

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

**Popular Publications, Inc.**

**Records, ca. 1910-1995**

**John D. Stinson  
2/8/84; Revised: 12/15/95; 3/10/97; 4/19/98**

## Summary

**Title:** Popular Publications, Inc. Records, c1910-1995

**Size:** 68.7 lin. ft. (41 cartons, 79 boxes)

**Source:** Joel Frieman, Blazing Publications, Inc., 1984;  
Joel Frieman, Argosy Communications, Inc., 1995; Shirley M. Steeger, 1996

**Access:** Unrestricted; sound recordings unavailable until processed for research use

**Description:** Popular Publications, Inc., publisher of popular pulp magazines, was founded in New York City in 1930 by Henry Steeger. During the ensuing decade it became the largest publisher of pulp magazines in America. In 1942 the firm acquired the literary properties of the Frank A. Munsey Co. The records include correspondence of the Frank A. Munsey Co. and of Popular Publications, Inc. relating to copyright, literary and editorial matters; copyright registration records, index card files of authors; and canceled checks. Included also are papers relating to the Court of Last Resort of *Argosy* magazine including extensive correspondence between Henry Steeger and Erle Stanley Gardner; personal papers of Henry Steeger including his correspondence as president (and member) of the National Urban League; and correspondence of Blazing Publications, Inc. (later, Argosy Communications, Inc.), successor-in-interest to Popular Publications, Inc., relating to the publication of reprints in book format of popular fiction.

## Historical Note

Popular Publications, Inc., a publisher of popular pulp magazines including detective, adventure, romance, and Western fiction, was founded in 1930 in New York City by Henry Steeger (1903- ), a Princeton graduate and former editor at Dell Publishing Co. Steeger remained the firm's president and publisher until its sale in 1972. During the decade of the 1930's, the golden age of pulp magazines, the firm was the largest publisher of popular pulp fiction in America. Its numerous publications included *Dime Detective*, *Dime Mystery Magazine*, *Dime Western Magazine*, *Fifteen Love Stories*, *True Adventure*, and *Western Love Romances*. In 1942 the firm acquired the copyrights to the properties of the Frank A. Munsey Co. including its immensely successful *Argosy Magazine*. From 1946 Steeger edited *Argosy* and co-founded with Erle Stanley Gardner its popular feature "Court of Last Resort" which sought to aid those whom it considered to be victims of miscarriages of justice. Steeger was also president of Fictioneers, Inc. (1939-58), All-Fiction Field, Inc. (1942-58), New Publications, Inc. (1936-60), Recreational Reading (1936-60), and Post Periodicals, Inc. (1936-60).

After the dissolution of Popular Publications, Inc. in 1972, its literary properties were acquired Joel Frieman, vice president and director of publications of Blazing Publications, Inc. of Newark, New Jersey. As successor-in-interest to Popular Publications, Inc. Mr. Frieman has promoted the reprinting in book and paperback format of several authors of pulp magazine fiction including Ray Bradbury, Edgar Rice Burroughs, John Carroll Daly, Erle Stanley Gardner, Frederick Nebel, Hank Searles, and Rex Stout. In 1988 the corporate title of Blazing Publications, Inc. was changed to Argosy Communications, Inc.

## Arrangement Note

The records are arranged into the following series:

- I. Correspondence;
- II. Copyright Registration Records;
- III. Index Card Files;
- IV. Cancelled Checks;
- V. Unsorted Records;
- VI. Pen and Ink Drawings;
- VII. Personal Papers of Henry Steeger;
- VIII. Additional Records (95M28); and
- IX. Additional Records (96M33 and 96M43).

## Series Descriptions

### I. Correspondence

(Containers #1-7)

The correspondence (c1914-77) is arranged into five sub-series: (1) Copyright Assignments and Permissions (c1914-59), A-Z; (2) Copyright Releases (Poems), A-Z; (3) Radio Rights and Syndication (c1945-52); (4) "Court of Last Resort" (c1948-53); and (5) Editorial / Permissions / Releases / Foreign Sales (c1959-73). There is also (following sub-series V.) a file of unsorted correspondence (to 1977).

