acerbic discussion of the struggles of women artists in the late nineteenth century and later.

Background on Martha Ramsey

Martha Ramsey was born in 1954 in Flemington, New Jersey, a farming community about 65 miles southwest of New York City. She had unusually creative, bohemian-minded, arts-oriented parents; her father was the pioneering jazz historian Frederic Ramsey, Jr. As a child she was precociously intelligent, socially clueless, and a bookworm. She attended high school at Solebury School in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. The summer before tenth grade, in 1968, at age 13, while she was out on her own on a bike ride on back roads, she was attacked and raped by a 28-year-old man, a stranger to her. Within his family and immediate friends, he was suspected of having molested other girls, but none of his other victims' families had come forward.

After the rape Martha endured a confrontation with the rapist, at the police barracks, and giving testimony at the trial that resulted in his conviction and a sentence of 15 years. Five years later, on the same date as his rape of Martha, almost immediately after being paroled, the perpetrator brutally abused and murdered a 16-year-old girl in the same community; he was sentenced to life in prison for that crime.

Ramsey's memoir, *Where I Stopped*, was written when she was in her thirties, tells this story in detail and follows her attempts to understand what had happened to her and how it affected her over the years as she grew into adulthood, pursued her calling as a poet, and married, and her eventual decision to go back to the place where she grew up, speak with people who remembered the crime and who participated in the trial, unearth the police and trial records, and come to terms with what she remembered.

A literary memoir first published to high critical acclaim in 1995, *Where I Stopped* was ahead of its time, and was the first book-length autobiography focusing on rape during adolescence. It is a classic account of sexual trauma and recovery.

Scope of collection

A powerful collection documenting the writing of her memoir, *Where I Stopped*, Ramsey's papers include audio recordings of statements she and others made to the police shortly after her rape; a transcript of the trial; Ramsey's notes from interviews she conducted with individuals who remembered the crime; and drafts of her memoir, containing comments from early readers and material cut from the final version. Ramsey's unpublished writings, journals, and correspondence document her intellectual and emotional life from her teenage years forward, including the drafts of all her published and unpublished poems. Family papers focus on the author's father, Frederic Ramsey, a noted jazz historian; they include correspondence, photographs, and the unpublished autobiography of Ethel Ramsey (1884-1965)—textile designer, painter, and participant in the artists' colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania—that contains acerbic discussion of the struggles of women artists in the late nineteenth century and later.

Overall, the collection deals with issues of childhood trauma, family alcoholism, family mental illness (depression and schizophrenia), rape in adolescence, writing and the teaching of writing, women's friendship, marriage, living with chronic illness, and spiritual development.

Series descriptions

[Series 1. Memoir](#) 1968-2000

Materials related to the research and writing of Ramsey's memoir, *Where I Stopped*. Includes audio recordings of statements she and others made to the police shortly after her rape; a transcript of the trial; Ramsey's notes from interviews she conducted with individuals who remembered the crime; and drafts of her memoir, containing comments from early readers and material cut from the final version.

[Series 2. Writings](#) 1967-2007

Drafts and final versions of Ramsey's poems and prose from throughout her career.

[Series 3. Personal](#) 1969-2008

Notes, photographs, publications, course materials and other items related to Ramsey's life.

[Series 4. Family](#) 1815-2007

Family history including photographs, publications, and family correspondence. Of particular note are materials relating to Frederic Ramsey Jr., a noted jazz historian and author of *Been Here and Gone* and the unpublished autobiography of Ethel Ramsey (1874-1965), textile designer, painter, and participant in the artists' colony in New Hope, Pennsylvania.

Inventory

Series 1. Memoir

1968-2000

Adaptions, Excerpts, Articles

1996

Box 2: 114

Beetle, Thomas

1971, undated

Box 2: 115

Bill's Critique

undated

Box 2: 116

Book cover

undated

Box 2: 117

Booklist reviews and customer comments

1999

Box 2: 118

Caluska, Judy

undated

Box 2: 119
Carol C. comments
1991 Apr.
Box 2: 120
Chapter 2, Richard's comments
undated
Box 2: 121
Clarke, Judy
1990 Nov.
Box 2: 122
Contract invoices and checks
1990
Box 2: 123
Cooper, Neal--Boyce, Charlotte
1989, undated
Box 2: 124
Correspondence with agents
1993, undated
Box 2: 125
Critiques
1990-1992, undated
Box 2: 126
"Critiques of 5/18/94"
1994
Box 2: 127
Description of Memoir, A.R. correspondence
1991, undated
Box 2: 128
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux (FSG) Contract: Rosenthal, Arthur
1990
Box 2: 129
German copy of memoir royalty statements
1999
Box 2: 130
Goreski, Frank
1990, undated
Box 2: 131
Grant Research
1989 Dec.-1992 July, undated
Box 2: 132
Hall of Records materials
1969-1971
Box 2: 133
Haper's Bazaar edits and correspondence
1995 Sept.
Box 2: 134
Hill & Wang publisher
1990-1993
Box 2: 135
Interview materials about the rape
1989, undated
Box 2: 136
Invoice
1990
Box 2: 137
Journal: New Jersey trip
1990 Nov.
Box 2: 138
"Jury"
1990 Nov.
Box 2: 139
Kawano, Edith
undated
Box 2: 140
Kirkus Reviews
1995
Box 2: 141
Lein, Laura
undated
Box 2: 142
Martha C.'s comments
1991-1994, undated
Box 2: 143
"Martha on ending"
undated
Box 2: 144
Memoir draft pages 3-165
undated
Box 2: 145
Memoir draft pages 166-295
undated
Box 2: 146
Memoir draft pages 296-435
undated
Box 2: 147
Memoir order forms
1995
Box 2: 148
Monica's comments
1991 Apr.
Box 2: 149
Notes
undated
Box 3: 1
Notes

undated
Box 3: 2
Notes and newspaper clippings: Ramsey Jr., Frederic
1968-1969, 1973, undated
Box 3: 3
"Notes for crisis memoir"
1990-2000
Box 3: 4
Notes on style
undated
Box 3: 5
Photographs
undated
Box 3: 7
Photograph for memoir
1995
Box 3: 8
Promotional materials and related correspondence
1996-1997, undated
Box 3: 9
Prosecution files
1968-1970, 1990, undated
Box 3: 10
Ramsey, Loch
1990 Oct.
Box 3: 11
Shavemaker, John
1990 Nov.
Box 3: 12
"Studio Bull Board"
1990
Box 3: 13
"The Crayon Pictures"
undated
Box 3: 14
Transcript of trial
1968
Box 3: 15
Trial notes
undated
Box 3: 16
Trial recordings
1968
Box 18

Recordings captured by Edison Voicewriter Dictaphone records.

