Read collection overview Collection overview

One of the pioneers in the ephemera trade, Samuel E. Murray (1906-1989) was a long time antiquarian bookman, based at his home in Wilbraham, Mass. Born on Christmas Day, 1906, Murray interrupted his college studies to go to sea, but after the Depression left him unemployed, he landed a position as sales representative for McGraw-Hill and, later, G. & C. Merriam and other firms. Always an avid book collector, Murray left the publishing industry in 1970 to become a full time bookseller. Without ever advertising or issuing catalogs, he developed a wide reputation among dealers and collectors for his keen eye and perspicacity with rare and uncommon books. A generalist by trade, Murray had a particular fondness for colorplate books and travel literature, but was renowned both for his extensive reference library and for recognizing early on the value of ephemera. After a lengthy bout with myelofibrosis, Murray died at home on June 4, 1989.

The Murray Papers contain correspondence between Murray and a range of his fellow booksellers and clients, as well as his extensive card files on fellow book dealers and wants lists. The collection offers insight into the operations of a well-known antiquarian bookman during the 1970s and 1980s.

See similar SCUA collections:

Books and book history Massachusetts (West)

Background on Samuel E. Murray

Samuel Murray was born on December 25, 1906, in Sedalia, Missouri, and spent most of his childhood there until his family moved to Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1916. He attended Columbia
University where he studied engineering for four years of a six year program but did not finish as he became interested in other pursuits.

After college, Murray went to sea, serving as a yeoman engineer on both passenger and freight ships for various shipping companies, rising to the rank of Assistant Purser during his four year career. During the Great Depression he was unemployed for a time until 1932, when he landed his first job in the book industry as a sales representative for McGraw-Hill. He was with that firm for about four years until they shut down many of their operations. For the next couple of years he worked for a company that sold photographic services for high school yearbooks, until he returned to the publishing industry with G & C Merriam. His job there had him selling dictionaries to retail bookstores.

During this time of his life he was living in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where he met his wife, Josephine, at his aunt's home one day. Both said it was love at first sight and they were married in 1939.

At the start of the Second World War, Murray left the publishing industry and joined Bethlehem Steel Company where he was an inspector of large bombs before rejoining Merriam. Although he accepted a position in California, his stay was brief. Because Jo did not like it there, the couple moved to Wilbraham, Massachusetts, in 1943 and remained there for the rest of their lives.

Murray left Merriam in 1955 to become an independent publisher's representative for firms such as David McKay and the University of Oklahoma Press, covering a territory that included New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.
He continued with that career until 1970 when he went full time into the antiquarian book business.

Murray’s interest in books began as a child when his family moved to New York. Throughout his teenage years and into adulthood he visited many used bookstores and he rapidly began to accumulate a large collection of mostly non-fiction books about the sea, travel, exploration, and biographies. In 1970 his collection was overflowing, so he decided that his only option was to become a bookseller. He gave up his job as a publisher’s representative.

All of Murray’s business dealings were conducted out of his home in Wilbraham. He never advertised and he never issued a catalog. All of his business was by word of mouth, and in the early years most of his sales were to other book dealers whom he had met during his years of collecting. Later on, Murray’s reputation spread and booksellers from all across the country, and the world, wrote or visited requesting books. Murray’s style was easygoing and warm. He would invite prospective buyers into his home and spend hours with them going over his collection and having lively conversations about books in general. And at the end of the visit his wife, Jo, would cook a wonderful meal for everyone. People frequently wrote to Murray to say how much they enjoyed spending time at his home.

During his career as an antiquarian book dealer, Murray joined several professional organizations, including the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA), and he participated in many book fairs in the New England area, including all of the Boston book fairs. He also became a pioneer in the ephemera trade, being one of the first people to recognize the cultural and historical importance of ephemera. Murray was one of the founding members of the Ephemera Society of America (ESA) when that organization came into being in 1980, and he received the Maurice Rickards award from ESA posthumously in 1997, for distinguished service in the world of ephemera.