(1) The Copyright Assignments and Permissions Correspondence (1914-59), which is arranged alphabetically, is that of Alden H. Norton and Albert J. Gibney of Popular Publications, Inc.; and of Robert Hobart Davis and A.B. Gaunt of the Frank A. Munsey Co. The correspondence is interfiled in a single alphabetical sequence. The correspondence of Robert Hobart Davis and A.B. Gaunt relates mainly to literary and editorial matters. The correspondence is with authors, authors' agents, publishers, motion picture companies, and attorneys. Included are copies of assignments (issued by both organizations) giving the author's name, his pseudonym, title of property and date and issue of its first publication.

(2) The Copyright Releases (Poems) consists of correspondence mainly of Robert Hobart Davis and A.B. Gaunt;

(3) The Radio Rights and Syndication correspondence (c1945-52) is that of Alden H. Norton and Kenneth S. White;

(4) The "Court of Last Resort" correspondence (c1948-53) is that of Henry Steeger and other members of the "Court" with prisoners whose cases the "Court" accepted, prison wardens, and judges. Included are case records consisting of memoranda, reports, transcripts of trial testimonies, photographs, and eleven sound recordings;

(5) The Editorial/Permissions/Releases/Foreign Sales correspondence (c1959-73) is mainly that of Alden H. Norton, Gil Paust, Leo F. Lucke, and Peter Gannett of Popular Publications, Inc. The correspondence is with authors, prospective authors, and with American and foreign magazine and book publishers. Correspondents include Achmed Addullah, Authors' Syndicate, Ltd., Clarence Gilmore Boggie, George H. Doran Co., Erle Stanley Gardner, Marshall W. Houts, Christopher Morley, Raymond C. Schindler, LeMoyne Snyder, Park Street, Jean Swick, Hunter S. Thompson, and Charles Hanson Towne.

## **II. Copyright Registration Records**

(Containers #7-13)

The copyright registration records (1930's - 1960's) relate to publications of the Frank A. Munsey Co., Popular Publications, Inc., New Publications, Inc., Fictioneers, Inc., Recreational Reading, Inc., and All-Fiction Field, Inc. Included are official certificates of copyright registration and renewal issued by the Registrar of Copyrights.

## **III. Index Card Files**

(Containers #13-50)

The index card files contain author and/or title indices for authors published by Frank A. Munsey Co. and Popular Publications, Inc. The type of information provided on the cards varies but includes name of author, title of article or manuscript, title and date of publication in which the manuscript or article was first published, and the amount paid. Some indices contain the author's pen name, the author's title, the published title, number of words, voucher date, control number, agent's name, statement on rights, and note on sale of rights. Included also are a few title indices for specific magazines.

## **IV. Cancelled Checks**

(Containers #51-73)

The cancelled checks (1910-72) were issued by Popular Publications, Inc., Frank A. Munsey Co., All-Fiction Field, Inc., Fictioneers, Inc., Recreational Reading, Inc., and New Publications, Inc. Most of the checks are annotated (above the endorsement line) with the title of the literary property, and the kinds of rights transferred (i.e., serial, North-American, etc.).

## **V. Unsorted Records**

(Containers #74-75)

The unsorted records are of the Frank A. Munsey Co. and Popular Publications, Inc.

## **VI. Pen and Ink Drawings (Container #76)**

The pen and ink drawings or sketches with overlays represent illustrations which were published in *Argosy* magazine.

## **VII. Personal Papers of Henry Steeger**

(Container #77-80)

The personal papers of Henry Steeger which are unsorted contain Steeger's correspondence as president of the National Urban League; and printed and near-printed ephemera issued by the League. There is also some correspondence relating to Steeger's real estate investments and to his presidency of Popular Publications, Inc. Included are a few letters to Steeger from Whitney Young, Jr.

