

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers
1909-1983
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**Laura Ruttum
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Summary

- Main entry:** O'Connor, Jessie Lloyd
- Title:** Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers, 1909-1983
- Size:** 2 linear feet (5 boxes)
- Source:** Donated by Jessie Lloyd O'Connor between 1945 and 1988.
- Abstract:** Jessie Lloyd O'Connor was a journalist and pro-labor activist from the 1920s through her death in 1988. She predominantly wrote for the Federated Press, a news service oriented toward labor and unions. O'Connor's articles were published in a variety of national newspapers, and she spent the years 1927-28, and 1933 in the Soviet Union writing for the *London Daily Herald* and the *Moscow Daily Times*. She was involved with numerous progressive organizations, including the ACLU, the League Against War and Fascism, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Daughter of the pacifist Lola Maverick Lloyd and Chicago millionaire William Bross Lloyd, Jessie Lloyd O'Connor professionally collaborated with the radical journalist Harvey O'Connor, her husband of fifty-seven years.
- Access:** Apply in the Special Collections Office for admission to the Manuscripts and Archives Division.
- Preferred citation:** Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.
- Special formats** Diaries, photographs

Provenance note

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's papers were donated to The New York Public Library and processed as part of the Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers, Series O of the Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection. In 2005 the Lola Maverick Lloyd papers were reprocessed, and Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's materials were separated and reprocessed at that time. Approximately one box of correspondence from her parents and siblings was inserted into Ms. O'Connor's materials, having been separated from the Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers.

The papers are still administratively part of the Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection, but are physically arranged as a separate collection.

Related materials note

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers
Sophia Smith Collection
Smith College, Northampton, MA.

At The New York Public Library:

Georgia Lloyd Papers
Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers
Mary Maverick Lloyd Papers
William Bross Lloyd, Jr. Papers
Maverick Family Papers
Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection

Biographical note

The first child of the peace activist Lola Maverick Lloyd and Socialist millionaire William Bross Lloyd, Jessie Lloyd O'Connor was born in Illinois in 1904. A radical journalist and Socialist who focused on labor concerns in industry and mining, O'Connor worked as a staff journalist for the Federated Press, a news service dedicated to labor issues. Over the course of her career, her articles ran in the *London Daily Herald*, the *Moscow Daily News*, and the *New York Times*, among other papers.

Born to somewhat bohemian, yet financially well-to-do parents, O'Connor held fast to her progressive politics through both world wars, the McCarthy era, the Vietnam War and the Cold War. O'Connor's mother, peace activist Lola Maverick Lloyd, had a strong influence on her daughter's pacifist and radical beliefs. As a result of Lola Maverick Lloyd's professional travels, O'Connor spent much time during her formative years in Europe, observing the early pacifist movement and interacting with the leaders of various progressive organizations. O'Connor also credited her father's initial support of Socialism with the development of her own political beliefs, and found these beliefs strengthened by exposure to labor issues during her early professional years.

At age eleven, O'Connor and two of her three younger siblings joined their mother on the 1915 Ford Peace Expedition ship to Europe. While the expedition did not fulfill its goal of curtailing the war, O'Connor was greatly impressed by her observations of the peace activists in general, and in particular by the selective and biased reporting of the event by journalists onboard ship. Following their return to the United States in early 1916, O'Connor's parents divorced. She attended high school in the Chicago suburb of Wilmette, and chose to continue her education at her mother's Alma Mater, Smith College. While at Smith she studied economics and graduated in 1925.

In 1926, O'Connor joined her mother and siblings in Geneva, where she obtained press credentials from the *London Daily Herald* to act as correspondent at the League of Nations. She soon convinced the paper to send her to the Soviet Union, where she would spend the bulk of the year 1927-1928 filing stories from Moscow and associating with American Communists and Socialists resident in the city at that time. She would later return to Russia as a correspondent for the Federated Press in 1932-1933, and file occasional stories for the *New York Times* journalist Walter Duranty.

At the end of her first sojourn in the Soviet Union, Jessie Lloyd O'Connor returned to the United States and began working with Harvey O'Connor at the Federated Press. She reported for the news service on labor conflicts in Gastonia, North Carolina in 1929, and Harlan, Kentucky in 1931--where she replaced two journalists who had been shot, and herself received several threats.

