

**The New York Public Library - Stephen A. Schwarzman Building**  
**Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Guide to the

**Elizabeth Wade White papers**

1901-1994 (bulk 1923-1976)

MssCol 5990

Compiled by Lea Jordan, March 2011

## **Summary**

**Creator:** White, Elizabeth Wade, 1906-1994

**Title:** Elizabeth Wade White papers, 1901-1994 (bulk 1923-1976)

**Size:** 9.07 linear feet (22 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Peter H. Judd, 1997

**Abstract:** Elizabeth Wade White (1906-1994) was an author, self taught scholar, amateur poet, and activist. The Elizabeth Wade White papers document her passion for political action and the welfare of others, as well as the difficulties of coming to terms with her sexuality and her position in life.

**Access:** Advance notice required. Apply at <http://www.nypl.org/mssref>.

**Preferred citation:** Elizabeth Wade White papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

## **Related collections**

Elizabeth Wade White .Mattatuck Museum .[www.mattatuckmuseum.org](http://www.mattatuckmuseum.org)

Elizabeth Wade White .New England Historic Genealogical Society.[library.nehgs.org](http://library.nehgs.org)

## **Creator history**

Elizabeth Wade White (1906-1994) was an author, self taught scholar, amateur poet, and activist. Educated through the high school level in Middlebury, Connecticut, she later studied sculpture in Rome and New York. In the 1930s she moved to New York City, and supported Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal while participating in investigations of labor conditions in mining and industrial towns.

In the late 1930s White moved to Dorset, England – telling her family she was going to research Anne Bradstreet. She actually intended to meet up with Sylvia Townsend Warner and her partner Valentine Ackland and participate with the American Friends Service Committee as a relief worker in Spain. She made several trips to Spain in 1937 and 1938, with her parents sending telegrams in increasing amounts asking her to return to the United States.

In late 1938 White suffered a nervous breakdown, and left Spain for Dorset where she spent Christmas with Ackland and Warner, eventually becoming Ackland's lover. She took her own house in Dorset and

took in a Spanish refugee couple, Mr. and Mrs. B.M. Smith.

During the war she returned to the United States to live in New York City, volunteering for the Red Cross as an ambulance driver and raising awareness for Russian War Relief. In the fall of 1945, she moved to her grandmother's house in Middlebury, "The Patch" with the woman who would become her life partner, Evelyn Holahan.

At the close of the 1940's White and Holahan started "White & Holahan, Books," a used and rare book business run out of their home. During this time White was an active member of the Progressive Party, dabbled in Communism, and wrote many letters in support of Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign.

In 1950, without an undergraduate degree, White was accepted to Oxford University on the basis of research she had already completed on the poet Anne Bradstreet. She graduated in 1953, and published *The Life of Anne Bradstreet: The Tenth Muse* in 1971. After graduating from Oxford, White maintained a home both in Oxford and in Middlebury. Holahan died in 1985, and White remained at "The Patch" until the end of her life, maintaining her many close friendships through correspondence.

### Scope and content note

The Elizabeth Wade White papers document her passion for political action and the welfare of others, as well as the difficulties of coming to terms with her sexuality and her position in life. The papers consist of personal correspondence, arranged by name and date, subject files documenting White's activities and interests, photographs of White and her family, and her writings, which include both poetry and articles written for various publications. These papers are a strong resource for insights into early 20th century women's education, social activism and war work, and the upper classes and sexuality.

Users should note a guide was created by Peter Judd of the totality of White's papers before they were donated. Materials referencing Waterbury, Connecticut were donated to the Mattatuck Museum. The bulk of White's Anne Bradstreet materials were donated to the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston. The remainder of the papers covered in the guide are contained in this collection. Guide box numbers are no longer valid, but users should be able to use this aid in tandem with the old guide to complete their research.

### Arrangement

The Elizabeth Wade White papers are organized into the following series:

- I. Correspondence (by name), 1917-1994
- II. Correspondence (by date), 1906-1969
- III. Diaries, 1919-1994
- IV. Subject Files, 1923-1950
- V. Photographs, 1901-1990
- VI. Writings, 1928-1978

### Key terms

#### Subjects

American Red Cross  
Lesbian authors  
Russian War Relief, Inc.  
Women authors  
World War II

### Places

Dorset (England)  
Middlebury (Conn.)

