

Mary White Ovington Collection

Papers, 1854-1948  
6.25 linear feet

Accession # 323  
OCLC#

The papers of Mary White Ovington were placed in the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs by Mrs. Carrie Burton Overton, Miss Ovington's secretary, in 1969, 1971 and 1973 and were opened for research in 1973.

Mary White Ovington was born in Brooklyn in 1865. In 1895, after education in private schools and at Radcliffe College, she began a career as a social worker. From 1904 on, she devoted herself to the particular problems of Negro populations in New York and other cities. In 1909 she participated in the founding of the NAACP. She remained an officer and prominent figure in the organization until her retirement in 1947.

Miss Ovington was the author of several books and numerous articles. Her history of the NAACP, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, is in both the Archives Library and the Wayne State Purdy Library collections. Miss Ovington died in New York in 1951.

Important subjects covered in the collection are:

Unpublished autobiographical material by Miss Ovington  
Living conditions of the poor in New York City in the early 1900s  
Negroes in the American South in the early 1900s  
Foundation and growth of the NAACP  
The Civil Rights Movement, in general, up to 1947  
Ovington family history, 1800-1948

Among the important correspondents are: (an index to the location of these letters will be found on the last page of the guide)

Jane Addams	Herbert Lehman
Arna Bontemps	Claude McKay
Benjamin Cardozo	Elmer Rice
John White Chadwick	Robert H. Schauffler
Lorenza Cole	A. B. Spingarn
Babette Deutsch	J. E. Spingarn
W. E. B. DuBois	Carl Van Vechten
Louis Gannett	Oswald Garrison Villard
William J. Ghent	Lyman Ward
Shirley Graham	Beatrice Webb
Roland Hayes	Walter White
John Haynes Holmes	Roy Wilkins
Langston Hughes	Richard Wright
James Weldon Johnson	Max Yergan

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1/2 manuscript boxes

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Non-manuscript material

Approximately 50 photographs relating to Miss Ovington and the NAACP have been placed in the Archives' Audio-Visual Collections.

Series 1  
Box 1  
Autobiographical Writings

The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the period from the 1860's to 1933. The material appears to have been written between 1910 and 1933.

Box 1

- 1-5. "Reminiscences," Baltimore Afro-American, 1932. (photocopy)
- 6-9. "Reminiscences" (original)
- 10. "Reminiscences" (fragment)
- 11-25. Autobiographical manuscripts
- 26-27. Manuscript on Jamaica, 1910
- 28-31. Diary of a trip, 1933

Series II  
Boxes 1-3  
Correspondence

Cards, letters, notes and telegrams sent to Miss Ovington from professional associates and friends. The files are arranged chronologically and cover the period from 1872 to 1948. (For correspondence regarding published books, see Series V)

Box 1

- 32-40. 1872-1927

Box 2

- 1-38. 1928-1947

Box 3

- 1-7. 1948 and no date

Series III  
Box 3  
Published Writings

Miss Ovington pasted copies of most of her short publications in scrapbooks. Since the pages are now disintegrating, most of the material in this series has been photocopied. The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the years 1904-1940.

Box 3

8. "The Penny Paper," "By the Playground," "John White Chadwick; In Memory"
9. "The Colored Women in Domestic Service in New York City"
10. "The Settlement in America"
11. "Atlanta, City Nursing Dead Ideals," "The Negro Home in New York"
12. "The Negro and the New York Tenement"
13. "The Negro and the Trades Unions in New York"
14. "Working Girl's Clubs"
- 15-16. Reports to the New York Post (fragments)
17. "Fresh Air Work Among Colored Children in New York," letter to Boston Guardian
18. "A Life of Service" (fragment)
19. "Negroes on Firmer Ground," "Some Publications regarding the American Negro," "A Mount Discovery Musing"
20. "Closing the Little Black Schoolhouse" (fragment) "The Negro in America, Today and Tomorrow," "On the New-time Negro"
21. "The Status of the Negro in the United States," "Revolution"
22. "How the NAACP Began"
23. "The White Brute," "Letter to the Editor of the Masses," "Mary Phagan Speaks"
24. "On Christmas Eve," two untitled fragments
25. "The United States in Porto Rico"

Box 3 (cont'd)

26. "Gretchen Talks to Her Doll," article in the New York Post
- 27-29. "The Shadow"
30. "Revisiting the South"
31. Letter to The Forum, "Book Chat," letter to The Nation
32. "A Christmas Happening"
33. "A Christmas Tale"
34. "In the Land Where the Sons of the Prophet are the Children of France"
35. "The Spirit of John Brown," "The Son of a Carpenter"
36. Two book reviews, untitled fragment, "Nativity"

Series IV  
Box 4  
Personal Financial Accounts

The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the years 1873-1883, and 1915-1947.