In 1930, Jessie Lloyd and Harvey O'Connor married. Their relationship would last until Harvey's death in 1987, mutually reinforcing each other's common dedication to social causes and collaborating on their various professional projects. Together they raised two children--Stephen and Kathleen--and after stints in New York and Pittsburgh they settled in Little Compton, Rhode Island, where their home became a refuge for many involved in progressive and radical movements.

Among the organizations with which Jessie O'Connor was involved were the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the ACLU, the League Against War and Fascism, the League of Women Shoppers, Chicago's Hull House, and the National Committee to Abolish HUAC. She was an ardent letter-writer, and sent hundreds of missives to politicians and newspaper editors over the course of her adult life. Her interests, as indicated through her letters, included consumer and tenant rights, labor rights, the protection of the civil liberties of citizens and immigrants alike, and the abolition of war. Her leisure-time hobbies included boating and playing the violin.

After a lifetime of defense of the disenfranchised and dedication to often unpopular causes, Jessie Lloyd O'Connor passed away in 1988.

Scope and content note

The papers consist of correspondence, professional writings and notes, and a small amount of printed matter, newspaper clippings, financial papers, and photographs. The materials document in part O'Connor's political beliefs and commitment to various radical causes. The typescript of a 1927-1928 diary kept by O'Connor while she was living in the Soviet Union presents a window into circles of American "fellow travelers" in Moscow at that time.

Certain items within the collection, in particular the photocopied Letters to the Editor and the Soviet diary typescript, may be present in part or in alternate forms in the substantial Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers held as part of the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. For further information, researchers are advised to view the finding aid for that collection at http://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss131_main.html.

Arrangement note

The Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers are organized in the following series:

- I. Correspondence, 1909-1983, n.d.
- II. Writings, 1926-1943, n.d.
- III. Financial, 1916-1943, n.d.
- IV. Printed matter and newspaper clippings, 1917-1961, n.d.
- V. Miscellaneous, 1939-1944, n.d.
- VI. Photographs, 1919, 1936, n.d.

Series descriptions and container list

I. Correspondence, 1909-1983, n.d.

The bulk of the correspondence in Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's papers consists of general incoming letters, and those from Lola Maverick Lloyd, O'Connor's mother, from two family friends, Franciska Schwimmer and Edith Wynnner, and from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. A small number of letters addressed to Mrs. O'Connor's husband, Harvey O'Connor, are included in the incoming correspondence.

In addition to incoming materials, there are nine folders of outgoing letters, the majority of which O'Connor sent as Letters to the Editor over the course of fifty years of dedicated drafting of such correspondence.

All materials are arranged chronologically.

A. Incoming, 1909-1980, n.d.

General, 1909-1980, n.d.

General incoming correspondence consists of letters Jessie O'Connor received from friends and associates in organizations with which she was affiliated. The materials from 1909 through the early 1930s are primarily family correspondence.

The letters make reference to various aspects of O'Connor's professional and activist efforts, in addition to her personal life. These include items documenting her 1944 membership on the board of the Abraham Lincoln School--a progressive school in Chicago focusing on peace, international cooperation, labor rights, and civil liberties; her status as a national committee member with International Labor Defense; her composition of songs for the Young Americans for Roosevelt, and the UAW-CIO; and her membership in the League of Woman Shoppers, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, and the League for Mutual Aid. Additional materials reference donations O'Connor made to various progressive organizations, conferences attended, and materials on the Spanish Civil War and refugees.

Of interest is the 1974-1975 exchange of two letters between Jessie O'Connor and Madame Sun Yat-Sen, whom O'Connor had met in Moscow in the 1920s. O'Connor's letter reminds Madame Sun of their acquaintance, and states that "you once did me the honor to suggest that I should go to China and help organize unions, because probably as an American I could not be shot." Madame Sun's warm response invites O'Connor to "...come to see our people building Socialism."

Additional prominent correspondents include Alice Henry, Rosika Schwimmer, and Caro Lloyd Strobell.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Fol</u>	
1	1	1909-1929
	2	1930-1939
	3	1940-1947
	4	1950-1980
	5	undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
1	6

Cordon Company, 1938-1940

The Cordon Company was a publishing company in which O'Connor and her husband owned stock. The Cordon Company materials primarily consist of correspondence pertaining to a conflict between the company's president and board of directors regarding stock issuances.

Lola Maverick Lloyd, 1911-1944, n.d.