### **VIII. Additional Records [95M28]**

(Containers #81-84)

These additional records consist of the following:

(1) Additions to Series I. consisting of Copyright Assignments and Permissions correspondence (1911-76) mainly of Robert Hobart Davis and A. B. Gaunt of the Frank A. Munsey Co.; and of Alden H. Norton and of Henry Steeger of Popular Publications, Inc. The correspondence, which is arranged alphabetically in a single sequence, is with authors, literary agents, publishers, and attorneys. Included are assignments and agreements. Correspondents include Robert Ames Bennett, Louis Joseph Vance and Ben Ames Williams. There is also a separate file of correspondence (1941-42, 1957) concerning complaints of plagiarism brought by Popular Publications, Inc. against prospective writers; and miscellaneous papers;

(2) Copyright Assignments and Publications file (1979-92) of Blazing Publications, Inc., and of Argosy Communications, Inc. [the corporate title of Blazing Publications, Inc. was changed in 1988 to Argosy Communications, Inc.]. This file consists of correspondence of Joel Frieman as vice president and director of publishing of Blazing Publications, Inc., successor-in-interest to Popular Publications, Inc. with publishers, literary agents, attorneys, and copyright owners, relative to reprints in book format of stories originally published by the Frank A. Munsey Co. and by Popular Publications, Inc. The files relate to reprints of fiction by Ray Bradbury, Edgar Rice Burroughs, John Carroll Daly, Erle Stanley Gardner, Frederick Nebel, Hank Searles, and Rex Stout. The Rex Stout file includes correspondence with John J. McAleer relative to the writing of forwards and introductions to reprinted stories by Rex Stout. The Ray Bradbury file includes copies of correspondence (1952) between Ray Bradbury and Alden H. Norton. Included also are copies of assignments, agreements, and a few royalty statements; and photocopies of published stories by Erle Stanley Gardner and Rex Stout.

### **IX. Additional Records [96M33 and 96M43]**

(Containers #85-119)

These additional records are arranged into four series: A. Correspondence of Henry Steeger as President of Popular Publications, Inc.; B. Miscellaneous Papers relating to Popular Publications, Inc.; and C. Court of Last Resort Department of *Argosy*; and D. Papers relating to the National Urban League. The records are described in sequence below.

A. The correspondence (1941-81) of Henry Steeger is arranged chronologically in the period 1949-62, 1969-71, and alphabetically by year for the intervening period (1963-68). The correspondence relates mainly to the publication of *Argosy* magazine although correspondence of a more general nature is also present. The correspondence is with writers, editors, publishers, legal counsel, friends, associates and others. Included is correspondence from writers proposing travel articles and adventure stories; from congressmen (1960) regarding American servicemen allegedly held prisoner by Communist China; and from governors, congressmen and distillers responding to an article on the illegal traffic in liquor published in *Argosy* (February 1956). Included is an original typescript draft by General Frank L. Howley of his article "Eisenhower's Tragic Mistake Not Taking Berlin" published in *Argosy* (July 1971).

The correspondence is sparse in the period 1949-56. From 1972 Steeger's correspondence relates to various matters including the history of pulp magazine publishing, his presidency of Steeco Publications (which published *Tennis U.S.A.*), his chairmanship of the speakers' committee of the Dutch Treat Club; and to other personal affairs. Present also (following the alph./chrono series) is Steeger's correspondence as chairman of the development council of Wilberforce University; and correspondence relative to the publication of his book *You Can Remake America*.

Other correspondents include: Bennett Cerf (12/30/58, 1/15/59, 1/23/59, 2/3/59, 10/2/59); Harold J. Cruickshank (5/14/59, 6/22/59, 6/29/59, 11/19/59, 11/30/59, 1/9/61, 1/12/61, 1/18/61, 10/20/62, 11/2/62, 11/20/62, 11/28/62, 1964, 1967, 12/2/69, 2/17/70, 3/2/70, 7/10/71, 6/25/74, 7/4/77); Nuri Eren (1960) Temple Fielding (11/12/58, 1962, 3/28/69, 4/21/69); Frank L. Harvey (5/14/60, 5/18/60); Frank L. Howley (11/10/70, 5/21/71, 6/21/71); Henry Jordan (1/6/59, 8/21/59, 8/30/59, 12/12/59, 12/27/59); Lowell Thomas (12/12/58, 8/6/59, 10/19/59, 6/21/61, 1964, 1966, 1967, 12/4/69, 12/24/69, 7/26/76, 7/27/76, 9/1/76, 9/20/76, 9/29/76, 10/14/76, 12/3/76, 3/14/77, 3/18/81) Peter Throckmorton (10/22/60), and Walt Wiggins (3/1/60).