Tritt, Charlotte
undated
Box 3: 17
Whitney's comments
1992
Box 3: 18
Whitney's comments 1
undated
Box 3: 19
Whitney's comments 2
undated
Box 3: 20
Whitney's comments 3
undated
Box 3: 21
Whitney's comments 4
undated
Box 3: 22
Whitney's comments 5
undated
Box 3: 23
Whitney's comments 6
undated
Box 3: 24
Yorke, Laura: The Putnam Berkley Group, Inc.
1995, undated
Box 3: 25
Series 2. Writings
1967-2007
Poems: "2nd Summer in Vt. w/ Sarah", "Getting Water"
undated
Box 3: 26
Poems: "7:00a.m.", "Loch"
undated
Box 3: 27
Poems: "A Day Six Months Back"
undated
Box 3: 28
Poems: A Man was Sad
undated
Box 3: 29
Poems: "A Walk in the Storm"
undated
Box 3: 30
Poems: "A Meagre Man", "This Man"
1976
Box 3: 31
Poems: "A year ago at this time, I was looking forward to your first visit..."

undated
Box 3: 32
Poems: "About Love"
undated
Box 3: 33
Poems: "Advice"
undated
Box 3: 34
Poems: "After"
undated
Box 3: 35
Poems: "After Arriving in the Country House"
undated
Box 3: 36
Poems: "After Marriage"
undated
Box 3: 37
Poems: "After Moving In"
undated
Box 3: 38
Poems: "After the hurricane"
undated
Box 3: 39
Poems: "After Trying to be Resigned"
undated
Box 3: 40
Poems: "Again"
undated
Box 3: 41
Poems: "All I Ever Wanted to Say"
undated
Box 3: 42
Poems: "Alone in the Dark"
undated
Box 3: 43
Poems: "An adolescent, supple and tall..."
undated
Box 3: 44
Poems: "An Insect Moans"
undated
Box 3: 45
Poems: "Ancient Journey"
undated
Box 3: 46
Poems: "Apologia"
undated
Box 3: 47
Poems: "At Home"
undated
Box 3: 48
Poems: "At the Cemetery Today"
undated
Box 3: 49
Poems: "At the Ferry--On Deer Island"
undated
Box 3: 50
Poems: "Back in the Woods"
undated
Box 3: 51
Poems: "Because I could not tell"
undated
Box 3: 52
Poems: "Before Death", "The Last Visit"
undated
Box 3: 53
Poems: "Before Her Flowering"
undated
Box 3: 54
Poems: "Beginning thoughts on good and evil love and lack of love"
undated
Box 3: 55
Poems: "Being 13 on that stifling day..."
undated
Box 3: 56-58
Poems: "Bill"
undated
Box 3: 59
Poems: Blood Stories drafts
undated
Box 3: 60
Poems: "Blood Stories", "Stories About Blood"
undated
Box 3: 61-65
Poems: "Bus Journey", "Two Friends"
undated
Box 3: 66
Poems: "Cabin Hymn", "To Hickey"
undated
Box 3: 67
Poems: "Coming Home"
1981
Box 3: 68
Poems: "Christmas Poems & Biscuits", "To My Father"
undated
Box 3: 69

Poems: "Coming Home Breakfast"
undated
Box 3: 70
Poems: copies of published poetry
1983-1992
Box 3: 71
Prose: "Crazy Daughter"
undated
Box 3: 72
Poems: "Crossing Massachusetts"
undated
Box 3: 73
Poems: "Dahlias"
undated
Box 3: 74
Poems: "Dawn"
undated
Box 3: 75
Poems: "Dawn: what's unfinished breaks again"
undated
Box 3: 76
Poems: "D.C." Poem
undated
Box 3: 77
Poems: Draft Poems
1997, undated
Box 3: 78
Poems: "Dreams of You"
undated
Box 3: 79
Poems: "Dying of Cancer"
July 1978
Box 3: 80
Poems: "Each Time"
undated
Box 3: 81
Poems: "Entering My Apartment"
1976
Box 3: 82
Poems: "Eric poem (marriage poem)"
undated
Box 3: 83
Poems: "Erren"
undated
Box 3: 84
Poems: "Escapee"
undated
Box 3: 85
Poems: "Faces We Love"
undated
Box 3: 86
Poems: "Fairly Grief"
undated
Box 3: 87
Poems: "Father as Field"
1988
Box 3: 88
Poems: "Father Poem"
1991
Box 3: 89
Poems: "First Anniversary"
1986, undated
Box 3: 90
Poems: "For Ann Beutner, 1952-1989"
1986, undated
Box 3: 91
Poems: "For Eric and Bobo"
undated
Box 3: 92
Poems: "For My Brother after His Death"
undated
Box 3: 93
Poems: "Friends"
1976, undated
Box 3: 94
Poems: "From the Steps of the New York Public Library"
undated
Box 3: 95
Poems: "Getting Through"
1976
Box 3: 96
Poems: "Gideon Poems"
undated
Box 3: 97
Poems: "Girl in Green Valley"
undated
Box 3: 98
Poems: "Girl in Woods"
undated
Box 3: 99
Poems: "Halloween"
undated
Box 4: 1
Poems: "He is staying with her now"
1982, undated