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor and her mother Lola Maverick Lloyd corresponded with great frequency--often exchanging several letters a week. These letters were quite warm and informal, with common topics ranging from global politics to family matters, marriage, and children. The two women also discussed their professional projects, and O'Connor's travels in the Soviet Union. Lola Maverick Lloyd occasionally included reports from the various organizations with which she was involved, and included a 1931 report of a London trip and meeting with Mahatma Gandhi.

Many of Lola's letters were written on the backs of used envelopes and other scrap paper matter, often included letters forwarded from other acquaintances, and occasionally consisted of the combined writing efforts of O'Connor's three siblings, in addition to their mother.

For a large body of additional correspondence between Jessie Lloyd O'Connor and her mother, the reader is advised to review the family correspondence in the Lola Maverick Lloyd Papers.

1	7	1911-1928
	8	1929-1930
2	1	1931-1932
	2	1933-1934
	3	1935-1936
	4	1937-1938
	5	1939-1941
	6	1942-1944, n.d.

Franciska Schwimmer and Edith Wynner, 1930-1972, n.d.

Letters from Franciska Schwimmer and Edith Wynner are intermingled, maintaining original order and indicating the level of close professional collaboration between these two women. Schwimmer, sister to the more well-known Rosika Schwimmer, and Wynner, personal secretary to Rosika Schwimmer and later consultant to the Schwimmer-Lloyd Collection at The New York Public Library, were family friends of the Lloyds.

The materials present discussions of both family and the professional interests of all three women, in addition to their reminiscences on Rosika Schwimmer. Of note are the 1956 letters mentioning the flight abroad of Hungarian refugees, following the failed revolution in that country. Schwimmer and Wynner gathered together care packages to send to several Hungarian friends, who would share them amongst feminist colleagues suffering from the chaos and shortages following the revolution. Wynner wrote encouraging O'Connor to fund several such care packages herself.

Among other topics discussed in the correspondence were Jessie O'Connor's newspaper articles; the questioning of Harvey O'Connor by the House Un-American Activities Committee; various projects in which Wynner and Schwimmer were involved, especially pertaining to peace and world government; and news on friends and associates, including Frieda Langer Lazarus, Katherine Devereaux Blake, Count Mihaly Karolyi, and Irving Caesar.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>
3	1
	2
	3
3	4

1930-1954
1955-1960
1961-1972, n.d.

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1944, 1955-1957

Materials pertaining to the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WIL) consist of individual and membership correspondence, and in a few cases includes letters written by Jessie O'Connor attached to related correspondence. Several letters in this file are responses to O'Connor's concerns that several WIL publications misrepresented aspects of the early history of the organization, failing to give credit to early pioneers of the League.

Box Folder

B. Outgoing letters and Letters to the Editor, 1924-1983, n.d.

3 5

General outgoing, 1924-1946, n.d.

The bulk of the outgoing correspondence consists of Letters to the Editor written by Mrs. O'Connor over the course of a fifty year period. The greater part of these are photocopies of typed carbons.

The small amount of general outgoing correspondence includes letters to O'Connor's siblings, other family and friends, telegrams, and letters addressed to American and international statesmen, primarily calling them to task for their statements and actions pertaining to the Spanish Civil War.

Of interest is the undated letter addressed to "Frank," in which O'Connor discusses her initial experiences as a journalist covering the mining strikes in Harlan, Kentucky, where she replaced two journalists who had been shot, and herself received death threats. In this letter, she mentioned meeting with Governor Sampson, and an interview with an Associated Press (AP) representative, who gave her "...the impression he thought that would make it a big story if anything did happen to me."

Letters to the Editor, 1931-1983, n.d. (photocopies)

The Letters to the Editor cover the period from 1931 through 1983, and address numerous elements of American politics and world events. Examples of O'Connor's pet topics include Communism, immigrant rights, the Spanish Civil War, the Nuremberg trials, the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the Rosenberg executions, the Berlin Crisis, the Korean War, Cuba and Fidel Castro, the Cuban Missile Crisis, PLO-Israeli relations, race and police violence in America, the war in Vietnam, nuclear war, the SALT treaty, abortion, and the exile of the Shah of Iran.

