



The New York Public Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

Harold Ross letters to William Shawn

1942-1947

MssCol 24599

Processed by Susan M. Kline, 2018.

Summary

Creator: Ross, Harold Wallace, 1892-1951

Title: Harold Ross letters to William Shawn

Date: 1942-1947

Size: 0.1 linear feet (1 folder)

Source: Purchased from Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2018.

Abstract: The Harold Ross letters to William Shawn date from 1942 to 1947 and consist of internal *New Yorker* memoranda (mostly written by Ross to Shawn) regarding various articles; a typescript review about Alfred Kinsey, written by St. Clair McKelway; and a carbon copy of a letter to James Thurber.

Preferred citation: Harold Ross letters to William Shawn, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Susan M. Kline, 2018.

Creator History

Harold Ross (1892-1951), founded the *New Yorker* and was the magazine's editor-in-chief, until his death. Assistant editor William Shawn (1907-1992) having worked closely with Ross since 1939, succeeded him.

Scope and Content Note

The Harold Ross letters to William Shawn consist of internal *New Yorker* memoranda (mostly written by Ross to Shawn) regarding various articles; a typescript of a review by St. Clair McKelway and a carbon copy of a letter to James Thurber. Items are dated 1942-1947; some typed memos bear revisions and

notes in pencil.

The collection indicates Ross (known for his detailed memos) and Shawn candidly discussed a review submitted by former *New Yorker* reporter and editor, St. Clair McKelway. In the six page article McKelway declared Alfred Kinsey a genius and described Kinsey's forthcoming book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Ross and Shawn wrestled to make a decision about the piece; one editor, presumably Ross, regarded it as too sentimental and compared it to a Victorian novel. They ultimately declined to publish it because of its overt sexual content and the fact McKelway had only read one chapter of the not yet published book.

The other memos mention Janet Flanner, Joseph Lewis, Brendan Gill, *Time*, and *Life*. In his 1947 letter to Thurber, Ross refers to Thomas Carlyle's doubts on the subject of genius.

Key Terms

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Drafts (documents)

Memorandums

Occupations

Editors.

Subjects

Periodicals -- Publishing

Names

Kinsey, Alfred C. (Alfred Charles), 1894-1956

McKelway, St. Clair, 1905-1980

Ross, Harold Wallace, 1892-1951

Shawn, William

New Yorker Magazine, Inc.,

Container List

- f. 1 Memorandum, Correspondence, and Kinsey Review Draft 1942-1947