



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Ellen Tarry papers

1937-1999 [bulk 1970-1980]

Sc MG 738

Summary

Creator: Tarry, Ellen, 1906-2008

Title: Ellen Tarry papers

Date: 1937-1999 [bulk 1970-1980]

Source: Gift, Elizabeth Tarry Patton, 2004

Abstract: The Ellen Tarry Papers consist primarily of Tarry's writings and her involvement in projects pertaining to blacks and Catholicism.

Preferred citation: [Item], Ellen Tarry papers, Sc MG 738, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: one record carton of photographs and photo albums.

Related Materials:

Friendship House records also located at Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Creator History

African-American author and journalist, Ellen Tarry was primarily known for her writings and work pertaining to blacks and the Catholic Church. Tarry worked with Baroness Catharine de Hueck Doherty at Harlem's Friendship House, during the 1940s, and later assisted in setting up a Friendship House on the South Side of Chicago.

Tarry authored several books for children and teenagers and two autobiographies, only one of which

was published. Among her published works is *The Other Toussaint* (1981), a biography of Pierre Toussaint, the Haitian slave credited with funding the construction of old St. Patrick's Cathedral in lower Manhattan. Tarry was also involved in efforts to have him canonized. She wrote a young adult book about Katharine Drexel and served as a member of the committee for Drexel's beatification. In 2008 Tarry died at the age 101, in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The Ellen Tarry Papers consist primarily of Tarry's writings and her involvement in projects pertaining to blacks and Catholicism. The Alphabetical File series, 1940-1999 includes research files along with personal and professional correspondence. The correspondence files include letters concerning her writings and activities related to the Catholic Church; among them a 1953 letter from Mary McLeod Bethune asking for Tarry's assistance in writing a column regarding the Church.

There is correspondence between Tarry and John Cardinal O'Connor, then Archbishop of New York, and several priests pertaining to Pierre Toussaint, a Haitian slave brought to New York City by his owner, ca. 1787. The correspondence deals with the elevation of Toussaint to Venerable, a step toward sainthood proclaimed by Pope John Paul II in 1996 and the efforts of the Office of Black Ministry in the Archdiocese of New York to canonize him. Additional records concerning Toussaint in this series consist of Tarry's research material and the 1993 testimony given in Rome regarding the efforts to have him beatified and canonized.

Tarry also authored a book for teenagers, *Katharine Drexel: Friend of the Neglected* (1960) based upon the story of this Philadelphia heiress who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and provided schools and social services for African Americans and Native Americans. Files discuss Drexel's beatification at the Vatican in 1988 and Tarry's meeting with Pope John Paul II as a member of the committee on Drexel's beatification. The transcript of an interview with Tarry conducted by a doctoral student in 1988 is in the folder "Publishers."

There are two files concerning Tarry and Baroness Catherine de Hueck Doherty's work at Friendship House, a Catholic outreach center promoting interracial friendship in Harlem; related matters are also discussed in the correspondence.

The Writings series, 1939-1997, contains a small number of Tarry's published articles, including a few of her journalistic articles (1939-1965). The bulk of this series consists of manuscripts for published books, unpublished book manuscripts, and unpublished short works. The manuscript for her published children's book *Hezekiah Horton (Gets His Wish)* (1942) and for *The Other Toussaint* can be found here as well as manuscripts for two unpublished books: *A Home for Dixie* (1980s), a fictional work concerning a black journalist who left New York to return to her home town in Birmingham where she covers the civil rights movement, and *Memories of Alabama and the Twentieth Century: Diary of a Weary Foot Soldier*, focusing on Tarry's family and church life at the beginning of the twentieth century (1996). There are also a large number of short manuscripts which relate various aspects of Tarry's experiences, a few are fictionalized stories and some are biographical stories about well-known African Americans. Her poems also form part of this series.

The series Datebooks, 1945-1996, contains datebooks with entries for many of her personal appointments as well as her travels, including Rome for the beatification of Katherine Drexel.