**Names**

Ackland, Valentine

Powys, Theodore Francis, 1875-1953

Warner, Sylvia Townsend, 1893-

White, Elizabeth Wade, 1906-1994

## Container list

### I. Correspondence (by name), 1917-1994

This series includes letters from White's most frequent correspondents, primarily close friends and family members. Family letters mostly convey home news – frequent correspondents include Mary Wade White (her mother), Peter Haring Judd (her cousin), and her brother Henry Wade White. Letters from family members often reflect the discrepancies between the social path the Whites had imagined for their daughter and the one she was choosing to pursue. Other letters of interest include those from her lover Valentine Ackland, Valentine's partner the author Sylvia Townsend Warner, and White's partner Evelyn Holahan. The letters between these three women and White are often fraught with tension, as Ackland openly professed to loving White but refused to leave Warner. Other lifelong friends and correspondents included Janet Machen (Sylvia Warner's niece), George Hamilton, and Doug McKee.

- b.1 f.1 Ackland, Ruth, 1938-1961
- b.1 f.2-5 Ackland, Valentine, 1931-1959
- b.2 f.1-4 Ackland, Valentine, 1960-1969
  - b.2 f.5 Bartlett, Henrietta, 1934
  - b.2 f.6 Beecham, Carola, 1962-1992
  - b.2 f.7 Cary, Joyce , 1953
  - b.2 f.8 Clark, Stephen, 1937
- b.3 f.1 Cole, Katherine Bullock , 1935-1950
- b.3 f.2 Crane, Alexander , 1937-1939
- b.3 f.3 Cummings, John J. Jr, 1934
- b.3 f.4 De La Mere, Walter, 1924
- b.3 f.5 De La Morte, Helen, 1940
- b.3 f.6 Delancey, Darragh, 1933-1934
- b.3 f.7 Fleischner, Charles M. , 1937
- b.3 f.8 Ford, George Newton , 1934-1943
- b.3 f.9 Frietas, Geoffrey, 1940
- b.3 f.10 Gabo, Naum , 1957
- b.3 f.11 Gardner, Helen, 1964-1985
- b.3 f.12 Greene, Vivian, 1971-1986
- b.3 f.13 Gregory, Alyse, 1949
- b.3 f.14 Griggs, Mrs. Robert , 1953-1969
- b.4 f.1-5 Hamilton, George H. , 1935-1984
  - b.5 f.1 Healy, Timothy, 1967
  - b.5 f.2 Hillman, Earnest Jr. , 1934
  - b.5 f.3 Hoffman, Irwin D. , 1930-1939
  - b.5 f.4 Holohan, Evelyn V. , 1939-1957
  - b.5 f.5 Judd, Carol Griggs, 1937-1939
  - b.5 f.6 Judd, Stuart E. , 1939-1971
- b.5 f.7-11 Judd, Peter H. , 1949-1980
  - b.6 f.1 Littlefeild, William , 1937-1940
- b.6 f.2-4 Machen, Janet, 1938-1984
  - b.6 f.5 Machen, Purefoy, 1940-1946

