

Sally Zaiser:

An Inventory of Her Collection of John Howell Books at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Zaiser, Sally, 1917-1993
Title:	Sally Zaiser Collection of John Howell Books
Dates:	1874-1986
Extent:	4 document boxes, 1 oversize box (3.36 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Sally Zaiser Collection of John Howell Books, 1874-1986, documents the personal and public life of the owners of John Howell Books. Included in the collection are personal items related to John and Warren Howell; correspondence to Sally Zaiser about Warren Howell's illness and death; book awards, news clippings, and other memorabilia pertinent to rare book collecting; unbound manuscripts and printer's proofs; publishing announcements; and financial records.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-02039
Language:	English, French, Aramaic, and Japanese
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift, 1986 (R11128)
Processed by:	Brooke Everett, Jessica Higgins, Jocelyn Petyak, and John Schooley, 2010
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Sally Zaiser (1917-1993) began working as an accountant for publisher and rare book dealer John Howell Books in 1967, becoming Secretary-Treasurer of the company in 1985. Founded by John Howell in San Francisco, California, in October 1912, John Howell Books initially specialized in "fine and rare books," expanding into publishing the following year. As a publisher, John Howell Books issued works of historical and biographical significance, and the works of contemporary authors, as well as establishing itself as the leading antiquarian book dealer on the Pacific coast. In addition to her professional role within the company, Zaiser became an accomplished book collector in her own right. As a book collector Zaiser procured every book published by John Howell Books, while as Secretary-Treasurer of the firm she collected and maintained the extensive company records which make up the bulk of this collection.

Sally Zaiser's work at John Howell Books helped her make many contacts in the world of book collecting, which proved beneficial in her efforts to acquire materials. She assembled a world-class personal collection in the largely male-dominated world of book collecting. Over the course of her career, she compiled a comprehensive collection of the work of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Paul Horgan, including every work he published, and extensive manuscripts and notes. This collection was acquired by the DeGolyer Library at Southern Methodist University in 1990, and was featured in a major exhibition in 1991, *The Collector's Eye: Selections from the Sally Zaiser Collection of Paul Horgan*. Zaiser also authored a short monograph on Horgan: *Paul Horgan, Author, Artist, Bookman*, published in 1995.

Although Sally Zaiser assembled this collection, many of the materials present evoke the memory of Warren Howell. Warren was the figurehead of John Howell Books and a respected figure in the rare books community. He began working in the shop in 1932 and inherited the position of director from his father, John, in 1950. Warren died in 1984, and Zaiser served as a director of the company until the business closed shortly thereafter.

Sources:

Chickering, Allen L. "John Howell." *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 2 June, 1956, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25155057> (accessed 05 October 2010).

Farmer, David, and Paul Horgan. "The grace and passion of a true bibliophile: Sally Zaiser, two tributes." San Francisco: The Press in Tuscany Alley, 1995.

Scope and Contents

The Sally Zaiser Collection of John Howell Books, 1874-1986, documents the personal and public life of the owners of John Howell Books. Included in the collection are personal items related to John and Warren Howell; correspondence to Sally Zaiser about Warren Howell's illness and death; book awards, news clippings, and other memorabilia pertinent to rare book collecting; unbound manuscripts and printer's proofs; publishing announcements; and financial records. The collection consists of one series organized and listed under Zaiser's original descriptive headings: 'Book awards,' 'Announcements,' 'Christmas cards,' 'Items relating to John Gilson Howell,' 'Items relating to Warren Richardson Howell,' 'Miscellany,' 'Financial Statements,' 'Various clippings newspaper and magazines,' and 'Correspondence to Sally V. Zaiser.'

Materials within each of the headings are filed in the original order created by Zaiser. Zaiser's original item level listing of the materials is available. The bulk of these materials involve printed materials from book conferences (found in 'Miscellany') and announcements and order forms (found in 'Announcements'). When an obvious order is present at the item level in the collection, it is chronological. Oversize items (including a broadside in Aramaic and several large Christmas cards) have been removed to a flat box.

Items of note include a set of unbound sheets from the John Howell Books edition of *The Bible of the Revolution*, a re-print of the first known English-language Bible to be printed in America. Also present are Christmas cards sent by Warren and Antoinette Howell to friends and customers, containing high-quality reproductions of various works of art, said to be treasured by recipients. Another noteworthy item is a typed narrative detailing Warren Howell's involvement in the purchase and sale of rare books later found to be stolen from the Crerar Library in Chicago, Illinois, and his cooperation in the subsequent F.B.I. investigation of the matter.