In 1984, Murray was stricken with myelofibrosis, a rare disease of the bone marrow. After many hospital stays and blood transfusions, the disease went into remission in 1986, but returned in early 1989. Samuel Murray died on June 4, 1989.

**Scope of collection**

The Murray collection contains papers amassed during Sam Murray’s career as both an independent publisher’s
representative and antiquarian book and ephemera dealer between the years of 1961 and 1989. These papers include business correspondence, business contact cards, invoices and bills of sales, and book trade publications including book catalogs and book fair brochures. There is also a small quantity of personal correspondence and effects.

The collection is approximately 7 linear feet, arranged in four series: 1. Business and personal correspondence. 2. Business Contact cards. 3. Invoices and bills of sales. 4. Book trade publications. The arrangement scheme for the collection was imposed during processing in the absence of a usable original order.

Series descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 1. Business and Personal Correspondence</th>
<th>1958-1997</th>
<th>2 linear feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Series 1 is comprised primarily of business letters between Murray and his clients, including want lists, requests for books or ephemera, or appraisals. Murray’s responses are often included. The letters are sorted in rough alphabetical order, by name of company or last name of individual. If no last name is available, the latter are arranged alphabetically by first name. Frequent names that appear are Leonard Finn, Josephine Starr, Manfred Gunther, Bob Merriam, Benjamin Tighe, James Pike, John Liebfried, George Rinsland, and Doris Frohnsdorff.

Series 1 also contains the following business related material: Articles on the business of rare books and collectibles, newspaper articles on other dealers in the business, articles and lists of missing/stolen books within the trade, Sam Murray’s personal business cards throughout the years, invoices, notecards and stationary with Samuel Murray letterhead, and appointment planners for the years 1979-1989. There is much material on Murray’s association with trade organizations, particularly the Antiquarian Booksellers of America Association, the Ephemera Society of America, and the Poplar Ridge Religious Society of Friends.

Among the small array of personal papers in the series are letters, postcards, holiday cards, wedding invitations, and invitations from Columbia University and the Delta Phi Fraternity for reunions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 2. Business Contact Cards</th>
<th>ca.1961-1989</th>
<th>2.5 linear feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Series comprised of business contact cards. Most are handwritten on index cards, but some are on pieces of paper or are formal business cards. The contacts consist of groups, businesses, or individuals, and have varying degrees of information on them. Some just have addresses, while others have phone numbers and
buyer information such as books wanted.

The business cards are unsorted.

Series 3. Invoices and Bills of Sale

Series comprised of invoices and bills of sales during the years of 1971-1987 with a bulk date of 1986. Invoices and bills of sale contain information and prices on books and ephemera bought from Sam, and by Sam, during this period. There is also a receipt of total sales and total purchases by Sam for the year of 1986.

Series 4. Book Trade Publications

Series comprised of publications of the books trade: book, ephemera, and art catalogues from various businesses and dealers, local book and antique dealer listings/brochures, book and ephemera fair brochures and contracts, and auction brochures.

Collection inventory

Series 1. Business and Personal Correspondence

Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America

Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA) papers: General ABAA newsletters/memos, membership applications and directories, meeting minutes (chrono), constitution and bylaws, ABAA Guidelines, ABAA Far East trip itinerary

Appointment planners

Appointment planners
Appointment planners 1984-1988 Box 1: 4

Association memberships 1973-1988 Box 1: 5

General memberships/associations: International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, Mass/RI
Antiquarian Booksellers meeting minutes and treasurer’s report from 1988, Bibliographic Society
of the University of Virginia (1973-1974), Moravian Archives Development Council (1973),
American Historical Print Collector’s Society, Inc. membership directories 1979 and 1982, donation
receipts for various organizations and charities, letter of request to start antiquarian booksellers
club for Western Mass.