Box 4: 2
Poems: "He leans over his bulky desk..."
undated
Box 4: 3
Poems: "Here"
undated
Box 4: 4
Poems: "High School"
undated
Box 4: 5
Poems: "His Need"
2007
Box 4: 6
Poems: "Homage to my Brother"
undated
Box 4: 7
Poems: "How About"
undated
Box 4: 8
Poems: "How I Was"
undated
Box 4: 9
Poems: "How It Turns Out"
undated
Box 4: 10
Poems: "How Would I Greet You"
1979
Box 4: 11
Poems: "How You Know (for Bryan Katie)"
undated
Box 4: 12
Poems: "I Am Learning"
undated
Box 4: 13
Poems: "I Am That"
undated
Box 4: 14
Poems: "I Am With Him after He Dies"
undated
Box 4: 15
Poems: "I cut my hair..."
undated
Box 4: 16
Poems: "I Don't Know"
undated
Box 4: 17
Poems: "I have come to live in your countryside..."
undated
Box 4: 18
Poems: "I Lay on the Beach" - "When He Came"
undated
Box 4: 19
Poems: "I Saw in Your Small Shoulders"
undated
Box 4: 20
Poems: "I Tossed at Night, I Thought"
undated
Box 4: 21
Poems: "I was visited/who visited"
undated
Box 4: 22
Poems: "I Wonder"
undated
Box 4: 23
Poems: "if I could put each knife, fork, and spoon..."
undated
Box 4: 24
Poems: "If You Could Choose"
undated
Box 4: 25
Poems: "In a dark time"
undated
Box 4: 26
Poems: "In a Poor Year, I try to Live in a Black Neighborhood"
undated
Box 4: 27-29
Poems: "In His Absence"
undated
Box 4: 30
Poems: "In Honors of the God"
undated
Box 4: 31
Poems: "In the Hospital"
1977 Fall
Box 4: 32
Poems: "It was New Jersey that raped me..."
undated
Box 4: 33
Poems: "Janet," "Our Meeting in the Heaven of Friends"
undated
Box 4: 34
Poems: "Janet's parting words"
1991, Jan. 26
Box 4: 35
Poems: "January: Vermont"

undated
Box 4: 36
Poems: "Just a Man"
undated
Box 4: 37
Poems: "Killed by Bright Colors"
undated
Box 4: 38
Poems: "Laws of August To the memory of My Mother"
undated
Box 4: 39
Poems: "Learning Greek"
undated
Box 4: 40
Poems: "Letter to the sun"
undated
Box 4: 41
Poems: "Louise"
undated
Box 4: 42
Poems: "Journey of Swamp Things"
undated
Box 4: 43
Poems: "July Fourth"
undated
Box 4: 44
Poems: "June 8"
undated
Box 4: 45
Poems: "Learning to Run"
undated
Box 4: 46
Poems: "Letter from My Camp"
1982
Box 4: 47
Poems: "Life"
2005 June, undated
Box 4: 48
Poems: "How Can I Tell You"
2005, June 24
Box 4: 49
Poems: "Life's Work"
undated
Box 4: 50-51
Poems: "Lines from an Artist's Colony"
undated
Box 4: 52
Poems: "Lines of Goodbye to a Friend at MacDowell"
undated
Box 4: 53
Poems: "Listening to Sallie Play After Dinner"
undated
Box 4: 54
Poems: "Maybe in some further world..."
undated
Box 4: 55
Poems: "Memories"
1982
Box 4: 56
Poems: "Memory"
1979
Box 4: 57
Poems: "Men Working"
undated
Box 4: 58
Poems: "Minimum"
undated
Box 4: 59
Poems: "Misellaneous"
1981, undated
Box 4: 60
Poems: "Miscellaneous Unfinished Poems on Mom's death"
undated
Box 4: 61
Poems: "Mom's Body"
undated
Box 4: 62
Poems: "More," "A Final Reality"
undated
Box 4: 63
Poems: "Morning"
undated
Box 4: 64
Poems: "Mother in Rain"
undated
Box 4: 65
Poems: "Mud," "Repeat Dialing," untitled
undated
Box 4: 66
Poems: "My Alchemy"
undated
Box 4: 67
Poems: "My father, I would like so much to walk with you near death..."
undated
Box 4: 68

Poems: "My Father's Heart"
undated
Box 4: 69
Poems: "My fear, a small animal..."
undated
Box 4: 70
Poems: "My First Lover"
2002
Box 4: 71
Poems: "My Little Life"
undated
Box 4: 72
Poems: "My Mother's Voice," "Anger Poem"
undated
Box 4: 73
Poems: "My Mystery"
undated
Box 4: 74
Poems: "My Room"
1987, undated
Box 4: 75
Poems: "My Sister"
undated
Box 4: 76
Poems: "My Total Defeat"
undated
Box 4: 77
Poems: "Mysteries"
undated
Box 4: 78
Poems: "Near the End"
1981, undated
Box 4: 79
Poems: "No Fear"
undated
Box 4: 80
Poems: "Not Asleep"
1976 Spring
Box 4: 81
Poems: "Not Here"
undated
Box 4: 82
Poems: "Old-Fashioned Remedies"
undated
Box 4: 83
Poems: "Old Poems and Drafts"
1979, undated
Box 4: 84-86
Poems: "Old Stuff"
undated
Box 4: 87
Poems: "On Courage" - "The Riddle" - "The Return"
undated
Box 4: 88
Poems: "On Halloween - Three Black Working Men"
1981, Nov. 9
Box 4: 89
Poems: "On Her Birthday After 3 Years"
undated
Box 4: 90
Poems: "On the First Morning of Your Visit"
undated
Box 4: 91
Poems: "One Night a Week Away From Home"
undated
Box 4: 92
Poems: "One light is on in my room..."
undated
Box 4: 93
Poems: "One-sided conversation"
undated
Box 4: 94
Poems: "Orpheus"
1985, undated
Box 4: 95
Poems: Outtakes
undated
Box 4: 96
Poems: "Paoli"
undated
Box 4: 97
Poems: "Persephone"
undated
Box 4: 98
Poems: "Piano Lesson"
undated
Box 4: 99
Poems: "Playtime"
1976 Summer
Box 4: 100
Poems: poem about Loch
1988 July
Box 4: 101
Poems: "Poem for Zeke"
1991 July

Box 4: 102
Poems: Poem on Envelope
undated
Box 4: 103
Poems: "Poem without End," untitled, notes
2000-2004, undated
Box 4: 104
Poems: "Poems not in Ms."
1978-1982
Box 4: 105
Poems: "Poems Pre-'89"
-1988
Box 4: 106
Poems: "Prescription"
1976, undated
Box 4: 107
Poems: "Pslam"
1986
Box 4: 108
Poems: "Ralph poems"
undated
Box 4: 109
Poems: "Rape at Thirteen," "The Revenge Dream"
1980, undated
Box 4: 110
Poems: "Rape Poem from R+R"
1990, undated
Box 4: 111
Poems: "Regarding My Father" - "Under My Father's Gaze"
undated
Box 4: 112
Poems: "Rembrandt Drawings"
undated
Box 4: 113
Poems: "Research"
1976 Summer
Box 4: 114
Poems: "Runaway"
undated
Box 4: 115
Poems: "Running in Winter"
undated
Box 4: 116
Poems: "Seasons"
undated
Box 4: 117
Poems: "Second Father"
undated
Box 4: 118
Poems: "Seeing His End"
undated
Box 4: 119
Poems: "Sesting"
undated
Box 4: 120
Poems: "Sister drafts"
1987
Box 4: 121
Poems: "Simple Pleasures"
2007, Jan. 7
Box 4: 122
Poems: "Sister poem"
1997 June
Box 4: 123
Poems: "Sitting"
undated
Box 4: 124
Poems: "Sleeping Over"
1976
Box 4: 125
Poems: "Song"
undated
Box 4: 126
Poems: "Standing with you in the night"
undated
Box 4: 127
Poems: "Sunflower"
undated
Box 4: 128
Poems: "Sweetness Btw. Them"
undated
Box 4: 129
Poems: "Tent Morning"
1982 Aug.
Box 4: 130
Poems: "That Morning"
undated
Box 4: 131
Poems: "That Year"
undated
Box 4: 132
Poems: "The Accident"
1976 Summer
Box 4: 133
Poems: "The Anarchists At Home"

