



Guide to
MS 112
**Owen Payne White
papers**

Span Dates, 1923-1951

3 feet, 3 inches (linear)

Processed October 2000
Updated by Laura Hollingsed, December 2009

Donated by Mrs. Owen P. White, 1967

Citation: Owen P. White Papers, 1923-1951, MS 112, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department
The University of Texas at El Paso

Biography

Owen Payne White, writer and editor, was born in El Paso on June 9, 1879. He was the second son of Alward and Katherine J. (Payne) White. He graduated from El Paso High School in May 27, 1896. In 1896, he attended the University of Texas at Austin, but returned to El Paso after only a few months. White also studied Law at New York University but never graduated. He served in World War I as a sergeant in a medical unit. He married Hazel Havey on January 22, 1920. That same year he became a columnist for the *El Paso Herald*.

Owen P. White wrote nine books and numerous articles about El Paso and the Southwest. His first book, *Out of the Desert*, published in 1923, was a local history of El Paso and brought him to the attention of H. L. Mencken, editor of *The American Mercury*. After a review of *Out of the Desert* appeared in the *New York Times*, White was asked to cover the inauguration of Miriam A. "Ma" Ferguson as governor of Texas. This resulted in the *New York Times* offering him a job. He moved to New York in 1925 and settled in Cutchogue, Long Island, where he lived until his death. For the next couple of years, White worked as a freelance writer for several magazines. In 1926 he joined *Collier's* as an associate editor and staff writer, where he worked until 1940. During his time at *Collier's*, White attracted national attention for muckraking and speaking out against corrupt politicians, particularly those from Texas. His criticism of the oil industry and graft in the Lower Rio Grande valley brought the threat of lawsuits against both White and *Collier's*. His final work, *Western Trails*, all but finished at the time of his death, was never published. It dealt with the major travel routes west of the Mississippi from the sixteenth century until 1836.

Owen P. White died in December 1946 at age the age of 67. He was survived by his wife and his sister, Leigh White Osborn, but he left no children. In November of 2000, he was inducted into the El Paso County Historical Society's Hall of Honor.

Series Arrangement or Description

Series I. Biographical - contains biographical material and photographs of Owen P. White. Includes several 8x10" portraits and a 3x5" snapshot of him in WWI uniform.

Series II. Correspondence - contains correspondence related to publishing efforts including correspondence with H. L. Mencken

Series III. Articles and Reviews - contains reviews of White's various works and some miscellaneous articles.

Series IV. Literary productions - contains off prints and copies of magazines containing many of White's articles. Also contains manuscripts for *A Frontier Mother* and *Western Trails*.

Scope and Content Notes

The Owen P. White papers contain correspondence, reviews, manuscripts, photographs, and periodicals in which his work appeared, such as *Colliers* and *American Mercury*. The collection also contains correspondence with editor H. L. Mencken and with other publishers. Some correspondence relates to specific projects, including *Out of the Desert*, *Frontier Mother*, *Just Me*, *Them Was the Days*, *Autobiography of a Durable Sinner*, and *Texas, an Informal Biography*. There is some biographical information including several photographs and his obituaries.

Provenance Statement

The Owen Payne White papers were donated in 1967 by Mrs. Owen P. White. The papers were first inventoried and described in the late 1960s by the archivist Leon Metz, and they were fully processed and described in 2000 by the archives staff. Correspondence between Baxter Polk and Mrs. White, and a checklist of works by Owen P. White was moved to donor file.

In 2009, a large, fragile newspaper and clipping were placed in folders, flattened, and moved to over-size storage in the map case.

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the Owen P. White papers must be obtained from the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Notes to the Researcher

Many documents are very fragile; please handle with care.