Book Trade Articles undated Box 1: 6

Articles on the business: how to buy at auctions, how to collect and handle rare books, collectors
handbook on marks on pottery and porcelain

Business Correspondence: A-C 1962-1989 Box 1: 7-9

Business Correspondence: D-Z 1961-1989 Box 2: 1-12

Ephemera Society of America 1978-1988 Box 3: 1

Ephemera Society of America: program brochures for Ephemera conferences (including 1st world
ephemera congress), contributions and subscriptions, treasurer’s report from 1988

Ephemera Society of America award 1997 Box 3: 2

Posthumous Maurice Rickards award by Ephemera Society of America - 1997. Guest book and
copy of commemorative speech by Anne Bromer

Grolier Club 1984-1987 Box 3: 3

Grolier Club: Membership Directory (1884-1984), Gazette
Letterhead business stationary

Personal business cards, invoice paper, notecards, and stationary all with Sam Murray letterhead. Several different personal business cards throughout the years

News clippings: Book trade and personal

1963-1988

All newspaper articles: colleagues in the business, 3 personal: on son's engagement, assault on wife by assailant, observance of Founders Day at Wilbraham Academy where sons attended school (pic of Sam and wife, Jo, are featured)

Newsletters and journals: various

1971-1989


Newsletters: "Ephemera News"

1981-1989

Newsletters: "The Ephemerist"

1985-1987

Personal correspondence: A-Z

1961-1988

Personal correspondence: includes letters, post cards, wedding invitations, holiday cards, Columbia Univ. Class reunion invitation, Delta Phi fraternity anniversary celebration invitation

Personal effects

1958-1987

Personal effects: paperwork on eye donation to Boston Eye Bank and body donation to Harvard Medical School, 2 playbills that son and daughter had parts in, car insurance information and claims on damage received at NY parking garage, unknown photo of woman

Personal receipts

1965-1986

Personal travel and home improvement receipts

Popular Ridge Religious Society of Friends

1972-1985
### Series 2. Business Contact Cards  
**ca. 1961-1989**  
**2.5 linear feet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business contact cards</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Box 5: No folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact cards: Most are on index cards, some are on paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business contact cards</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Box 6: No folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact cards and one bound journal of contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business contact cards</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Box 7: No folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business contact cards</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Box 8: No folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business contact cards</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Box 9: No folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants list contact cards</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Box Oversized item: No folders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Oversized folder of contact cards organized alphabetically by subject wanted by buyer**

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**Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), 1972-1975 and 1985:** Financial reports, contribution letters/receipts, list of officers and committees, state of society report, and current budget report

**Stolen and missing books 1971-1989**

Information on stolen books/art: letters, list of books missing/stolen, newspaper articles. Also a "black list" of dealers with bad debts
### Series 3. Invoices and Bills of Sale
1971-1987 (bulk 1986)
0.5 linear feet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invoices/Bills of sales: Letters A through Z. In front of box there is sales total receipt and purchase total receipt from year 1986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Series 4. Book Trade Publications
1961-1989
2 linear feet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auction brochures: Connecticut</td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td>11: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and antique dealer listings</td>
<td>1972-1986</td>
<td>11: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book fair applications and contracts</td>
<td>1972-1987</td>
<td>11: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book fair brochures</td>
<td>1971-1987</td>
<td>11: 5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book, ephemera, and art catalogs: letters A through G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book, ephemera, and art catalogs: letters H through M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Administrative information

Access
The collection is open for research.

Provenance
Gift of Paul Murray, July 2008 (accession number 2008-145).

Processing Information
Processed by Jennifer Sweet, October 2012.

Language:
English

Copyright and Use
Cite as: Samuel E. Murray Papers (MS 568). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects
- Antiquarian booksellers--Massachusetts.
- Printed ephemera--Collectors and collecting--Massachusetts.

- Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America.
- Ephemera Society of America.