undated
Box 4: 134
Poems: "The Big Ash Tree"
undated
Box 4: 135
Poems: "The Bird and the Song"
1980
Box 4: 136
Poems: "The Christmas Tree"
1980
Box 4: 137
Poems: "The Chronic Illness Support Group"
undated
Box 4: 138
Poems: "The cry of a newborn..."
undated
Box 4: 139
Poems: "The Day I Knew"
undated
Box 4: 140
Poems: "The Dream of Goodbye to Ralph"
undated
Box 4: 141
Poems: "The Earth is Painted Over"
undated
Box 4: 142
Poems: "The Easier Dead Harder than the Dead"
undated
Box 4: 143
Poems: "The Farmhouse" - "The House in White Creek"
undated
Box 4: 144
Poems: "The Field"
undated
Box 5: 1
Poems: "The Flood"
undated
Box 5: 2
Poems: "The Fourth of July"
undated
Box 5: 3
Poems: "The German Survivors"
undated
Box 5: 4
Poems: "The Good Night"
undated
Box 5: 5
Poems: "The Healing Laying on of Hands"
undated
Box 5: 6
Poems: "The House in White Creek"
undated
Box 5: 7
Poems: "The House of the Poor Family"
undated
Box 5: 8
Poems: "The Incest Survivor"
undated
Box 5: 9
Poems: "The Last Party"
undated
Box 5: 10
Poems: "The Last Visitors"
1980
Box 5: 11
Poems: "The Letters"
1982
Box 5: 12
Poems: "The Listener"
undated
Box 5: 13
Poems: "The Machine"
1979
Box 5: 14
Poems: "The Night Bird"
undated
Box 5: 15
Poems: "The Night Voices"
undated
Box 5: 16
Poems: "The Noisiest Truck I Ever Heard in Manhattan"
undated
Box 5: 17
Poems: "The Ones Who Stayed"
1980
Box 5: 18
Poems: "The Old Mixture"
1992 May
Box 5: 19
Poems: "The Other Martha"
undated
Box 5: 20
Poems: "The Picture"
undated
Box 5: 21

Poems: "The Quilt"
undated
Box 5: 22
Poems: "The Raft"
undated
Box 5: 23
Poems: "The Rape Angel"
undated
Box 5: 24
Poems: "The Revival"
undated
Box 5: 25
Poems: "The Silence Invites Me"
undated
Box 5: 26
Poems: "The Silence Invites You"
undated
Box 5: 27
Poems: "The Storm," untitled
undated
Box 5: 28
Poems: "The Story Does Not Mention"
undated
Box 5: 29
Poems: "The Thunder (Cambridge)"
undated
Box 5: 30
Poems: "The Thunder (Vt.)"
undated
Box 5: 31
Poems: "The Tree Frog"
undated
Box 5: 32
Poems: "The Visit"
undated
Box 5: 33
Poems: "The Visitor"
undated
Box 5: 34
Poems: "Them"
undated
Box 5: 35
Poems: "The Rocking Chair"
undated
Box 5: 36
Poems: "The Separation"
undated
Box 5: 37
Poems: "The Tenderness"
undated
Box 5: 38
Poems: "The Welders"
undated
Box 5: 39
Poems: "They"
undated
Box 5: 40
Poems: "They Never Told Me"
undated
Box 5: 41
Poems: "Things As They Are"
undated
Box 5: 42
Poems: "This Girl"
undated
Box 5: 43
Poems: "This Vantage Point"
undated
Box 5: 44
Poems: "To her Friend"
1978 Jan.
Box 5: 45
Poems: "To My Friend Whitney, Moving In"
1981
Box 5: 46
Poems: "To My Unborn Child"
undated
Box 5: 47
Poems: untitled
1974-2005, undated
Box 5: 48-53
Poems: "Valentine"
undated
Box 5: 54
Poems: "Vermont View"
1980 Summer
Box 5: 55
Poems: "Vision of my Father on Monlegan"
1986
Box 5: 56
Poems: "Visit to Arboretum"
undated
Box 5: 57
Poems: "Visiting Fort Warren"
1981

Box 5: 58
Poems: "Walking the Dog"
undated
Box 5: 59
Poems: "Wanting a Child"
undated
Box 5: 60
Poems: "We Face Each Other Naked"
1984-1985, undated
Box 5: 61
Poems: "We Visit My Father"
undated
Box 5: 62
Poems: "What I Did to You"
undated
Box 5: 63
Poems: "What I Do"
undated
Box 5: 64
Poems: "What I See"
undated
Box 5: 65
Poems: "When Did I Come to You"
undated
Box 5: 66
Poems: "When I Am Well"
undated
Box 5: 67
Poems: "When She Dies"
1978
Box 5: 68
Poems: "Why I Sit Here"
undated
Box 5: 69
Poems: "Why My Gardenia"
undated
Box 5: 70
Poems: "Will I"
undated
Box 5: 71
Poems: "With Kisses I've Marked You (Gan)" - "This Morning"
undated
Box 5: 72
Poems: "Within the Family was a Hell"
undated
Box 5: 73
Poems: "Without a Thought"
undated
Box 5: 74
Poems: "Working Man," "Afternoon"
undated
Box 5: 75
Poems: "World Gathered/The Letter"
1993, Jan. 25
Box 5: 76
Poems: "yet singing with my burden"
1987, June 12
Box 5: 77
Poems: "You"
undated
Box 5: 78
Poems: "You as a father"
undated
Box 5: 79
Poems: "You contain 2 souls"
undated
Box 5: 80
Poems: "You Wanted to Know How I Am"
1981
Box 5: 81
Poems: "Your Patience"
undated
Box 5: 82
Poems: "Zeus"
undated
Box 5: 83
Prose: "A Story About Us - Jean's Stay With Us"
undated
Box 5: 84
Prose: "An Etruscan Mirror"
1974, Mar. 1
Box 5: 85
Prose: "A.R. Selection"
1991 Aug.
Box 5: 86
Prose: "Aunt Helen"
undated
Box 5: 87
Prose: "Autobiography of a soul"
undated
Box 5: 88
Prose: "Battle of the Squirt Gun"
undated
Box 5: 89
Prose: "Begin - A is So Interesting"

