

The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Section

BERENICE C. SKIDELSKY  
Papers, 1850-1984

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Main Entry: Berenice C. Skidelsky

Title and Inclusive Dates: Papers, 1850-1984.

Size: 5.25 Linear Feet 11 AB, 2 1/2AB, 1 Photograph Box.

Source: Joyce Kidder Davis (Gift) May 31, 1990 and June 13, 1990.

Historical Statement: Papers of Berenice C. Skidelsky (1887-1984), writer and lecturer. Skidelsky, who also used the pseudonyms Berenice E. Noar and Burton E. Skidell, began her professional writing career creating stories for pulp magazines. She wrote a novel in 1932, Youth Cries Out, was a book and movie critic and eventually became the literary editor of Vogue. She was a lecturer with interests in political and current events, with a special interest in U.S./Soviet relationships.

Description: The papers of Berenice C. Skidelsky consist of personal correspondence, including ten letters from Theodore Dreiser. There are also letters from Sherwood Anderson and John Galsworthy. The bulk of the collection consists of diaries beginning with her first year as a student at Swarthmore (1904), until her death in 1984. These diaries or journals reflect her emotional history, activities and political thoughts. Also in the collection are clippings and clipping books of articles, quotations and newspaper and magazine commentaries. Most of these writings have been annotated by Skidelsky. There are photographs of friends and family and two boxes of floppy disks (in ASCII code), which contain biographical data, letters and the diaries which have been transcribed by the donor.

## Biographical Statement

Berenice Claire Skidelsky (1887-1984), was born in Philadelphia and was the daughter of Simon, a well-known botanist and essayist, and Rachael, a physician. Berenice attended Swarthmore College and Cornell University where she majored in and briefly taught psychology. Her main interest was writing which is reflected in her earliest clipping books (Box 12). By 1918, she was writing regularly for the Book Review Monthly. This activity introduced her to some prominent writers of the time, most notably Theodore Dreiser. Personal correspondence within the collection intimates that they may have had a brief affair.

Skidelsky's earliest writings display an interest in politics, specifically in U.S./Soviet relationships. This topic was also of interest to her father and this collection contains some of his essays. (Box 12) Skidelsky's literary career brought her to Vogue (1927), where she became literary editor. She wrote serials for pulp magazines (Modern Romances), in the 30's, published short stories and wrote a novel, Youth Cries Out, in 1932.

Using the pseudonym Berenice E. Noar (her mother's maiden name), Skidelsky was an active lecturer. Her topics were mainly political; the Soviet relationship with the U.S., Fascism, anti-semitism as well as comments on prominent political figures and events of the 40's, 50's and 60's. She was a spokesperson for the Progressive Party and Henry Wallace in his bid for the presidency.

In the late 1970's, Skidelsky suffered a fall, leaving her frail and house-bound. She wrote in her journal of her interest in out-of-body experiences and urged her friends to read some of the latest material on the phenomenon. Her last entries in her journal reflect her loneliness as the last of her generation of friends and family. She never married. Her last entry, on March 11, 1984, she calls an "astonishing milestone" as she passed her ninety-seventh birthday. The last writing is of her death three weeks later, written and initialled by "JKD", this collection's donor.

## Scope and Content

Correspondence (Box 1), includes letters from John Galsworthy, Sherwood Anderson and some of her editors. The most important pieces of correspondence are ten letters from Theodore Dreiser (1918-22). All correspondence has been arranged according to correspondent: family and friends, notables.

Included also in the collection are examples of her early writings in Vogue (1925), serials written for Modern Romances (1931-35), and book reviews for Book Review Monthly (1913-17).

A series of eighty-five handwritten journals (1904-1984), reflects Skidelsky's emotional history and activities. The journals begin with her entrance into Swarthmore and end three weeks before her death.

This collection contains clippings from magazines and newspapers as well as political pamphlets. Most of them have been annotated by Skidelsky. These annotations and the selection of material are a reflection of her own political and personal thoughts as well as criticism of some of her own writings.

Included also is an early scrapbook (Box 12), containing newspaper and magazine articles written by her father as well as some of his essays. These all have the by-line Simon S. or S.S. Skidelsky. All clipping books in the collection, except for this one and one other old album which is in Box 12, are arranged chronologically. The bulk of clippings, which have been removed from their original three-ring binders, are arranged according to topic or subject.

Photographs (Box 13), are a separate series in the collection, dating from the 1880's-1968. They are photos of friends and family, and include some photos of Berenice.

There are twenty-seven floppy disks (Box 14) which contain bibliographic data, letters from notables and the journals which were transcribed by the donor of the collection, Joyce Kidder Davis. The disks are in ASCII code.