B. The Miscellaneous papers, which are arranged topically, include editorial memoranda, press releases, speeches by Steeger, and printed ephemera; and papers relating to *Argosy* including a master list of "Honest Abe" columns (by Steeger), a profile of the magazine, reader surveys, and papers relating to the Watchdog for Justice department.

C. The Court of Last Resort records are arranged into four sub-series: 1. Correspondence with Members; 2. Miscellaneous Correspondence; 3. Miscellaneous Papers; and 4. Typescripts.

1. The correspondence with members of the Court consists of correspondence with Erle Stanley Gardner followed by correspondence (arranged alphabetically) with other members including Marshall Houts, Raymond C. Schindler, LeMoyne Snyder, and Park Street. The extensive correspondence (1940-74) of Henry Steeger with Erle Stanley Gardner, his friend, collaborator and co-founder of the Court of Last Resort, covers a broad range of their business and personal relationships. Included is correspondence relating to the purpose, organization and management of the Court; the investigation of cases proposed and accepted by the Court including the case of Clarence Gilmore Boggie and Dr. Samuel Shepard; the techniques of criminal investigation; methods of improving the system of criminal justice in America; and matters relating to editorial strategies for *Argosy*. Some of the correspondence is between Henry Steeger and Jean Bethel, wife of Erle Stanley Gardner. Included is extensive carbon copies of Gardner's correspondence with other members of the Court and with prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, governors, prison wardens, probation officers, and others. Some of the correspondence relates to Gardner's literary work in progress; his books (including *The Land of Shorter Shadows*); and to his excursions into the desert and mountain country of Baja, California (Mexico).

2. The miscellaneous correspondence includes correspondence from readers of *Argosy*; correspondence relating to contract negotiations for a television series relating to the Court; and correspondence with persons volunteering their services.

3. The miscellaneous papers, which are arranged topically, include papers relating to the aims and philosophy of the Court; bulletins and memoranda sent to its members; memoranda between Henry Steeger and the Court's chief investigator, Gene Lowall; minutes of a Chicago meeting (1959) of members; resumes of cases; papers relating to the Canadian Court of Last Resort; printed ephemera; and sound recordings. The sound recordings consist of an audiotape; and three "Audograph" discs. The audiotape is unidentified as to content. One disc is labeled "Memo to Erle" [Erle Stanley Gardner?]; the others are unidentified.

4. The typescripts consist of original and photocopied typescripts of articles by Erle Stanley Gardner published (1955-57) in *Argosy* magazine; and television scripts (1957-58) of Court of Last Resort cases prepared by Walden Productions, Inc. of Hollywood, California.

D. The papers relating to the National Urban League consist of correspondence (1962-68), arranged chronologically, of Henry Steeger as president (and member) of the League; and a topical file of miscellaneous papers including memoranda, minutes, press releases, speeches and printed ephemera. The correspondence includes letters from (and to) Whitney Young, Jr.



**CONTAINER LIST**

Box

**I. CORRESPONDENCE**

(1) Copyright Assignments and Permissions(ca. 1949-1959)

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | A-Fi  |
| 2   | Fi-Mi   |
| 3   | Mo-V  |
| 4   | (2) Copyright Releases (Poems)                                |
|     | (3) Radio Rights and Syndication (ca.1945-52)                 |
| 4-5 | (4) "Court of Last Resort" (ca.1948-53)                       |
| 6   | (5) Editorial/Permissions/Releases/Foreign Sales (ca.1959-73) |
| 7   | - Unsorted  |

**II. COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION RECORDS**

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 7-8   | -Records (1930-1960's) for magazines published by Popular Publications, Inc.   |
| 9-10  | -Records (1941-50) for magazines published by Popular Publications, Inc., Frank A. Munsey Co., and Fictioneers, Inc. |
| 11-12 | -Records for magazines published by Frank A. Munsey Co.  |
| 12-13 | -Copyright registration renewal cards  |

**III. INDEX CARD FILES**

Popular Publications, Inc.

Author Index

- |    |          |
|----|----------|
| 13 | Aa-Ay    |
| 14 | B-Car    |
| 15 | Car-Cro  |
| 16 | Cru-Flu  |
| 17 | Fun-Hei  |
| 18 | Hei-Kee  |
| 19 | Kee-Lou  |
| 20 | Lou-Mor  |
| 21 | Mor-Phi  |
| 22 | Phi-Sch  |
| 23 | Sch-Tin  |
| 24 | Tin-Z    |
| 25 | Unsorted |

Frank A. Munsey Co.