1998 June
Box 5: 90
Prose: "Bodenstab Lane"
undated
Box 5: 91
Prose: "Breakfast with Whitney"
undated
Box 5: 92
Prose: "Chickering House"
1987 Sept.
Box 5: 93
Prose: "Christmas at Seventy"
undated
Box 5: 94
Prose: "Courageous, Charming"
1977 Spring
Box 5: 95
Prose: "England"
1988, undated
Box 5: 96
Prose: "Europe through the Looking-Glass. Final Exam."
1975 May
Box 5: 97
Prose: "Funny"
undated
Box 5: 98
Prose: "Glan-Tim-Ralph-John Blais"
undated
Box 5: 99
Prose: "How I Found God"
undated
Box 5: 100
Prose: "How My Way Got Me"
undated
Box 5: 101
Prose: "In the fourth decade of my life..."
undated
Box 5: 102
Prose: "John at the pool-table"
undated
Box 5: 103
Prose: "Journal of a Hospital Visit as a Volunteer"
undated
Box 5: 104
Prose: "Letter to Loch"
undated
Box 5: 105
Prose: "Loch (and Fred)"
undated
Box 5: 106
Prose: "Love Essay"
undated
Box 5: 107
Prose: "Mona and Andy"
undated
Box 5: 108
Prose: "M.R. Early Writings"
1968-1972, undated
Box 5: 109-111
Prose: "My father must have told my mother once that he liked to cook..."
undated
Box 5: 112
Prose: "My House in the Woods"
undated
Box 5: 113
Prose: "My mother used to take a nap every day"
undated
Box 5: 114
Prose: "Notes for a book on Mom"
undated
Box 5: 115
Prose: "On Amelia Dying"
undated
Box 5: 116
Prose: "Piano Story"
undated
Box 5: 117
Prose: "Playing with Fire"
undated
Box 5: 118
Prose: Reflections on her life
undated
Box 5: 119-122
Prose: "Scaffolding: New and Selected Poems by Jane Cooper" review
ca.1985
Box 5: 123
Prose: "Some Passion"
undated
Box 5: 124
Prose: Space
undated
Box 5: 125
Prose: "Spring"
undated
Box 5: 126

Prose: "Strawberries"
undated
Box 5: 127
Prose: "Sunday Reading"
undated
Box 5: 128
Prose: Thailand Piece"
2000 July
Box 5: 129
Prose: untitled
1976-1977, undated
Box 5: 130-132
Prose: untitled autobiographical bound writing
undated
Box 5: 133
Prose: "The addition"
undated
Box 6: 1
Prose: "The Basket Man"
undated
Box 6: 2
Prose: "The Blue Paintings"
1998
Box 6: 3
Prose: "The Faces of the Dead"
undated
Box 6: 4
Prose: "The four of us were together last Christmas..."
1981, Nov. 16
Box 6: 5
Prose: "The Gods"
undated
Box 6: 6
Prose: "The ground-pine"
undated
Box 6: 7
Prose: "The Island of the Green Woods"
undated
Box 6: 8
Prose: "The Kitchen Floor"
undated
Box 6: 9
Prose: "The Pastoral World in Virgil and Theocritus"
undated
Box 6: 10
Prose: "The Porch"
undated
Box 6: 11
Prose: "The Swing"
undated
Box 6: 12
Prose: "The Walk In White Creek"
undated
Box 6: 13
Prose: "There are still people around who enjoy communal living"
undated
Box 6: 14
Prose: "When I think of my mother I think of rain"
undated
Box 6: 15
Prose: Writings about Ralph
undated
Box 6: 16
Series 3. Personal
1969-2008
Articles
1989, 1990, undated
Box 11: 33
Articles: Clippings, Pamphlets
1998-2006, undated
Box 11: 34
Articles: Jane Cooper retires
undated
Box 11: 35
Articles: Richard Hoffman
1995, undated
Box 11: 36
Articles: Short Stories
undated
Box 11: 37
Articles: Short Stories
1989, 2000, undated
Box 11: 38
Articles: Short Stories
1995-2001, undated
Box 11: 39
Articles: Short Stories
undated
Box 11: 40
Astrological Chart
1998
Box 11: 41
Birthday Party Invitations
1995 Jan.
Box 11: 42

Booklet: Huntington Art Center Exhibition
1979
Box 11: 43
Books: BLOOD STORIES by Martha Ramsey
1996
Box 11: 44
Books: In Search of the Blues by Marybeth Hamilton
2008
Box 12: 1
Books: News Letters: A Magazine of Fine Writing: Literary Awards Special Issue
1988
Box 12: 2
Books: Scaffolding: New and Selected poems by Jane Cooper
Box 12: 3
Books: WHERE I STOPPED: German Translation
1997
Box 12: 4
Books: Telling a Memoir of Rape and Recovery by Patricia Weaver Francisco
1999
Box 12: 5
Car Accident
1989 Nov.
Box 12: 6
Courses: "4 American Poets" Course with Jane Cooper
1983
Box 12: 7
Courses: "Basic Themes in Mysticism"
1985
Box 12: 8
Courses: "Biographical Notes for Application to Louise Gluck's Writing Workshop"
undated
Box 12: 9
Courses: Bunting Institute Fellowship Program
1989-1993
Box 12: 10
Courses: "Explore Buddhism"
1999, undated
Box 12: 11
Courses: Grade School Assignments
undated
Box 12: 13
Courses: Graduate School Course Evaluation
1984-1986, undated
Box 12: 14
Courses: Grade School Readings
undated
Box 12: 15
Courses: Jane Cooper
1992, undated
Box 12: 18
Courses: Jane Cooper
1982, 1986, undated
Box 12: 19
Courses: Jane Cooper Conferences and Courses
1983-1986
Box 12: 20
Courses: "Mailing List"
1987-1989
Box 12: 23
Courses: "Model Mugging Basics"
1989 Jan.
Box 12: 24
Courses: Monhegan Artists Studios
1986
Box 12: 25
Courses: Opening the Heart Workshop, Spring Hill
1990
Box 12: 26
Courses: Siddha Yoga Correspondence Course
undated
Box 12: 27-28
Courses: Spirituality East + West
1985
Box 12: 29
Diploma: Trinity College
undated
Box 12: 31
Documents: Appraisal
2005 June
Box 12: 32
Documents: "Book Submission"
1989-1992
Box 12: 33
Documents: Bryn Mawr, Princeton
1971
Box 12: 35
Documents: Cleveland State University Poetry Center Agreement: Blood Stories
1994, undated
Box 12: 36
Documents: Consent to Publish Agreement
1998
Box 12: 37
Documents: Financial Aid Application
1970
Box 12: 38

