



Samuel E. Murray Papers

1961-1989

14 boxes (7 linear foot)

Call no.: MS 568

Collection overview

One of the pioneers in the ephemera trade, Samuel E. Murray (1906-1989) was a long time antiquarian bookman, based at his home in Wilbraham, Mass. Born on Christmas Day, 1906, Murray interrupted his college studies to go to sea, but after the Depression left him unemployed, he landed a position as sales representative for McGraw-Hill and, later, G. & C. Merriam and other firms. Always an avid book collector, Murray left the publishing industry in 1970 to become a full time bookseller. Without ever advertising or issuing catalogs, he developed a wide reputation among dealers and collectors for his keen eye and perspicacity with rare and uncommon books. A generalist by trade, Murray had a particular fondness for colorplate books and travel literature, but was renowned both for his extensive reference library and for recognizing early on the value of ephemera. After a lengthy bout with myelofibrosis, Murray died at home on June 4, 1989.

The Murray Papers contain correspondence between Murray and a range of his fellow booksellers and clients, as well as his extensive card files on fellow book dealers and wants lists. The collection offers insight into the operations of a well-known antiquarian bookman during the 1970s and 1980s.

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[Books and book history](#)[Massachusetts \(West\)](#)

Background on Samuel E. Murray

Samuel Murray was born on December 25, 1906, in Sedalia, Missouri, and spent most of his childhood there until his family moved to Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1916. He attended Columbia University where he studied engineering for four years of a six year program but did not finish as he became interested in other pursuits.

After college, Murray went to sea, serving as a yeoman engineer on both passenger and freight ships for various shipping companies, rising to the rank of Assistant Purser during his four year career. During the Great Depression he was unemployed for a time until 1932, when he landed his first job in the book industry as a sales representative for McGraw-Hill. He was with that firm for about four years until they shut down many of their operations. For the next couple of years he worked for a company that sold photographic services for high school yearbooks, until he returned to the publishing industry with G & C Merriam. His job there had him selling dictionaries to retail bookstores.

During this time of his life he was living in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he met his wife, Josephine, at his aunt's home one day. Both said it was love at first sight and they were married in 1939.

At the start of the Second World War, Murray left the publishing industry and joined Bethlehem Steel Company where he was an inspector of large bombs before rejoining Merriam. Although he accepted a position in California, his stay was brief. Because Jo did not like it there, the couple moved to Wilbraham, Massachusetts, in 1943 and remained there for the rest of their lives.

Murray left Merriam in 1955 to become an independent publisher's representative for firms such as David McKay and the University of Oklahoma Press, covering a territory that included New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. He continued with that career until 1970 when he went full time into the antiquarian book business.



Samuel Murray, 1966

Murray's interest in books began as a child when his family moved to New York. Throughout his teenage years and into adulthood he visited many used bookstores and he rapidly began to accumulate a large collection of mostly non-fiction books about the sea, travel, exploration, and biographies. In 1970 his collection was overflowing, so he decided that his only option was to become a bookseller. He gave up his job as a publisher's representative.

All of Murray's business dealings were conducted out of his home in Wilbraham. He never advertised and he never issued a catalog. All of his business was by word of mouth, and in the early years most of his sales were to other book dealers whom he had met during his years of collecting. Later on, Murray's reputation spread and booksellers from all across the country, and the world, wrote or visited requesting books. Murray's style was easygoing and warm. He would invite prospective buyers into his home and spend hours with them going over his collection and having lively conversations about books in general. And at the end of the visit his wife, Jo, would cook a wonderful meal for everyone. People frequently wrote to Murray to say how much they enjoyed spending time at his home.

During his career as an antiquarian book dealer, Murray joined several professional organizations, including the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA), and he participated in many book fairs in the New England area, including all of the Boston book fairs. He also became a pioneer in the ephemera trade, being one of the first people to recognize the cultural and historical importance of ephemera. Murray was one of the founding members of the Ephemera Society of America (ESA) when that organization came into being in 1980,

and he received the Maurice Rickards award from ESA posthumously in 1997, for distinguished service in the world of ephemera.

In 1984, Murray was stricken with myelofibrosis, a rare disease of the bone marrow. After many hospital stays and blood transfusions, the disease went into remission in 1986, but returned in early 1989. Samuel Murray died on June 4, 1989.

Scope of collection

The Murray collection contains papers amassed during Sam Murray's career as both an independent publisher's representative and antiquarian book and ephemera dealer between the years of 1961 and 1989. These papers include business correspondence, business contact cards, invoices and bills of sales, and book trade publications including book catalogs and book fair brochures. There is also a small quantity of personal correspondence and effects.