Arrangement: Papers organized into three series: I. Alphabetical files; II. Writings; and III. Datebooks

Key Terms

Subjects

African American authors
African American Catholics
African American journalists
African American novelists
African American women
African American women authors
African Americans -- Intellectual life
African Americans -- Race identity
African Americans -- Segregation -- Alabama -- Birmingham
African Americans -- Social conditions
African Americans -- Social life and customs
Black author

Geographic Names

Birmingham (Ala.)

Names

Doherty, Catherine de Hueck, 1896-1985
Drexel, Katharine Mary, Saint, 1858-1955
O'Connor, John J. (John Joseph), 1920-2000
Tarry, Ellen, 1906-2008. Hezekiah Horton gets his wish
Tarry, Ellen, 1906-2008
Tarry, Ellen, 1906-2008. Home for Dixie
Tarry, Ellen, 1906-2008. Memories of Alabama and the twentieth century: diary of a weary foot soldier
Tarry, Ellen, 1906-2008. Other Toussaint
Toussaint, Pierre, 1766-1853
Catholic Church
Harlem Friendship House

Container List

- Alphabetical files 1940 - 1999
- b. 1 f. 1 Alabama authors 1991
 - b. 1 f. 2 Alabama – Montgomery – City of St. Jude 1973
 - b. 1 f. 3 *Amsterdam News letters* 1985
 - b. 1 f. 4 Bahamas – Levi – correspondence 1990
 - b. 1 f. 5-7 Birmingham, Alabama – printed material
 - b. 1 f. 8 Black Catholics – symposium 1985
 - b. 1 f. 9 Black clergy – printed material
 - b. 1 f. 10 Catholic Interracial Council – printed material
 - b. 1 f. 11 Clements, George - correspondence 1995 - 1997
 - b. 1 f. 12 Civil Rights Institute printed material
 - b. 1 f. 13-14 Clippings about Tarry 1952 - 1990
 - b. 1 f. 15 Letters to Tarry from "Album" 1937 - 1950s
 - Correspondence
 - b. 1 f. 16 1940s - 1960s
 - b. 1 f. 17-18 1950s - 1980s
 - b. 1 f. 19 1973 - 1996
 - b. 1 f. 20 Doherty, Catherine de Hueck 1942
 - b. 1 f. 21 To and from priests 1974 - 1995
 - b. 1 f. 22 *Daughters of Saint Paul re The Other Toussaint* 1995 - 1997
 - b. 1 f. 23 Deaths of friends 1962 - 1994
 - Drexel, Katharine
 - b. 1 f. 24 Beatification, Rome 1988
 - b. 1 f. 25 *Katharine Drexel: Friend of the Oppressed promotion of paperback edition* 1990 - 1999
 - b. 1 f. 26 Drew Houses, Harlem – renaming 1962
 - b. 1 f. 27 Farrar, Straus and Giroux (publisher) 1956 - 1988
 - b. 1 f. 28 Friendship House 1941 - 1993
Includes printed material and correspondence.
 - b. 1 f. 29 Gale Research autobiography series 1992
 - b. 2 f. 1 "Gift of the Black Wiseman" 1992
Correspondence regarding legend retold by Tarry.
 - b. 2 f. 2 *The Griot – Tarry's article* 1988
 - b. 2 f. 3 Hansborough Conservancy Board of Directors 1990 - 1991
 - b. 2 f. 4 Harlem Institute of Fashion – Building Fund Chairperson 1982 - 1987
 - b. 2 f. 5 Hauke, Kathleen A. – correspondence regarding Ted Poston and Catholicism 1982 - 1992
 - b. 2 f. 6-7 Highlander Folk School, Monteagle, Tennessee printed material 1946 - 1972
 - b. 2 f. 8 Hubert, Roberta Bosley estate 1992
 - b. 2 f. 9 *Johnson, James Weldon (Young Jim)* 1963 - 1968