**I. Correspondence (by name) (cont.)**

- b.6 f.6-9 McKee, Douglass, 1933-1944
- b.7 f.1-2 McKee, Douglass, 1945-1987
  - b.7 f.3 Mulford, Wendy, 1987
  - b.7 f.4 Muntz, Elizabeth , 1940-1955
  - b.7 f.5 Muntz, Hope, 1940-1949
  - b.7 f.6 Newman, Tom , 1939
  - b.7 f.7 Pears, Peter , 1971
  - b.7 f.8 Pitman, Mary, 1939-1940
  - b.7 f.9 Pitt, Angela, 1988
- b.7 f.10 Pollock, Martin , 1939
- b.7 f.11 Powys, Gertrude , 1939
- b.7 f.12 Powys, Katie, 1938-1954
- b.7 f.13 Powys, Theodore , 1936-1949
- b.7 f.14 Renn, Ludwig , 1939-1940
- b.7 f.15 Ring, Charles and Monica, 1938-1994
- b.8 f.1 Robson, Flora, 1971
- b.8 f.2 Rogers, L. , 1939
- b.8 f.3 Scott, John Robertson , 1939-1962
- b.8 f.4 Sifford, Rachel , 1949
- b.8 f.5 Skilton, John , 1944-1945
- b.8 f.6 Smith, Mrs. B. M. , 1939-1949
- b.8 f.7 Taylor, Prentiss, 1938-1963
- b.8 f.8 Van Doren, Irita, 1942
- b.8 f.9 Watters, Tamie , 1971
- b.8 f.10-11 Warner, Sylvia Townsend , 1937-1949
- b.8 f.12 Wade, Martha S. , 1940
- b.8 f.13 White, Elizabeth Wade , 1917-1919 (Letters home from Camp Mystic)
- b.9 f.1-6 White, Elizabeth Wade , 1920-1949 (letters home)
- b.10 f.1-3 White, Henry Wade , 1938-1951
- b.10 f.4-6 White, Mary Wade, 1937-1943
- b.10 f.7 White, William Henry, 1936-1941
- b.10 f.8 Whitley, Peter, 1943

**II. Correspondence (by date), 1906-1969**

This series contains letters from less frequent correspondents are arranged by date. These include cards from acquaintances, inquiries about studies or the rare book trade, and letters from businesses with which White had dealings.

- b.11 f.1-5 1906-1929
- b.12 f.1-4 1929-1932
- b.13 f.1-5 1933-1969

### III. Diaries, 1919-1994

This series contains White's diaries from 1919 to 1940 as well as a record kept by her caregivers in 1994 during her final illness. The earlier volumes consist of day to day entries about school, travel and friendships. The later entries, especially those post-1929, cover more complex topics. During this time, White notes feeling like a social outcast as her friends from school enter into marriage and have children, while she slowly begins to realize that marriage and a traditional female role in life may not be in her future.

b.14 f.1	1919
b.14 f.2	1920
b.14 f.3	1922
b.14 f.4-5	1924
b.15 f.1	1926
b.15 f.2	1927-1928
b.15 f.3	1929
b.15 f.4	1929-1939
b.15 f.5	1939
b.15 f.6	1940
b.15 f.7	1994 (kept by aides during her final illness)

### IV. Subject Files, 1923-1950

This series contains materials relating to White's various interests, alphabetized by subject. Correspondence from organizations, travel ephemera, financial materials, documents relating to White's education, and playbills and programs are all included in this series. The bulk of the material relates to political and social organizations in which White participated. These include American Relief for France, Spanish civil war relief groups, Russian War relief efforts, the Colonial Dames, the American Red Cross Motor Corps, and the 1948 Wallace presidential campaign. Other materials include financial documents, such as the wills and inventories of relatives. Of interest is the will of Mary Wade White, which stipulated that nothing be left to her daughter and that Henry White should act as a trustee for his sister. This device was designed to ensure that no family money go to Communist causes. White's travel documents include passports, postcards (unsent), some photographs, and ship logs and travel notes from many of her trips including one to Egypt in 1962. Papers held in this series relating to White's education include diplomas, correspondence from distance learning programs, report cards, and some essays. Some family memorabilia, such as White's baby book and her mother's recipe book are also contained here.

b.15 f.8	American Friends Service Committee, 1937-1940
b.15 f.9	American Friends of Spanish Democracy , 1937
b.15 f.10	American Red Cross, 1946
b.15 f.11	American Red Cross Motor Corps , 1940-1943
b.15 f.12	American Relief for France, 1944-1945
b.15 f.13	American-Soviet Friendship, 1942
b.22	Baby Book, 1906
b.15 f.14	Colonial Dames of America, 1941-1942