Box 4

1. 1873-1883 (Account book)
- 2-17. 1915-1947

Series V  
Boxes 4-5  
Published Books: Records and Manuscripts

The series contains correspondence, contracts and other papers relating to the publication of Zeke (1931) and The Walls Came Tumbling Down (1947). Included are three partial drafts of The Walls. The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the years 1930-1947.

Box 4

18. Correspondence on Zeke
19. Notes on Zeke
20. Publisher's agreement on Zeke

Box 4 (cont'd)

21. Royalty statements for Zeke and Upward Path
22. Correspondence on The Walls and publisher's contract
- 23-26. Correspondence on The Walls
- 27-32. The Walls Came Tumbling Down, first draft
- 33-37. The Walls, second draft

Box 5

- 1-21. The Walls, third draft
- 22-24. The Walls, final draft
- 25-31. The Walls, miscellaneous papers  
Series VI  
Boxes 5A-6  
Early Unpublished Writings

The files are arranged alphabetically, by title. The material appears to have been written between 1880 and 1900.

Box 5A

1. "The Celtic Sept"
2. "The Harvard Annex"
3. "Heroines of English Novels"
4. "Herrick as a Poet of Nature," "Charles Dickens"
5. "Literature for Young Girls"
6. "My Gallery"
7. "Ode to a Lamb Chop"
8. "The Order"
9. "Parsnips For Two"
10. "Peterkin Journal"
11. "Sidney Lanier"
12. "Tip-side Up"

- Box 6      1896 and no date
- 1-2. "A Wealth of Fancy"
  3. "Young Unitarian Women"
  4. Miscellaneous themes
  - 5-13. Untitled novel
  14. Untitled story

Series VII  
Boxes 6-7  
Later Unpublished Writings

The files are arranged alphabetically, by title. The material appears to have been written between 1900 and 1942.

Box 6

15. "Alias Vera Fortune"
16. "Birds"
- 17-28. The Boy Detective (novel)
- 29-34. The Pokam River Mystery (radio drama)
35. "Catching a Baby" (a series of photographs, "Alabama Midwives," in the Audio-Visual Collection, accompanies this text)
36. "Christmas Peace"
37. "Contributions of the German Immigration to American Life"
38. "Enter Babbitt" and other sketches
39. "Georgia, Invisable Empire State"
40. "The Gull"

Box 7

1. "Her Mysterious Journey"
2. "The Nodding Head"
3. "One Fight More"
4. From a packet marked "plans for plays, MWO-HDO"
- 5-6. Verse
7. "The Price of a Coat"
8. "Scientific Approach to Peace"
9. "Shopping Yesterday"
- 10-11. "The Spode Cup"
12. "The Cycle of a Race" and "The Story of the American Negro"
13. "To Each His Fear"
14. "What Zeke Found"
- 15-16. "Winston, The 'Free County' of Alabama"
17. "Womens Clubs"
18. "Zillah"
19. Manuscript Fragment
- 20-23. Miscellaneous sketches on political themes
- 24-25. Untitled play in Four acts

Series VIII  
Boxes 7-8  
Ovington Family Papers

The series includes correspondence and miscellaneous writing by, or sent to, members of the Ovington family, including Miss Ovington herself. The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the period 1854-1942.

Box 7

26. Ovington Family genealogy
- 27-36. Theodore Ovington to Louise Ketchum Ovington



Box 7 (cont'd)

37-40. Typed copies of 27-36.