Alphabetical files (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 10 Jones, E. Michael 1991
Includes "Nigger Hell: Modernity and the Negro as a Paradigm of Sexual Liberation", chapter one of proposed book.
- b. 2 f. 11 Jones, James Earl receiving Toussaint Medallion 1982
- b. 2 f. 12-13 Lackawanna and Niagara Falls, New York housing discrimination cases 1969 - 1973
- b. 2 f. 14-15 Lipscomb, Oscar H., Archbishop of Mobile, Alabama – correspondence 1990 - 1997
- b. 2 f. 16 de Porres, Martin 1949 - 1971
- b. 2 f. 17 March on Washington movement 1942
Includes addresses by Mary McLeod Bethune, A. Philip Randolph, and Walter White.
- b. 2 f. 18 McKay, Claude correspondence 1946 - 1948
- b. 2 f. 19 Miscellaneous notes and printed material
- b. 2 f. 20-21 National Association of Media Women, Inc 1982 - 1987
Includes correspondence from Nassau, Bahamas, 1985-1987.
- b. 2 f. 22-23 National Black Arts Festival 1992
Tarry received the Living Legends Award.
- b. 2 f. 24 National Black Catholic Congress 1991
- b. 2 f. 25 - 27 New York Coalition of 100 Black Women 1975 - 1998
Includes correspondence and printed material on the annual meetings.
- b. 2 f. 28 - 30 Office of Black Ministry, Archdiocese of New York 1988 - 1993
- b. 2 f. 31-33 O'Connor, John (Cardinal) 1971 - 1998
Includes correspondence on Tarry's writing from 1981-1991, and correspondence between Cardinal O'Connor and other priests.
- b. 3 f. 1 Payne, Ethel L 1985 - 1991
Includes resume and death notice.
- b. 3 f. 2 Poston, Ted 1956
Includes reproduction of typescript, "Autherine Lucy's Life Story."
- b. 3 f. 3 Press releases
- b. 3 f. 4-5 Publishers 1942 - 1998
Includes contracts and correspondence.
- b. 3 f. 6 Roebuck, Waldemar A. background information 1964 - 1999
- b. 3 f. 7 Saint Emma - Saint Francis Alumni Association 1993
- b. 3 f. 8 Schomburg Corporation and Schomburg Center 1983 - 1993
- b. 3 f. 9 Spring Hill College – honorary degree 1993
Tarry, Ellen
- b. 3 f. 10 Letter to her daughter, Elizabeth Tarry Patton 1965
- b. 3 f. 11-12 Biographical information
- b. 3 f. 13 Retirement tributes 1976
- b. 3 f. 14-18 Personal papers 1941 - 1993
- b. 3 f. 19-21 *The Third Door – University of Alabama* 1990 - 1992
Includes correspondence, introduction, and printed material.
Toussaint, Pierre
- b. 3 f. 22-30 Research and printed material 1980 - 1997
- b. 3 f. 31-32 Testimony regarding beatification and canonization, Rome, Volumes I-II 1993

Alphabetical files (cont.)

Toussaint, Pierre (cont.)

- b. 4 f. 1 Pierre Toussaint Cause 1995
- b. 4 f. 2 Haitian notes
- b. 4 f. 3 Pierre Toussaint Award 1993 May 2
- b. 4 f. 4-6 United Nations 1988 - 1993
Includes correspondence, printed material, and material on UNIFEM.
- b. 4 f. 7 USO 1943
- b. 4 f. 8 University of Alabama Press 1983 - 1993
- b. 4 f. 9 Waring, Judge Julius Waites – source material 1987 - 1989
- b. 4 f. 10 Woodlawn Cemetery – correspondence 1987 - 1989
- b. 4 f. 11-13 Research background information and printed material

Writings 1937 - 1997

Published

Articles

- b. 5 f. 1 *"Hotel New Yorker Bars Dr. Carver", Chicago Defender, and "Harlem's Busy Knitting Nook", Pittsburgh Courier* 1939 - 1951
- b. 5 f. 2 1940
- b. 5 f. 3 "Ted Yates" ca. 1965
- b. 5 f. 4 "Lest We Forget Our Heritage" 1940
- b. 5 f. 5-6 Magazine articles 1940 - 1992
- b. 5 f. 7-9 *Pride Magazine* 1986 - 1991