The collection is approximately 7 linear feet, arranged in four series: 1. Business and personal correspondence. 2. Business Contact cards. 3. Invoices and bills of sales. 4. Book trade publications. The arrangement scheme for the collection was imposed during processing in the absence of a usable original order.

Series descriptions

Series 1. Business and Personal Correspondence	1958-1997	2 linear feet
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Series 1 is comprised primarily of business letters between Murray and his clients, including want lists, requests for books or ephemera, or appraisals. Murray's responses are often included. The letters are sorted in rough alphabetical order, by name of company or last name of individual. If no last name is available, the latter are arranged alphabetically by first name. Frequent names that appear are Leonard Finn, Josephine Starr, Manfred Gunther, Bob Merriam, Benjamin Tighe, James Pike, John Liebfried, George Rinsland, and Doris Frohnsdorff.

Series 1 also contains the following business related material: Articles on the business of rare books and collectibles, newspaper articles on other dealers in the business, articles and lists of missing/stolen books within the trade, Sam Murray's personal business cards throughout the years, invoices, notecards and stationary with Samuel Murray letterhead, and appointment planners for the years 1979-1989. There is much material on Murray's association with trade organizations, particularly the Antiquarian Booksellers of America Association, the Ephemera Society of America, and the Poplar Ridge Religious Society of Friends.

Among the small array of personal papers in the series are letters, postcards, holiday cards, wedding invitations, and invitations from Columbia University and the Delta Phi Fraternity for reunions.

Series 2. Business Contact Cards

**ca.1961-
1989**

**2.5 linear
feet**

Series comprised of business contact cards. Most are handwritten on index cards, but some are on pieces of paper or are formal business cards. The contacts consist of groups, businesses, or individuals, and have varying degrees of information on them. Some just have addresses, while others have phone numbers and buyer information such as books wanted.

The business cards are unsorted.

Series 3. Invoices and Bills of Sale

**1971-1987
(*bulk*1986)**

**0.5 linear
feet**

Series comprised of invoices and bills of sales during the years of 1971-1987 with a bulk date of 1986. Invoices and bills of sale contain information and prices on books and ephemera bought from Sam, and by Sam, during this period. There is also a receipt of total sales and total purchases by Sam for the year of 1986.

Series 4. Book Trade Publications

1961-1989

2 linear feet

Series comprised of publications of the books trade: book, ephemera, and art catalogues from various businesses and dealers, local book and antique dealer listings/brochures, book and ephemera fair brochures and contracts, and auction brochures.

Inventory

Series 1. Business and Personal Correspondence	1958-1997	2 linear feet
Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America Contents: Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA) papers: General ABAA newsletters/memos, membership applications and directories, meeting minutes (chrono), constitution and bylaws, ABAA Guidelines, ABAA Far East trip itinerary	1972-1987	Box 1: 1
Appointment planners Contents:	1979-1989	Box 1: 2
Appointment planners Contents:	1984-1989	Box 1: 3
Appointment planners Contents:	1984-1988	Box 1: 4
Association memberships Contents: General memberships/associations: International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, Mass/RI Antiquarian Booksellers meeting minutes and treasurer's report from 1988, Bibliographic Society of the University of Virginia (1973-1974), Moravian Archives Development Council (1973), American Historical Print Collector's Society, Inc. membership directories 1979 and 1982, donation receipts for various organizations and charities, letter of request to start antiquarian booksellers club for Western Mass.	1973-1988	Box 1: 5
Book Trade Articles Contents: Articles on the business: how to buy at auctions, how to collect and handle rare books, collectors handbook on marks on pottery and porcelain	undated	Box 1: 6
Business Correspondence: A-C Contents:	1962-1989	Box 1: 7-9
Business Correspondence: D-Z Contents:	1961-1989	Box 2: 1-12
Ephemera Society of America Contents: Ephemera Society of America: program brochures for Ephemera conferences (including 1st world ephemera congress), contributions and subscriptions, treasurer's report from 1988	1978-1988	Box 3: 1
Ephemera Society of America award Contents: Posthumous Maurice Rickards award by Ephemera Society of America - 1997. Guest book and copy of commemorative speech by Anne Bromer	1997	Box 3: 2
Grolier Club Contents: Grolier Club: Membership Directory (1884-1984), Gazette	1984-1987	Box 3: 3
Letterhead business stationary Contents: Personal business cards, invoice paper, notecards, and stationary all with Sam Murray letterhead. Several different personal business cards throughout the years	undated	Box 3: 4
News clippings: Book trade and personal Contents: All newspaper articles: colleagues in the business, 3 personal: on son's engagement, assault on wife by assailant, observance of Founders Day at Wilbraham Academy where sons attended school (pic of Sam and wife, Jo, are featured)	1963-1988	Box 3: 5
Newsletters and journals: various Contents: Various ephemera journals 1987, 1989, 1990, various other newsletters and journals from other organizations 1971-1987, Book Source Monthly 1988, AB Bookman's Weekly 1977 and 1989 (1989 issue is dedicated to Sam Murray and has an article on him entitled, "Sam Murray's Heritage: Generosity, Wisdom, and the Love of Books", by Jacob L. Chernofsky	1971-1989	Box 3:
Newsletters: "Ephemera News" Contents:	1981-1989	Box 4: 1
Newsletters: "The Ephemerist" Contents:	1985-1987	Box 4: 2
Personal correspondence: A-Z	1961-1988	Box 4: 3