Documents: Graduate School Papers
1984-1985
Box 12: 39
Documents: Grants, Awards, Submissions
1982-1983
Box 12: 40
Documents: Guidelines for Copyediting
1990 July
Box 12: 41
Documents: Handwriting Analysis
1989
Box 12: 42
Documents: Literature Program Grant Application
1993
Box 12: 43
Documents: "Names and Addresses"
1982, undated
Box 12: 44
Documents: Oxford University Press Contractor Agreement
2005
Box 12: 45
Documents: Passport and International Certificate of Vaccination
1969-1974
Box 12: 46
Documents: "Past Submissions"
1979-1989
Box 12: 47
Documents: Pine Manor College
1988-1992
Box 12: 48
Documents: Pine Manor College Staff Evaluation
1991-1992
Box 12: 49
Documents: "Portfolio"
1983, undated
Box 12: 50
Documents: Quotes
1995, undated
Box 12: 52
Documents: "Rejections"
1985-1989
Box 12: 54
Documents: Resume
undated
Box 12: 55
Documents: Reviews
undated
Box 12: 56
Documents: School District of New York and directory
1984, undated
Box 13: 1
Documents: School Reports and Programs
1962-1971
Box 13: 2
Documents: School Records and Reports
1960-1979
Box 13: 3
Documents: "Shrinks" writing
2006 Mar, undated
Box 13: 4
Drawings: artwork
undated
Box 13: 5
Drawings: Bruce Porter
1990
Box 13: 6
Drawings
1994-1995
Box 13: 7
Drawings: "Eggs"
undated
Box 13: 8
Drawings: "My Pastels"
undated
Box 13: 9
Finances: Trinity College
1971
Box 13: 13
Freelance Accounting
2001-2002
Box 13: 14-15
Freelance Accounting
1998-2000
Box 13: 16-18
Health: Addiction and Recovery Pamphlets
2007
Box 13: 19
Health: Healthy Home Workplace
1992-1993
Box 13: 20
Health: Medical and financial records
1973-1974
Box 13: 21
Health: "Medicine, Health"
2000-2004, undated

Box 13: 22
Health: "Sexual Abuse Therapy"
1991
Box 13: 23
Health: "Yoga"
1999, undated
Box 13: 24
"Humor"
1998, undated
Box 13: 25
ID Cards
undated
Box 13: 26
Map: Bucks County, PA
undated
Box 13: 27
Map: Hunterdon County, NJ
1989
Box 13: 28
Map: Putney Road Map
2003
Box 13: 29
Map: the Putney School
undated
Box 13: 30
Map: Visitor's Guide, Brattleboro, VT
1994-1995
Box 13: 31
Notes: "Freelance Writing"
undated
Box 13: 42
Notes: Mailing lists, clippings, other
2002, undated
Box 13: 43
Notes: "Reading Places"
1987, 1990, undated
Box 13: 45
Notes: Recent release fiction
1990
Box 13: 46
Notes: "Resources"
undated
Box 13: 47
Notes: small, fragments
undated
Box 13: 48
Notes: Spiritual
1994, undated
Box 13: 49
Notes: "Volunteering"
undated
Box 13: 51
Periodicals: Affordable travel newspaper article
2007 Apr.
Box 13: 52
Periodicals: Associated Writing Programs
1984 Sept.
Box 13: 53
Periodicals: Brattleboro Reformer
2007 Feb.
Box 13: 54
Periodicals: Coda: Poets and Writers Newsletter
1986
Box 13: 55
Periodicals: Magazines
1987-1988, 1992-1994, undated
Box 13: 56
Periodicals: passages north
1989
Box 13: 57-58
Periodicals: Poets and Writers
1986-1989
Box 14: 1-2
Periodicals: Poets and Writers
1993
Box 14: 3
Periodicals: Poets and Writers
1993-1994
Box 14: 4
Periodicals: Poets and Writers
1990-1997
Box 14: 5
Periodicals: Purple
undated
Box 14: 6
Periodicals: The Iowa Review: Volume Twelve Numbers Two/Three
1981
Box 14: 7
Periodicals: Segue Distributing
1991
Box 14: 8
Periodicals: Shank Painter 33
1993
Box 14: 9
Periodicals: Sojourner: The Women's Forum

1985 Aug.
Box 14: 10-11
Periodicals: Sounding East: Feature Poet: Martha Ramsey
1989
Box 14: 12
Periodicals: The Whittemore Newsletter
1986-1987
Box 14: 13
Periodicals: "Vermont poet Martha Ramsey emerges from Memory's dark past" newspaper article
1999 June
Box 14: 14
Periodicals: "Why Men Rape" article
1996 Apr.
Box 14: 15
Photographs
undated
Box 14: 16
Photographs: "Francis"
1997, undated
Box 14: 17
Photographs: Field
undated
Box 14: 19
Photographs: Publicity
undated
Box 14: 20
Photographs: Wedding Negatives
undated
Box 14: 21-22
Postcards: Blank
undated
Box 14: 25
Readings: Given, hosted, or attended
1987-1993, undated
Box 14: 26
Recipes
undated
Box 14: 27
Reviews and newspaper clippings
1988-1989
Box 14: 28
Solebury School Health Report
undated
Box 14: 29
Solebury School Yearbook
1971
Box 14: 30
Writings: "Bernie Siegel"
undated
Box 14: 34
Writings: Celebrations by Michael Cuddihy
1980
Box 14: 36
Writing: "Eric" journal entry
1984 July
Box 14: 37
Writings: Ethan Dufault
undated
Box 14: 38
Writings: Harold Brodkey: "His Son, In His Arms, In Light, Aloft"
1975 Aug.
Box 14: 39
Writings: Satari Shower by G.D. Hunter
2003 July
Box 14: 43
Series 4. Family
1815-2007
AJR - Autobiography, memoirs: family recollections and some journals, other inbound files
1971, undated
Box 15: 1
Artwork
various dates
Box 18
Childrens' school work and art
1970-1973, undated
Box 15: 2
Davenport: Articles about New Hope tapestries
undated
Box 15: 3
Davenport, Don Abbot and Ethel Ramsey: The New Hope business brochure
undated
Box 15: 4
Davenport, Don Abbot and Ethel Ramsey
1928, undated
Box 15: 5
Davenport, Ethel Ramsey: "Ladies Didn't," unpublished autobiography
undated
Box 18
Davenport, Ethel Ramsey: watercolor flowers
1932 Jan.
Box 15: 6
Family Correspondence: unknown
1979, undated
Box 15: 7
Gardening newspaper clippings