## Arrangement Note

The collection was found in RC boxes with some internal order. All correspondence was separated and arranged according to correspondent. Clippings and articles were removed from old three-ring binders except for those binders which contained annotations on the covers. All photographs have been removed from the original photo albums and gummed sleeves and have been put inside protective photo jackets. The notations of names, dates and places included with the photographs were included with the original collection on receipt. Writings and manuscripts are arranged according to title of publication; then arranged chronologically within the title. Those materials which were unpublished or undated are arranged separately. The journals are arranged chronologically.

## Condition Note

The collection was found to be in fair to good condition. Many clipping books were in poor condition and the binders were disposed of when possible. Most of the clippings and articles have been removed from their original three-ring binders; they were in poor condition and bulky to store. Those clippings remaining in the three-ring binders and included in the collection have been left intact as the covers of the albums contain annotations and glued envelopes (also annotated) by Skidelsky.

## Series

- |    |                |                         |                               |
|----|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | Correspondence | (1904-1972).            | .42 linear feet; Box 1.       |
| 2. | Writings       | (1913-50; undated).     | .84 linear feet; Boxes 1-2.   |
| 3. | Journals       | (1904-1984).            | 1.89 linear feet; Boxes 3-7.  |
| 4. | Clippings      | (1930's-70's; undated). | 2.10 linear feet; Boxes 8-12. |
| 5. | Photographs    | (1880's-1968).          | .25 linear feet; Box 13.      |
| 6. | Floppy disks   | (1904-1984).            | .21 linear feet; Box 14.      |

Container List

Series 1 Correspondence

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Family, friends	1904-72.
	2	T. Dreiser, S. Anderson, editors	1918-22.

Series 2 Writings

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	3	Newspaper writings	1918-25.
	4	Magazine writings ( <u>Vogue</u> , <u>The Fight</u> , <u>All's Well</u> )	1925, '37, '22.
	5	Pulp writing ( <u>Modern Romances</u> )	1931-33, '35.
	6	Music sheet (Song: "Berenice Mazurka) Cornell Musical	1910.
2	1	Book review ( <u>Vogue</u> ), <u>Fashionable Dress</u> , others; "Burton C. Skidell"	1926, '27, undated.
	2*	<u>Book Review Monthly</u>	1913-17.
	3	Lectures ("Berenice E. Noar") US/Soviet relationships, politics	1943-45.
	4	Lectures ("Berenice E. Noar") US/Soviet relationships, politics	1946-48, '50.
	5	Unpublished ("Berenice E. Noar")	undated.
	6	Random thoughts, poems, unfinished writings	undated.
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Series 3 Journals

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
3		Vols. 1-24	Sept.29,1904- Feb.22,1917.
4		Vols. 25-46	Feb.27,1917- Sept.11,1933.
5		Vols. 47-61	Sept.13,1933- Feb.20,1948.
6		Vols. 62-77	Mar.4, 1948- Mar.22, 1961.
7		Vols. 78-85; note written of death, April 4, 1984, initialled J.K.D. (Donor of collection)	Mar. 27,1961- Mar. 11,1984.

\* Addenda; see Page 7

Series 4 Clippings

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
8	1	Clippings: political, essays, commentaries--annotated, BCS	30's, 40's, undated.
	2	Clippings: Russian developments, war, US/USSR relation.	1939-53.
	3	Clippings: Russian developments, US/USSR relationships	1945-55.
	4	Political pamphlets, essays	undated.
	5	Political pamphlets, essays	undated.
	6	Clippings: Fascism, anti-semitism	undated.
9	1	Clippings: America/Fascism	undated.
	2	Clippings: Fascism in US	undated.
	3	Clippings: Korea	1950.
	4	Clippings: Korea	1950-52.
	5	Clippings: political figures; Henry Wallace presidential can.	1948.
	6	Clippings: Progressive Party	1950-51.
<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
10		Four 3-Ring binders; political comments, essays, annotated BCS.	1952; 1955-60; 1961-62; '63-68
11		Three 3-Ring binders; political comments, essays, annotated BCS.	1968; 1972-74; 1975.
	1	Quotations, annotated BCS	undated.
	2	Quotations, annotated BCS.	undated.
	3	Quotations, annotated BCS.	undated.
12	1	Clipping book; childhood, early Berenice Skidelsky writings, drawings.	undated.
	2	Clipping book; Simon S. Skidelsky (Father)	undated.

Series 5 Photographs

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
13		Photographs; Family, friends	1880's-1968.

Series 6 Floppy Disks

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
14	Box-1	14 Disks; journals	1904-1944.
	Box-2	13 Disks; journals, letters, biographical summaries	1945-1984.

ADDENDA

Series 2            Writings

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
2	2A	Book Reviews, Misc.	
	7	Miscellaneous Notes, notebooks, typescript	1909, 1918- 1919, 1951
	8	Letters to the Editor	1933-1984