Author Index

- |    |         |
|----|---------|
| 25 | Aa-Ar   |
| 26 | As-Ber  |
| 27 | Bes-Bur |
| 28 | Bur-Coc |
| 29 | Coc-Dav |
| 30 | Dav-Eb  |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 31    | Ec-Fox  |
| 32    | Fox-Gri   |
| 33    | Gro-Hol   |
| 34    | Hol-Kel   |
| 35    | Kem-Ker   |
| 36    | Les-Mac   |
| 37    | Mac-My  |
| 38    | Na-Pie  |
| 39    | Pie-Ros   |
| 40    | Rot-Ship  |
| 41    | Shir-Stol   |
| 42    | Stol-Tren   |
| 43    | Tren-Whit   |
| 44    | Whit-Z  |
| 44-45 | <i>Detective Fiction</i> (author/title indices)   |
| 45-46 | <i>Sports Novels</i> (author indices)   |
|       | <i>44 Western</i> (control cards)   |
|       | <i>Dime Mystery, Detective Tales, 44 Western, and New Western</i> (editorial costs, c1945-48)   |
| 46    | <i>Detective Fiction</i> (author index)   |
|       | <i>Argosy</i> (author/title indices)  |
|       | <i>Argosy and Adventure</i> (author index 1940's)   |
|       | <i>Detective Tales</i> (title index c1945-47)   |
|       | <i>15 Detective Stories, 15 Western Tales</i> and other magazines (author index)  |
| 47    | <i>True Adventure, Adventure, Argosy</i> (title index)  |
| 48    | <i>Railroad Magazine</i> (author index)   |
|       | <i>Electric Lines and Model Railroads</i> (title index)   |
|       | Persons and organizations (names/addresses)   |
| 49    | <i>Adventure</i> (author index)   |
|       | <i>Argosy</i> (index of photographers/illustrators)   |
|       | Unidentified publications (author/title indices, 1920's-1940's)   |
| 49-50 | <i>Flynn's Detective Fiction, Fighting Aces, New Detectives, Love Novels</i> and other publications of Frank A. Munsey Co. (author indices) |
| 50    | <i>Argosy</i> (author index c1969-72)   |
|       | <i>Ready for Rockets</i> (author index)   |
|       | Persons and organizations (names/addresses)   |

#### IV. CANCELED CHECKS

|    |                     |
|----|---------------------|
|    | Frank A. Munsey Co. |
| 51 | 1910-18             |
| 52 | 1916-25             |
| 53 | 1919-30             |
| 54 | 1927-34             |
| 55 | 1933-38             |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| 56    | 1936-40   |
| 57    | 1939-42   |
|       | Popular Publications, Inc. (et al)  |
| 57    | 1935-46   |
| 58    | 1937-44   |
| 59    | 1943-48   |
| 60    | 1945-51   |
| 61-62 | 1945-55 (also All-Fiction Field, Inc. and Fictioneers, Inc.   |
| 63    | 1953-54; 1957-60  |
| 64    | 1955-65 (also: New Publications, Inc.)  |
| 65    | 1961-63   |
| 66    | 1960-69   |
| 67    | 1963-65   |
| 68    | 1966-68   |
| 69    | 1963-71 (with bank statements)  |
| 70    | 1964, 1967-69 (with bank statements)  |
| 71    | 1963-72   |
| 72-73 | 1968-72; unsorted   |
| 74-75 | <b>V. UNSORTED RECORDS</b>  |
| 76    | <b>VI. PEN AND INK DRAWINGS</b>   |
| 77-80 | <b>VII. PERSONAL PAPERS OF HENRY STEEGER</b>  |
| 81    | <b>VIII. ADDITIONAL RECORDS (95 M 28)</b>   |
|       | Popular Publications, Inc.  |
|       | Copyright Assignments and Permissions File  |
|       | A-W   |
|       | Plagiarism File   |
|       | Miscellaneous Papers  |
|       | <i>Argosy</i> magazine – draft cover captions   |
|       | <i>Comics (proposed)</i>  |
|       | <i>Miscellany</i>   |
| 82    | Blazing Publications, Inc. / Argosy Communications, Inc.  |
|       | Copyright Assignments and Publications File   |
|       | -Bradbury, Ray  |
|       | -Burroughs, Edgar Rice  |
|       | -Daly, John Carroll   |
|       | -Gardner, Erle Stanley  |
|       | -Nebel, Frederick   |
|       | -Searles, Hank  |
|       | -Stout, Rex   |
| 83    |   |
| 84    | Photocopies (published stories by Erle Stanley Gardner, and Rex Stout;<br>miscellaneous photocopies |