Related Collections

Leigh W. Osborn Photographs, PH026

Container List

Box #	Folder #	Title	Date
Biographical Information			
1	1	Photographs	
1	2	Article—"Making the Grade in Gotham," by Owen P. White (moved to Map Case Drawer W5)	1929
1	2	Newspaper— <i>The Juarez-El Paso Shrapnel</i> (moved to Map Case Drawer W5)	May 19, 1911
1	3	<i>The Alcalde</i>	
1	4	Awards	
1	5	Obituaries	
Correspondence			
1	6	Letters from, to and about H.L. Mencken	
1	7	Letters from Publishers	
1	8	Bailer threatened lawsuit	
1	9	New York Times Correspondence	
1	10	Letters - <i>Frontier Mother</i>	1929
1	11	Letters - <i>Autobiography of a Durable Sinner</i>	1942
1	12	Letters - <i>Texas, an informal biography</i>	1945
1	13	Letters - Misc.	
1	14	Letters - from White	
Reviews and Articles			
1	15	Reviews - <i>Out of the Desert</i>	1923
1	16	Reviews - <i>Just Me</i>	1924
1	17	Reviews - <i>Them was the days</i>	1925
1	18	Reviews - <i>Frontier Mother</i>	1929
1	19	Reviews - <i>Autobiography of a Durable Sinner</i>	1942
1	20	Reviews - <i>Texas, an Informal Biography</i>	1945
1	21	Misc. Articles	
Literary Productions			
2	1	"In the Nature of Prophecy"	
2	2	<i>A Frontier Mother</i> – Manuscript	1929
2	3	<i>A Frontier Mother</i> – Article and Art	1929
2	4	"All Washed Up"	Sept. 1934
2	5	<i>Today</i> "Texas Thirst"	Jan. 1935
2	6	"Hello Paris"	Feb. 1936
2	7	<i>Conservation</i> – "Low, the Poor Indian"	Mar. 1937
2	8	"America Calling"	Nov. 1939
2	9	The American Mercury	Aug. 1924
2	10	The American Mercury	May 1926
2	11	The American Mercury	Sept. 1926
2	12	The American Mercury	Mar. 1929
2	13	The American Mercury	Dec. 1929
2	14	The American Mercury	Dec. 1946
3	1	Liberty	Aug. 1, 1936
3	2	Liberty	Nov. 28, 1936

3	3	Liberty	Dec. 5, 1936
3	4	Liberty	Apr. 17, 1937
3	5	Liberty	Apr. 2, 1938
3	6	Liberty	Apr. 9, 1938
3	7	Liberty	Apr. 16, 1938
3	8	Articles	1918-1932
3	9	Articles	1919-1923
3	10	Articles	1925
3	11	Articles	1925
3	12	Articles	1924-1931
3	13	Articles	1951
3	14	Miscellaneous	
3	15	<i>Out of the Desert</i> Publicity	
4		Manuscript - <i>Western Trails</i>	
5	1	Collier's	July 9, 1927
5	2	Collier's	Apr. 6, 1929
5	3	Collier's	May 4, 1929
5	4	Collier's	Jun. 22, 1929
5	5	Collier's	Aug. 10, 1929
5	6	Collier's	Aug. 17, 1929
5	7	Collier's	Aug. 24, 1929
5	8	Collier's	Oct. 5, 1929
5	9	Collier's	Oct. 12, 1929
5	10	Collier's	Oct. 19, 1929
5	11	Collier's	Oct. 26, 1929
5	12	Collier's	Nov. 9, 1929
6	1	Collier's	June 6, 1931
6	2	Collier's	June 27, 1931
6	3	Collier's	Nov. 14, 1931
6	4	Collier's	Jan. 2, 1932
6	5	Collier's	Feb. 6, 1932
6	6	Collier's	Feb. 27, 1932
6	7	Collier's	Aug. 20, 1932
6	8	Collier's	Oct. 8, 1932
6	9	Collier's	Oct. 28, 1933
6	10	Collier's	Jan. 6, 1934
6	11	Collier's	Mar. 3, 1934
6	12	Collier's	June 2, 1934
6	13	Collier's	June 16, 1934
6	14	Collier's	July 21, 1934
6	15	Collier's	Aug. 4, 1934
6	16	Collier's	Oct. 27, 1934
7	1	Collier's	Jan. 12, 1935
7	2	Collier's	Jan. 26, 1935
7	3	Collier's	Apr. 6, 1935
7	4	Collier's	May 11, 1935
7	5	Collier's	June 22, 1935

7	6	Collier's	July 27, 1935
7	7	Collier's	July 27, 1935
7	8	Collier's	Feb. 15, 1936
7	9	Collier's	May 17, 1941
7	10	Today	Jan. 26, 1935