undated
Box 15: 8
Glass plate negatives: family
ca. 1916
Box 18
"Golden Touch" blouse designs
2007
Box 15: 9
Home and School Association Meeting
1971 Sept.
Box 15: 10
Photographs
1904
Box 15: 11
Photographs: "Amelia's 1/2 brother Harry Greenwood"
undated
Box 15: 12
Photographs: Amelia Ramsey
1948, undated
Box 15: 13
Photographs: "Bunny"
undated
Box 15: 14
Photographs: "Bunny, Amelia J.R. Coldspring"
undated
Box 15: 15
Photographs: "Alida, Loch, Hannah"
1964-1966, undated
Box 15: 16
Photographs: Alida (Porter) Ramsey
1957-1975, undated
Box 15: 17
Photographs: Charles Frederic Ruff
1848
Box 15: 18
Photographs: Charles Frederic Ruff, Annie Elizabeth Ruff, Annie Elizabeth Ramsey
1858
Box 15: 19
Photographs: Child in Snow
1917 Jan.
Box 15: 20
Photographs: Elizabeth Kerr Runnette
undated
Box 15: 21
Photographs: estate or building
ca.1815
Box 15: 22
Photographs: Ethel and Fred Ramsey
1915, 1950, undated
Box 15: 23
Photographs: Eugenia Ricaille
ca.1903-1904
Box 15: 24
Photographs: Frederic Ramsey Jr.
1918, 1922, undated
Box 15: 26
Photographs: "Jessie Carduner, Alice Wicker, Alida, Private, Ctairs, Trees"
1966 July
Box 15: 27
Photographs: (Johnston) Greenwood
undated
Box 15: 28
Photographs: Kennedy
1959
Box 15: 29
Photographs: Loch Ramsey
undated
Box 15: 30
Photographs: "Loch, Amelia, + Ann Charters in Schuck's Woods"
1966 Sept.
Box 15: 31
Photographs: Martha Ramsey
1970, undated
Box 15: 32
Photographs: "Moravian College and Bethlehem"
1966 July
Box 15: 33
Photographs: "Hannah, Alida, Cricket, Stardust"
1966
Box 15: 34
Photographs: "Harry Greenwood Sr."
undated
Box 15: 35
Photographs: Negatives
1977, undated
Box 15: 36-37
Photographs: "Pictures of woods around our house"
1966 May
Box 15: 38
Photographs: Ramsey family
1953-1959, undated
Box 15: 39
Photographs: Ricaille
ca.1903-1906
Box 15: 40

Photographs: "Ricky," unidentified
1916, undated
Box 15: 41
Photographs: Ruff Family
ca.1903-1908
Box 15: 42
Photographs: Scanned Copies
undated
Box 15: 43
Photographs: "Side of Road, Shucks Woods, Our Driveway"
1966 May
Box 15: 44
Photographs: "Toby, Road, Cricket, House"
1966
Box 15: 45
Photographs: unidentified
undated
Box 15: 46
Photographs: unidentified
undated
Box 15: 47
Photographs: Yearbook D.T.S. "Imposter"
1971
Box 15: 48
Publication: "One Hundred American Selections"
1966
Box 15: 49
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Elementary School diploma
1971
Box 15: 50
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): College Grants and Finances
1974-1975
Box 15: 51
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Correspondence
1964, 2001, undated
Box 15: 52
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha
1973-1980
Box 15: 53
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha
1981-1989
Box 15: 54
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha
1990-1998
Box 15: 55
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha
undated
Box 15: 56
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Early drawings and artwork
undated
Box 15: 57-58
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Grant Application
1976-1977
Box 15: 59
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Watercolor exhibition
1979 May-1979 June
Box 15: 60
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Grade School Records
1961-1971
Box 15: 61
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): School Papers and records
1968-1980
Box 15: 62
Ramsey, Alida (Porter): Solebury School
1971-1975
Box 15: 63
Ramsey, Amelia: Correspondence
1941-1979, undated
Box 15: 64-65
Ramsey, Amelia: Hunterdon County Medical Center
1989
Box 15: 66
Ramsey, Amelia: Photographs, newsclippings of drama group
1966
Box 15: 67
Ramsey, Amelia: "Jericho Mountain Players"
1966 Dec., 1974 Jan., undated
Box 15: 68
Ramsey, Amelia: Medical and insurance
1974-1978
Box 15: 69
Ramsey, Amelia: Reader's report on Blow My Blues Away by George Mitchell
1969 Apr.
Box 15: 70
Ramsey, Frederic and Amelia: FASOLA Shape-Note hymns
1970
Box 15: 71
Ramsey, Amelia: Resume
1973
Box 15: 72
Ramsey, Amelia: Medical and Insurance
1978
Box 15: 73
Ramsey, Amelia: Medical and Insurance
1978