Contents: Personal correspondence: includes letters, post cards, wedding invitations, holiday cards, Columbia Univ . Class reunion invitation, Delta Phi fraternity anniversary celebration invitation

Personal effects	1958-1987	Box 4: 4
Contents: Personal effects: paperwork on eye donation to Boston Eye Bank and body donation to Harvard Medical School, 2 playbills that son and daughter had parts in, car insurance information and claims on damage received at NY parking garage, unknown photo of woman		
Personal receipts	1965-1986	Box 4: 5
Contents: Personal travel and home improvement receipts		
Popular Ridge Religious Society of Friends	1972-1985	Box 4: 6
Contents: Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), 1972-1975 and 1985: Financial reports, contribution letters/receipts, list of officers and committees, state of society report, and current budget report		
Stolen and missing books	1971-1989	Box 4: 7
Contents: Information on stolen books/art: letters, list of books missing/stolen, newspaper articles. Also a "black list" of dealers with bad debts		

Series 2. Business Contact Cards

ca.1961-1989 2.5 linear feet

Business contact cards	undated	Box 5: No folders
Contents: Contact cards: Most are on index cards, some are on paper		
Business contact cards	undated	Box 6: No folders
Contents: Contact cards and one bound journal of contacts		
Business contact cards	undated	Box 7: No folders
Contents:		
Business contact cards	undated	Box 8: No folders
Contents:		
Business contact cards	undated	Box 9: No folders
Contents:		
Wants list contact cards	undated	Box Oversized item: No folders
Contents: Oversized folder of contact cards organized alphabetically by subject wanted by buyer		

Series 3. Invoices and Bills of Sale

1971-1987 (bulk 1986) 0.5 linear feet

Invoices and bills of sale: A-Z	1971-1987	Box 10: 1-7
Contents: Invoices/Bills of sales: Letters A through Z. In front of box there is sales total receipt and purchase total receipt from year 1986		

Series 4. Book Trade Publications

1961-1989 2 linear feet

Auction brochures: Connecticut	1985-1989	Box 11: 1
Contents:		
Auction brochures: M-Z	1967-1975	Box 11: 2
Contents:		
Book and antique dealer listings	1972-1986	Box 11: 3

Contents:		
Book fair applications and contracts	1972-1987	Box 11: 4
Contents:		
Book fair brochures	1971-1987	Box 11: 5-7
Contents:		
Book trade catalogs: A-G	1963-1989	Box 12: 1-5
Contents: Book, ephemera, and art catalogs: letters A through G		
Book trade catalogs: H-M	1965-1989	Box 13: 1-6
Contents: Book, ephemera, and art catalogs: letters H through M		
Book trade catalogs: N-Z	1960-1991	Box 14: 1-5
Contents: Book, ephemera, and art catalogs: letters N through Z		
Ephemera fair brochures and contracts	1980-1987	Box 14: 6
Contents:		

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Paul Murray, July 2008 (accession number 2008-145).

Processing Information

Processed by Jennifer Sweet, October 2012.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use [\(More information](#))

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Search terms

Subjects

- Antiquarian booksellers--Massachusetts.
- Printed ephemera--Collectors and collecting--Massachusetts.

Contributors

- Murray, Samuel E., 1906-1989[**main entry**]
- Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America.
- Ephemera Society of America.

Link to similar **SCUA** collections

Books and book history

Massachusetts (West)