Recipients of these letters were generally newspapers, journals, and radio stations. Political figures who received letters from O'Connor included U.S. Senators and Representatives, every President from Eisenhower to Carter, Henry Kissinger, Erich Honecker, Fidel Castro, Jawaharlal Nehru, and various ambassadors and counsels of the Soviet Union and France. In several cases the outgoing letters are arranged with the recipient's response to her letter.

An April 25, 1955 letter offers insight into O'Connor's attitude towards her inheritance of Lloyd family money. The mailing is addressed to Eugene Suter, Jr. of New York, a Socialist who had been featured in the newspapers as recently having rejected his inherited fortune. O'Connor wrote to encourage him to maintain the inheritance, and put it to good use fighting injustice and poverty. She wrote "Rich men, the kind ones, will give to charity, to mop up spilt milk. But they will not give to change the system that keeps spilling it....you are the kind who should keep it and use it for a good purpose."

In addition to her more politically-motivated addresses, Jessie O'Connor also wrote numerous letters to businesses and corporations, expressing complaints about their products and services, or offering helpful suggestions for product design. An example is her amusing 1977 letter to Kohler Co., which contains suggestions for better toilet seat and faucet handle design.

6 1931-1939
7 1940-1949

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
	8	1950-1959
4	1	1960-1963
	2	1964-1965
	3	1966-1969
	4	1970-1979
	5	1980-1983, n.d.

II. Writings, 1926-1943, n.d.

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's writings include a diary she kept while living in the Soviet Union in 1927-1928, Federated Press news service sheets which contain numerous articles by both of the O'Connors, clippings of published articles, drafts of articles, and notes.

4 6 **A. Russian Diary, 1927-1928**

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's Russian diary was written during the year 1927-1928, while she was living and working as a journalist in Moscow. There are a few incomplete entries, but the work as a whole nevertheless reads as a complete narrative. The diary documents her observations on life in the Soviet Union, the professional and social circles in which she participated, and the successes and failures of the fairly new Soviet experiment.

The diary indicates that O'Connor frequently crossed paths with the American Socialists Scott Nearing and Albert Rhys Williams, the New York Times journalist Walter Duranty (whose Moscow New York Times beat she covered for a few months when he was away), and American Socialist and future conscientious objector Brent Allinson. She met with the American journalist Anna Louise Strong, translated memoirs into English for Madame Fania (Mrs. Mikhail) Borodin, and befriended Sofia Tolstoya, "Sonya," the poet Sergei Esenin's fifth wife and granddaughter of Leo Tolstoy. When O'Connor mentioned to Tolstoya that she was staying at a Quaker hostel in the city, Tolstoya insisted she come live in the spare room of their apartment.

O'Connor also mentioned meeting Theodore Dreiser and Madame Sun Yat-Sen, and interviewing Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife and a social and educational reformer in her own right. She also excitedly mentioned sitting behind Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin at the theater, an event of which she noted that this made "...nine great men I've been near enough to stab...in America this would be great material for a boast--but to me it's more a source of regret--why didn't I stab some of them?"

Other items of interest in Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's memoirs include research she conducted on the "Bez Prizornie," or homeless children of the city, and her ongoing battle with customs, the telegraph office, and the censor's bureau. She provided synopses of several Socialist Realist plays she attended, and a Red Square parade she attended, in which she saw Budyenny and his cavalry. She recorded fortuitously witnessing the funeral procession for Adolph Joffe from a passing train, and seeing Leon Trotsky marching in the crowd. O'Connor also made occasional observations on the Soviet citizens' reception of American culture, and in March of 1928 mentioned herself giving a talk on "life in America" at the Foreign Language Institute.

Documentation accompanying the material indicates that O'Connor sent the diary to her mother, Lola Maverick Lloyd, who forwarded it her friend Rosika Schwimmer for editing. Schwimmer's personal secretary Edith Wynner returned

the work to O'Connor in 1979. The diary would eventually be reworked and included as a chapter in the semi-autobiographical book *Harvey and Jessie; A Couple of Radicals*. The diary is in English, with occasional transliterated Russian words.

B. Articles, drafts, and notes, 1926, 1936-1943, n.d.

Articles and related material arranged in this series consist of Federated Press news sheets, several copies of *Labor's News*, published articles by O'Connor, drafts for articles, and a small amount of working notes.