**IV. Subject Files** (cont.)

- b.15 f.15 Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, 1940
- b.16 f.1 Connecticut Conference on Social and Labor Legislation , 1943
- b.16 f.2 Connecticut Third Party , 1948
- b.16 f.3 Coronation of King George VI , 1937
- b.16 f.4 Craske, John, undated
- b.16 f.5 Delehanty Institute, 1943
- Education
- b.16 f.6 General, undated
- b.16 f.7 Columbia University Home Study , 1927-1928
- b.16 f.8 Editor of School newspaper, 1924
- b.16 f.9 Essays, 1936
- b.16 f.10 Miss Risser's School for American Girls , 1923-1924
- Inventories and Wills
- b.16 f.11 Wade, Martha, 1946
- b.16 f.12 White, Mary Wade, 1948
- b.16 f.13 White, William Henry , 1950
- b.17 f.1 Job applications, 1943
- b.17 f.2 Mattaluck Historical Society , 1962
- b.17 f.3 National Committee for People's Rights, 1940
- b.17 f.4 Notes, 1927-1950
- b.17 f.5-7 Playbills and gallery invitations , 1920-1940
- b.17 f.8 Rare book deals, 1927-1931
- b.22 Recipe book - Mary Wade White, undated
- b.18 f.1 Russian War Relief , 1942-1943  
Includes travel chess game sold for Russian relief.
- Spanish Relief , 1937-1939
- b.18 f.2 General
- b.22 *The Spanish People's Fight for Liberty*
- b.22 *Work and War in Spain*
- Travel
- b.18 f.3 British Waterways cruise, 1960
- b.18 f.4 Egypt, 1962
- b.18 f.5-6 England, 1939-1949
- b.18 f.7 France , 1938
- b.18 f.8 Mexico, 1938
- b.18 f.9 Passports, 1937-1949
- b.19 f.1 Postcards and photographs, undated
- b.19 f.2 Tri-State Commission , 1940
- b.19 f.3 USSR booklets, 1939

#### IV. Subject Files (cont.)

- b.19 f.4 United Office and Professional Workers of America , 1943
- b.19 f.5 Wallace presidential campaign , 1948  
War Effort
- b.19 f.6 Evacuee packages , 1942
- b.19 f.7 Ration books , 1942-1945
- b.19 f.8 Wartime passport requests, 1940

#### V. Photographs, 1901-1990

This series contains both formal portrait and snapshot photographs of the White family and their home. The bulk of the pictures date from before 1930 and depict the White children and their parents in various activities and poses.

- b.19 f.9-13 Family and home snapshots , 1920-1990
- b.20 f.1 McKee, Douglass, 1940-1943  
White, Elizabeth Wade
- b.20 f.2 Portraits, undated
- b.20 f.3 Snapshots, undated  
White, Henry Wade
- b.20 f.4 Portraits, undated
- b.20 f.5 Snapshots, undated
- b.20 f.6 White, Mary Wade  
White, William Henry
- b.20 f.7 Portraits, undated
- b.20 f.8 Snapshots with wife Mary, 1901-1911

#### VI. Writings, 1928-1978

This series contains White's poetry as well as copies of the many articles, columns and letters to the editor she wrote during her lifetime. Though White focused her research on Anne Bradstreet, she wrote many smaller articles, most notably the "Old Book Column" for the Junior League Magazine, which coincided with her work as a rare books seller in the 1940s.

- b.21 f.1 *An American Herb Calendar*
- b.21 f.2 Biography, undated
- b.21 f.3-5 Colonial Dames, 1955-1976
- b.21 f.6 *Country Verses from a Type-Case*, undated
- b.21 f.7 *The Education of a WASP*, 1976
- b.21 f.8 *Et Ego In Arcadia*, 1928
- b.21 f.9-11 Junior League Magazine *Old Book Column*, undated
- b.21 f.12-13 Letters to the Editor, 1970-1978
- b.21 f.14 *The Life-Style of Waterbury*, 1973  
Poetry, 1930-1942, undated
- b.21 f.15 General, undated
- b.22 Clippings of published poems, 1930-1942



**VI. Writings** (cont.)

- b.22      *The Tenth Muse: A Tercentenary Appraisal of Anne Bradstreet*, 1951  
Article in *The William and Mary Quarterly*
- b.21 f.16      *The Quakers in Spain*, 1937
- b.21 f.17      *Watercress*, 1970