Box 16: 1
Ramsey, Amelia: Medical and Insurance
1978-1979
Box 16: 2
Ramsey, Amelia: Prescriptions
1977-1978, undated
Box 16: 3
Ramsey, Amelia: Social Security Information
1978-1979
Box 16: 4-5
Ramsey, Amelia: Obituaries
1979
Box 16: 6
Ramsey, Amelia: Will, Debts, Estate
1979
Box 16: 7
Ramsey Sr., Charles Frederic: Home and Art Information
1926, undated
Box 16: 8
Ramsey Sr., Charles Frederic: Writing
undated
Box 16: 9
Ramsey Sr., Charles Frederic: Correspondence: Solebury School
1927
Box 16: 10
Ramsey Sr., Charles Frederic: Willand Estate
1942
Box 16: 11
Ramsey, Ethel Runnette: Christmas and Other Antique Cards
1920-1930
Box 16: 12-13
Ramsey, Ethel Runnette: will
1962
Box 16: 14
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Book: Been Here and Gone
1960
Box 16: 15
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Condolences
1979
Box 16: 16
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Conscientious Objecter, Selective Service
1940-1944, undated
Box 16: 17
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Family
1960 May
Box 16: 18
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Hubbard, Janet
1979-1985
Box 16: 19
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: manuscript editors
1940-1966
Box 16: 20
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Alida
1975-1987
Box 16: 21
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Amelia
1948-1975
Box 16: 22
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Beutner
1984-1987
Box 16: 23
Ramsey Jr., Frederic and Amelia: Correspondence: Ramsey Sr., C.F. and Ethel
1941-1961
Box 16: 24-25
Ramsey Jr., Frederic and Amelia: Correspondence: Ramsey Sr., C.F. and Ethel
1938-1948
Box 16: 26-27
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Loch
1968-1972
Box 16: 28
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha
1977-1987
Box 16: 29
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Runnette, Helen V.
1947-1983, undated
Box 16: 30
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Runnette, Helen V.
1962-1988
Box 16: 31
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Sancton, Thomas
1955-1974
Box 16: 32
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Seeger, Anthony
1992 June
Box 16: 33
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Silber, Irwin
1960 Dec.
Box 16: 34
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Unidentified, Bunny
1969-1988, undated
Box 16: 35
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Correspondence: Unidentified and Miscellaneous
1941-1990
Box 16: 36
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Been Here and Gone book cover scan

1960
Box 16: 37
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charles Edward Smith Papers and Miscellaneous
1949-1973, undated
Box 16: 38
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Carlton Brown Record Review
1946, undated
Box 16: 39
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charm Magazine
1946
Box 16: 40
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charm Magazine
1947
Box 16: 41
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charm Magazine
1948
Box 16: 42
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charm Magazine
1949
Box 16: 43
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Charm Magazine
1950
Box 16: 44
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Estate Planning
1991-1997, undated
Box 17: 1
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Excerpt from Martha Ramsey's journal"
1971 May
Box 17: 2
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: 50th Anniversary Retrospective Art Exhibit Booklet
1979 May-1979 June
Box 17: 3
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Fred Ramsey: the heartbeat of jazz research" Newspaper Article
1986 June
Box 17: 4
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Guitar Music - C.F. Ruff"
undated
Box 17: 5
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Historic New Orleans Papers Transfer
2006 July-2006 Aug.
Box 17: 6
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Jazz Record Book
1941 June
Box 17: 7
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Journal
1963 Dec.-1980 Dec.
Box 17: 8
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Leadbelly
1953, 1982, 1995
Box 17: 9
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Ma Rainey
undated
Box 17: 10
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Martha Plans
undated
Box 17: 11
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Papers of Frederic Ramsey Jr. Transfer Information
2006, undated
Box 17: 12
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Phonograph Record Companies"
undated
Box 17: 13
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Poems and Resume from Martha
1979-1982
Box 17: 14
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Professional Records and Articles
1953, 1986, undated
Box 17: 15
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: RCA Victor Picture Review, The Red Seal Picture article
1951 Sept.
Box 17: 16
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Records"
1946-1949
Box 17: 17-20
Ramsey Jr., Frederic and Amelia: "Records: Bach Bicentennial"
undated
Box 17: 21
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "The Story of Music of Africa in America"
undated
Box 17: 22
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Vita
undated
Box 17: 23
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Walnut Recipes
1973-1974
Box 17: 24
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: will
1978 Jan.
Box 17: 25
Ramsey Jr., Frederic: Williams, William C., Cal
1958, 1961
Box 17: 26
Ramsey Jr., Frederic and Amelia: wills
1978-1979
Box 17: 27

Ramsey Jr., Frederic: "Worth Hearing Classical Records"
1951 Aug.
Box 17: 28
Ramsey, Loch: Correspondence
1971
Box 17: 29
Ramsey, Loch: Correspondence: Ramsey, Martha
1987, undated
Box 17: 30
Ramsey, Loch: Grade School Records
1950-1961
Box 17: 31
Ramsey, Loch: Medical Records
1968-1974
Box 17: 32
Ramsey, Loch: Medical, Funeral, Estate
1995-2005
Box 17: 33
Ramsey, Loch: Poems
1956
Box 17: 34
Ramsey, Loch: Solebury School
1962-1968
Box 17: 35
Ramsey, Martha: Family Correspondence
1960-2002, undated
Box 17: 36
Ramsey, Loch: Hiram College
1964-1973
Box 17: 37
Ramsey, Madonne (Annie): Correspondence
1914, 1929
Box 17: 38
Ramsey, Milne: Biography of Milne Ramsey
1973
Box 17: 39
Ramsey, Milne: Chapellier Galleries Publication
1974
Box 17: 40
Ramsey, Milne: Exhibition Booklet
1978
Box 17: 41
Ramsey, Milne: Postcard Design
undated
Box 17: 42
Runnette, Joseph: Will and Estate
1947-1948
Box 17: 43
"Runnette Lineage"
1952
Box 17: 44
Runnette, Helen V.: Correspondence
1962-1973
Box 17: 45
Runnette, Helen V.: Correspondence
1973-1985
Box 17: 46
Runnette, Helen V.: Funeral and Estate
1977-1996, undated
Box 17: 47
Runnette, Helen V.: Correspondence: Transfer of Papers to Mt. Holyoke
1997 Oct.
Box 17: 48
Solebury School Booklet/Brochure
1972-1973
Box 17: 49
Solebury School Documents and Correspondence
1970-1973
Box 17: 50
Solebury School Headmaster Correspondence and Documents
1971 Oct.-1972 Apr.
Box 17: 51
Solebury School Meetings, Reports, Financial Documents
1966, 1971-1973
Box 17: 52
The Old New York Road Caller: The New Hope Number publication
1936 Oct.
Box 17: 53
Unidentified
undated
Box 17: 54
Valentine Pop-Up Card
undated
Box 17: 55

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Gift of Martha Ramsey, 2018.

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