Book manuscripts

- b. 6 f. 1 *Hezekiah Horton (Gets His Wish)*
- b. 6 f. 2 *In Search of a Door outline (sequel to The Third Door)*
- b. 6 f. 3 *Katharine Drexel: Friend of the Neglected (photocopy of book)*
- b. 6 f. 4-6 *The Other Toussaint: A Post Revolutionary Black*
- b. 6 f. 7-8 *The Third Door (photocopy of book)*

Unpublished

- b. 6 f. 9 "Africa – The Pope and I"
- b. 6 f. 10 "Aunt Gena Goes to Town"
- b. 6 f. 11 "Brotherhood in the Marketplace"
- b. 6 f. 12 "Chloe's Children"
- b. 6 f. 13 "Forging a Chain of Shoulders"
- b. 6 f. 14 "The Gift of the Magi"
- b. 6 f. 15 "A Historical Overview of Equal Opportunity in Housing"
- b. 6 f. 16 "The Inevitable Nursing Home (Or Is It?)"
- b. 6 f. 17 "Mary McLeod Bethune" (WPA Federal Writers Project)
- b. 6 f. 18-19 Ms. Embree – Ghosted for Dr. Embree
- b. 6 f. 20 "Negro America's First Lady"
- b. 6 f. 21 "Patty's 'Possum"
- b. 6 f. 22-23 "The Saint of San Fratello: Benedict the Moor"
- b. 6 f. 24 "Stumbling through Europe Alone"
- b. 6 f. 25 "Thurgood Marshall" – outline for book

Writings (cont.)

Unpublished (cont.)

- b. 6 f. 26 "A Tree Grew in Birmingham"
- b. 6 f. 27 "Winnie's Gift"
- b. 6 f. 28 "The Wonderful Secret"
- b. 6 f. 29-30 Various manuscripts
Includes in folder 29: "An Ambassador Without Portfolio"; "The George Washington Carver Foundation (Great Man's Work Lives On)"; "If Only_____"; "The Jamiesons Make It"; "Jim Crow in a Country Church"; "Mama and Company: Mama Told Me"; "A Memorable Christmas"; and "My Love Affair with Laddie". Includes in folder 30: "On Climbing Jacob's Ladder"; "Papa Knew Best (About Last Wills and Testaments)"; "Patty's Trolley"; "The Possible Dream -- For the Harlem Institute of Fashion"; "Tombstones Don't Lie"; "Tribute to Gerri Major (R.I.P.)"; and an untitled manuscript.
- b. 6 f. 31 *Review of The Struggle Is My Life: Nelson Mandela*
- b. 6 f. 32 Poems
- b. 6 f. 33 Folktale from Onitsha, Nigeria
- b. 6 f. 34-35 Fragment and notes
Book manuscripts
- b. 7 f. 1-13 "A Home for Dixie" ca. 1980s
Includes first draft (folders 1-5) and manuscript (folders 6-13).
- b. 7 f. 14-24 "Memories of Alabama and the Twentieth Century: Diary of a Weary Foot Soldier" 1992 - 1997
Includes manuscript and correspondence with publisher.

Datebooks 1945 - 1996

- b. 8 f. 1 1945
- b. 8 f. 2 1952
- b. 8 f. 3 1962
- b. 8 f. 4 1963
- b. 8 f. 5 1979
- b. 8 f. 6 1980
- b. 8 f. 7 1981
- b. 8 f. 8 1982
- b. 8 f. 9 1983
- b. 8 f. 10 1984
- b. 8 f. 11 1985
- b. 9 f. 1 1986
- b. 9 f. 2 1987
- b. 9 f. 3 1988
- b. 9 f. 4 1989
- b. 9 f. 5 1990
- b. 9 f. 6 1991
- b. 9 f. 7 1992
- b. 9 f. 8 1993
- b. 9 f. 9 1994
- b. 9 f. 10 1995
- b. 9 f. 11 1996