A number of photographs were removed from this collection in 2006 and processed at the Ransom Center under the title "John Howell Books, Literary File, Photography Collection." Among those removed are photographs of a ceremony to honor Warren Howell's career. This event is mentioned frequently in correspondence between Sally Zaiser and Decherd Turner, former Ransom Center director and a speaker at the event. Following Warren's death, Zaiser was involved in the dispensation of this collection to the Harry Ransom Center, while most of the shop's business records, correspondence, and published books are now housed at the Stanford University Archives. Correspondence to Stanford about the acquisition of these items is also present in this collection.

Languages present in the collection, other than English, include several letters in French from Helen Howell Parnell, a broadside in Aramaic, and a catalog in Japanese and English from the Fifth International Antiquarian Book Fair in Tokyo. The materials in this collection are generally in good to excellent condition.

Related Material

Most of the shop's business records, correspondence, and published books are now housed at the Stanford University Archives.

Separated Material

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Index Terms

Subjects

Howell, John, 1874-1956

Howell, Warren R.

John Howell Books (San Francisco, Calif.)

Bibliography

Book collecting--United States--History--20th century

Rare books

Document Types

Christmas cards

Financial Records

Letters

Newspaper Clippings

Printers' proofs

Series I. John Howell Books, 1874-1986

'Book awards,' 1932-1983	Container 1.1
'Announcements,' 1912-1983	Container 1.2
'Christmas cards,' 1957-1984, undated	Container 1.3, 1.5
'Items relating to John Gilson Howell,' 1902-1971, undated	Container 1.4-5
'Items relating to Warren Richardson Howell'	
Personal items, biographical materials, invitations and announcements, 1927-1985	Container 2.1
Album of tributes to W.R. Howell compiled by Sally Zaiser, 1982	Container 2.2
Posthumous material, death certificate, typed statement regarding purchase of stolen books, 1962-1985	Container 2.3
'Miscellany'	
Announcements, order forms, brochures, bookmarks, and promotional materials, 1950-1984, undated	Container 2.4-5
Printer's proofs for <i>The First 100 Years of Painting in California, 1980</i>	Container 2.5
Checklist of John Howell Books publications, announcements, brochures, pamphlets	Container 3.1, 3.5
'Financial statements,' 1963-1985	Container 3.2-3
'Various clippings newspaper and magazines,' 1874-1986	Container 4.1-2
'Correspondence to Sally V. Zaiser'	
1969-1976	Container 4.3
1982-1983	Container 4.4
1984	Container 4.5
1985-1986	Container 4.6

Oversize materials

Container 5

Index of Correspondents

- Arena, Javier--4.4-5
- Baker, Ellis K.--4.3
- Becker, Robert H.--2.2
- Berès, Pierre--2.2, 4.4-5
- Berland, Abel E. (Arthur Rubloff & Co.)--2.2, 4.5
- Bernard Quaritch, Ltd.--2.2
- Blomberg, A. M. von--1.4
- Bowden, Dina Moore--4.3
- Boyles, John--2.2
- Brass, David (E. Joseph Bookseller)--2.2, 4.4-5
- Brown, Andreas (The Gotham Book Mart)--2.2, 4.4
- Cathcart, Robert S. (Bledsoe, Smith, Cathcart, Boyd & Eliot)--4.3
- Carnochan, Brigitte Hoy--4.6
- Clark, Taylor--2.2, 4.5
- Clark, William Andrews Jr.--1.4
- Coffill, Marjorie S.--4.4
- Cooper, Charles Miner--1.4
- Crosett, Napier M.--4.5
- Dauber, Florence--4.5
- Dickie, Jean Kellogg--4.4
- Dickinson, Donald C.--4.4
- Du Pont, John E.--2.2, 4.5
- Eberstadt, Lindley (Edward Eberstadt & Sons)--2.2, 4.3
- E. P. Goldschmidt & Co.--2.2
- Ehrlich, I.--4.4
- Ehrman, Sidney--1.4
- Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain--2.3
- Elmore, Doris Ann--4.5
- England, Patricia G.--4.5
- Farmer, David (University of Tulsa. Libraries)--4.4
- Feldman, Lew D. (House of El Dieff, Inc.)--4.3
- Fleming (John F.) inc., New York--4.3
- Francis, Martin A. Jr.--2.2
- Franklin, Colin--4.4
- Freeman, Arthur (Bernard Quaritch, Ltd.)--2.2
- Gessell, John M. (Sewanee, Tenn. University of the South)--4.4
- Getty, J. Paul--4.5
- Gotham Book Mart--2.2
- Hanna, Archibald, 1916-2010--2.2-3, 4.6
- Harrison, Michael--4.4-5
- Hart, James D.--2.2
- Hatfield, Mark O.--2.2
- Hilscher, Herb--4.4
- Hince, Kenneth--4.4
- Hinckle, Marianne--4.4-5
- Holliday, J. S.--4.4
- Howard, Peter (Serendipity Books)--2.2
- Howard S. Mott (Firm)--4.4-5
- Howell, Rebecca--1.4, 4.3