**IX. ADDITIONAL RECORDS (96M33 and 96M44)**

## A. Correspondence of Henry Steeger as President of Popular Publications

85 1949-58  
 86 1959-60  
 87 1961-62  
 88 1963  
 89 1964, A-M  
 90 1964, N-Z  
 91 1965  
 92 1966-67  
 93 1968-70  
 94 1971-76  
 95 1977-81; n.d.  
 96 Wilberforce University (1965-68)

*You Can Remake America* book (1968-70)

## 97 B. Miscellaneous Papers relating to Popular Publications, Inc.

*Argosy*

-“Honest Abe” column by Steeger (master list; clips)

-Profile

-Reader Surveys (1965-70)

-Watchdog for Justice department

Editorial Memoranda

Photographs by John S. Day

Press Releases

## 98 Printed Matter

Steeger, Henry

-Speeches

-Miscellany

Stock Records of back issues of various magazines

C. Court of Last Resort Department of *Argosy*

## 1. Correspondence with Members

-Gardner, Erle Stanley

99 1940-48, Aug.  
 100 1948, Sept. – 1950, Mar.  
 101 1950, Apr. – 1951  
 102 1952 – 1953, Mar.  
 103 1953, Apr. – 1954  
 104 1955-56  
 105 1957 – 1958, Apr.  
 106 1958, May – 1959, July  
 107 1959, Aug. – 1965  
 108 1966-74; n.d.  
 109 -Burns, W. Sherman (1960)

- Clement, Donald Leeds (1954-60)
  - Gregory, Alex L. (1959-60)
  - Houts, Marshall (1959-60)
  - Lowell, Gene (1958-64)
  - Schindler, Raymond C. (1959)
  - Snyder, LeMoyne (1959-64)
  - Street, Park (1959-61)
  - Agreements with Members
- 110 2. Miscellaneous Correspondence
- Responses from Readers (1955)
  - Television Series Contract negotiations (1954-58)
  - Texas, University of
  - Volunteers
3. Miscellaneous Papers  
(Topical File)
- 111
- Aims of the Court
  - Biographies of members
  - Bulletins Sent to Members
  - Canadian Court of Last Resort
  - Memoranda Sent to Members
  - Memoranda (Gene Lowell – Henry Steeger)
  - Memoranda (Bob Rhay to Members)
  - Minutes of Chicago Meeting, Feb. 1959
  - Miscellany
  - Printed Matter
- 112
- Resumes of Cases
  - Simmons, Walter, Case of (Transcript of Testimony)
  - Sound Recordings
  - Study of the Court Prior to Shutting Down
4. Typescripts
- 113 -Scripts of Articles by Erle Stanley Gardner
- 114 -Television Scripts (1957-58)
- “The Allen Cutler Case”
  - “The Frank Clark Case”
  - “The Jacob Loveless Case”
  - “The Joe Credo Case”
  - “The Lester Arnold Case”
  - “The Mary Morales Case”
  - “The Peter Stevens Case”
  - “The Phillip Houston Case”
  - “The Stephen Lowell Case”
  - “The Todd-Loomis Case”
- D. Papers relating to the National Urban League
- A. Correspondence (Chronological)
- 115 1962 – 1963, Jan.-Nov

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 116 | 1963, Dec. – 1964   |
| 117 | 1965-68   |
|     | B. Miscellaneous Papers<br>(Topical File)   |
| 118 | -Appeals<br>-Detroit Urban League<br>-Memoranda (1958, 1963-64)<br>-Minutes (1959-64)                   |
| 119 | -Minutes (1965)<br>-Miscellaneous Papers<br>-Press Releases (1963-64)<br>-Printed Ephemera<br>-Speeches |