Box 8

1. "Poems" (an anthology, marked "L. Ovington from Annie Chadwick")
2. Verse by Louise Ovington
- 3-6. Miss Ovington to her family
7. Verse and writings with accompanying letter
8. John White Chadwick manuscript on Hebrews 2:15
9. "Faithful Remembrance," manuscript ascribed to Henry Ward Beecher
- 10-11. Dr. N.E. Gorke-Davis to C.K. Ovington
12. C.K. Ovington, miscellaneous correspondence
- 13-14. Mrs. C.K. Ovington, miscellaneous correspondence
- 15-22. Yawwiga Smyk to Mrs. C.K. Ovington
- 23-26. Jennie Harding to Mrs. C.K. Ovington
27. Postcards from Gotts Island, Maine
- 28-29. Elizabeth W. Kingsbury, (Betty) to Miss Ovington
- 30-33. Elizabeth W. Kingsbury, "The Lives of Two Young Shepherds"
34. Elizabeth W. Kingsbury, 3 pencil drawings
- 35-39. Correspondence concerning Georgia Ovington
40. Family to Miss Ovington

Series IX  
Boxes 9-10  
The Diaries of Charles K.Ovington

The original manuscripts were returned to the family after the following photocopies were made. The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the years 1856-1929.

Box 9

1. 1856-1874
- 2-21. 1881-1892
- 22-39. 1905-1923

Box 10

- 1-10. 1924-1929

Series X  
Box 10

Writing by Friends

Many of Miss Ovington's friends, like herself, wrote stories and verse, examples of which make up this series. The files are arranged alphabetically, by author's name. The material is not dated.

Box 10

11. Doris Alexander, "A Chest of Drawers"
12. Rosalie M. Jonas, verse
13. Ruth Moore, verse
14. Beth Torrey, "Little Elephant"
- 15-24. Elisa Van Wyck verse and related writing
25. Miscellaneous, verse

Series XI  
Boxes 10-11  
Miscellaneous

Items relating to Miss Ovington's career or careers of her friends and associates. The files are arranged in chronological order and cover the period from 1905 to 1948.

Box 10

26. Book of Birthdays and Wedding Dates
27. Sydney Oliver "The White Man's Burden at Home"
28. Articles on Miss Ovington
29. NAACP branches list, Atlanta Conference list
30. James Weldon Johnson, "Self-Determining Haiti"

Box 11

1. "Book Chats"
2. "The Civic Club," Program of the Second Unitarian Congregational Society
3. Mabel Carney, "African Letters"
4. Marcet Haldeman-Julius, "The Defendants in the Sweet Trial," in Haldeman Julius Monthly
5. Haldeman-Julius, "Clarence Darrow's Defense of a Negro"
6. "Cheers" (student handbook), Tuskegee Institute
7. Lorenza Cole, papers
8. Christmas card lists
9. Christmas card lists
10. Christmas card lists
11. James Weldon Johnson Dinner Program
12. "Negroes Holding Presidential Appointment Offices Under the Roosevelt Administration, 1933-1937"
13. "Visits to Branches," "Report to (NAACP) Board by Miss Ovington re: Southern Trip"
14. Shirley Graham, "Spirituals to Symphonies"

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Box 11 (cont'd)

15. Miscellaneous articles and souvenirs
16. Address books
17. George Padmore, articles
18. Miscellaneous articles and souvenirs
19. William H. Hastie, "On Clipped Wings, The Story of Jim Crow in the Army Air Corps"
20. Appointment calendar
21. Atlanta University Bulletin
22. W.E.B. Du Bois, reports on Pan African Congresses
23. George M. Houser, "Erasing the Color Line"
- 24-35. NAACP minutes and bulletins, 1946-1947

Box 12

- 1-6. NAACP minutes and bulletins, 1946-1947
7. New Africa (Bulletin)
8. Robert F. Wagner, "Service and Conduct of Negro Soldiers"
9. From Mary White Ovington's "Book File"
10. "Notes on Conversation between Miss Ovington and Mr. (Walter) White"
11. Minutes of the Negro Labor Assembly
12. Helen Gahagan Douglas, "The Negro Soldier"
13. CORE, "Corelator"
14. Matthew Browning, "My Tour Through Dixie"
15. NAACP tributes to Mary White Ovington
16. Book reviews and lists
17. Housing, business and the American Negro
- 18-24. Letters in C. Overton's shorthand transcription
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