- Howell, Warren R.--2.1
- Hutchison, W. H. "Hutch"--2.2
- Israel, Nico--2.2, 4.3-5
- Johnson, Folger--4.5
- Kahle, Theo B.--4.5
- Kraus, Hans P. (Kraus, Hans P., firm, booksellers, Vienna)--2.2, 4.4
- King, Roy--4.5
- Kittleson, Harold--4.4
- Knight, George--4.5
- Lansburgh, Mark--2.2
- Leake, Chauncey D. (Mosely, Hallgarten, Eastabrook & Weedem, Inc.)--2.2, 4.4-5
- Longo, Lawrence D.--4.5
- Lowry, George S. (Swann Galleries)--2.2
- Lyon, Katie--4.5
- Maggs, John--4.5
- Massey, Mary P.--4.5
- Mattila, Robert W.--4.4
- Mattison, Lewis C.--4.5
- McDonald, Frederick--4.5
- McDonald, Martha--4.5
- McGoogan, Leon S.--4.6
- Morgan, John P.--4.3
- Mott, Howard S.--2.2
- Myrick, David--4.4
- Nebenzahl, Kenneth--2.2
- Newton, A. Edward--1.4
- Nitta, Mitsuo, 1924- (Yushodo Booksellers, Ltd.)--2.2, 4.4-5
- Norman, Jeremy--2.2
- Nunis, Doyce B. (Doyce Blackman)--2.2, 4.4
- O'More, Haven--2.2
- O'Brian-Malkin, Mary Ann--4.3
- Parnell, Helen Howell--4.3-5
- Park, David (Holmes Book Company)--2.2
- Pierpont Morgan Library--2.2
- Pincus, Dr. I. J.--2.2
- Pipe, Therese--4.5
- Poole-Wilson, Nicholas (Bernard Quaritch, Ltd.)--2.2
- Powles, Sir Guy--4.3, 4.4-5
- Powers, Maurice F.--4.5
- Prothro, Charles--2.2
- Radcliffe, Howard (Bernard Quaritch, Ltd.)--2.2
- Reinhardt, Max (Bodley Head [Firm])--2.2, 4.4-5
- Rice, Spencer Morgan--4.5
- Rippey, Arthur G.--4.4-5
- Robbins, Irving W.--4.4
- Rosenthal, Bernard M.--2.2
- Rudisell, Carol A. (Stanford University Libraries)--4.6
- Ryan, Michael T. (Stanford University Libraries)--2.3, 4.5
- Ryskamp, Charles (Pierpont Morgan Library)--2.2
- Sawers, Robert G.--4.5
- Seymour, Ann--2.2

- Seymour, Dr. Robert J.--2.2
- Shasky, Florian J. (Stanford University Libraries)--4.3-4
- Shumate, Dr. Albert--2.2
- Slocum, John J.--2.2, 4.4-5
- Slusser, Willis S.--4.5
- Speckman, H. A. W.--1.4
- Starr, Kevin--4.5
- Steele, Geoffrey--2.2
- Steloff, Frances (The Gotham Book Mart)--2.2
- Streeter, Frank S.--2.2, 4.5
- Strouse, Norman H.--4.3
- Swann Galleries--2.2, 4.6
- Tanenbaum, Charles J.--2.2, 4.4
- Tanselle, G. Thomas--2.2
- Tavener, Colin--2.2, 4.4-5
- Thomas, N. S.--1.4
- Thompson, Lawrence S.--4.4
- Turner, Decherd (Dallas. Southern Methodist University, Texas.; University at Austin. Humanities Research Center)--4.3-4
- Vasica, Diane (Arkadyan Books)--2.2
- Vasica, Joseph (Arkadyan Books)--2.2
- Vellekoop, Jacques (E. P. Goldschmidt & Co.)--2.2
- Wagner, Henry R.--1.4
- Waring, Jones--2.2
- Webb, Gerald (Arkadyan Books)--2.2
- Welch, William Henry--1.4
- Werner, Klaus W.--4.4
- Wirshup, David S. (Anacapa Books)--2.2
- Witten, Laurence--2.2
- Wyer, William J. (William Wyer Rare Books.)--4.4
- Yelton, Elmer--4.4
- Zaiser, Sally V.--4.3-6
- Zeitlin, Jacob--2.2