The Federated Press (FP) news sheets range from 1930 to 1934 and contain numerous articles by both of the O'Connors. This news service focused on labor issues in the United States, featuring articles on labor unions and strikes, exposes on industry and its leaders, Socialism, and concerns particular to workers. Among the issues included were the standard of living, occupational health and safety requirements, social programs, and the possibility of another war. The sheets present in the collection include reports put out by the FP's Washington and Eastern Bureaus, and the Pittsburgh Weekly Letter.

Labor's News materials consist of four copies of the publication, advertised as "The News Magazine of the Labor Movement," and published in New York City. The editions in question contain articles by Jessie Lloyd O'Connor on the Gastonia, N.C. strike; strikes in New York and unemployment in Manhattan; Marxism; and Soviet aviation. The magazine also featured numerous articles from the Federated Press and articles by Harvey O'Connor.

Other published articles by Jessie O'Connor include clippings from such sources as the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Nation*, the journal *Labor Age*, the *Milwaukee Leader*, the *Moscow Daily News*, and a pamphlet on labor organization in Gastonia, N.C. The articles present in these publications focus upon workers' and miners' conditions and strikes, and various political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the Soviet Union. Also included is a flyer Jessie Lloyd O'Connor helped design for the Metropolitan Housing Council of Chicago, that advises renters of health and safety requirements for rental dwellings, and how to obtain compliance from landlords.

Completing the subseries, O'Connor's writings also include a folder of drafts for articles, and research notes. The article drafts include such disparate topics as a 1926 story on the government of Syria, a 1936 article on dental hygiene, a short item from 1937 on the improvement of life for national minorities in the Soviet Union, and a 1943 report on the Chicago Housing Authority. Research notes include an item containing a list of workers' names and outlining what appear to be infractions on the part of management of a factory or company.

A small amount of the newspaper clippings present in this subseries are fragile, and are arranged in an envelope following photocopies of the originals. Please refer to the photocopies before consulting originals.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
4	7	Federated Press articles, 1930-1934
	8	<i>Labor's News</i> , 1929-1930
	9	Published articles, 1929-1933, n.d.
5	1	Article drafts, 1926, 1936-1943, n.d.
	2	Notes, 1941, 1943, n.d.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
5	3	III. Financial, 1916-1943, n.d. This small series consists of one folder of financial papers in the form of checks, bank statements from 1916 and 1918, an undated bank book, and receipts. Checks present consist of a few written by Jessie O'Connor herself, checks from both of her parents, and one check related to the Hull House Association. Receipts are for donations and membership fees made to the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee committee and Chicago Civil Liberties Committee, payments made to Hull House, and general personal expenditures.
5	4	IV. Printed matter and newspaper clippings, 1917-1961, n.d. Printed matter and newspaper clippings consist of miscellaneous printed matter, newspaper clippings and articles by other authors, and one poster. Materials of interest include several flyers advertising speeches by friends and family, and a pamphlet on the Abraham Lincoln school--the progressive school with a pacifist focus with which both O'Connor's were involved. V. Miscellaneous, 1939-1944, n.d. Miscellaneous items include a 1943 adoption application filled out by Jessie Lloyd O'Connor, an application and membership materials from the Descendants of the American Revolution, and one folder of general miscellaneous materials. The 1943 adoption application for the Chicago Foundlings Home contains biographical information on Jessie and Harvey O'Connor, including religion, ancestral origin, employer and financial standing (including Harvey's sources of income, and the yearly payments of Jessie's trusts), the existence of another individual the O'Connors helped to support, references, and gender and character of child preferred. The Descendants of the American Revolution, an organization committed to the ideals of freedom and democracy in American life, and which supported the protection of civil rights and academic freedom, served as a progressive response to the more conservative Daughters of the American Revolution. Items related to this organization include Jessie O'Connor's membership application and supporting genealogical reports, a small amount of correspondence, 1939 copies of the organization's National Constitution, and other administrative materials from 1940-1941.
5	5	Adoption application, 1943
	6	Descendants of the American Revolution, 1939-1941, n.d.
	7	General, 1944, n.d.
5	8	VI. Photographs, 1919, 1936, n.d. Jessie Lloyd O'Connor's black and white photographs consist of a photograph of Rosika and Franciska Schwimmer in Budapest, 1919; the copy of a signed, undated portrait of Rosika Schwimmer; twenty-five pictures of a small boy, circa 1936; and one undated photograph of Jessie and Harvey O'Connor, taken in the later years of their marriage.