



8-25-2023

William Somerset Maugham Collection Finding Aid

Paige Harris

Follow this and additional works at: <https://poetcommons.whittier.edu/finding>

Title: W.S. Maugham Collection

Dates: 1897-1980

Creator/Collector: Unknown

Extent: 1 box (14 linear feet)

Repository: Wardman Library-Whittier College. Whittier, California 90602

Abstract: William Somerset Maugham was a queer playwright and author known for his raw depictions of wartime and working-class life. He served as an ambulance driver during World War Two and was a member of the British Secret Service. The W. S. Maugham Collection consists of books written by William Somerset Maugham, as well as papers written by and pertaining to him.

Language of Material: English

Access: The collection is open for research use.

Publication Rights: Authorization to publish, quote, or reproduce must be obtained from Wardman Library, Whittier College.

Preferred Citation: Maugham Collection, Wardman Library-Whittier College

Acquisition Information: The Maugham Collection was donated by Dr. Louis B. Vogt, class of 1954, in 1967 and facilitated by Drs. Paul Smith and Ben Whitten.

Biography/Administrative History: William Somerset Maugham was born in Paris in 1874 to British parents. Although he spent his younger years in France and spoke French as a first language, he was educated in English systems and lived in England after the age of ten. Maugham began writing while in his teens and, as a young adult, met with considerable success as a professional novelist and playwright and was applauded for his raw depictions of wartime and working-class life. At the same time as this professional success, however, Maugham struggled with his attraction to other men and feared meeting a similar fate to Oscar Wilde, whose trial for homosexuality was widely discussed in Maugham's social circles.

During the First World War, Maugham served as a volunteer ambulance driver for the British Red Cross. He also courted a woman, Syrie Wellcome, who gave birth in 1915 to what would be his only child. The couple married in 1917 despite Maugham's ongoing relationships with other men, including Frederick Gerald Haxton, who would be his secretary and romantic

partner for nearly thirty years. After the war, Maugham travelled to Geneva, Samoa, and Russia as an agent of the British Secret Service while continuing to write and publish. He and Wellcome divorced in 1929, after which Maugham lived in France with Haxton until the French surrendered to Nazi rule in 1940; the pair then moved to America, although they lived apart. In 1944, Haxton died of tuberculosis, from which Maugham had also suffered in the past.

After the war, Maugham travelled regularly around Europe and was designated as a Companion of Honour by Queen Elizabeth the Second. He published his final work, an autobiography, in 1962 and died in 1965 of complications from a fall. This finding aid was developed by Paige Harris in 2023.

Scope and Content of Collection: The Maugham Collection consists of books written by William Somerset Maugham, as well as papers written by and pertaining to him. The books include many of Maugham's most popular works, including *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, and *Cakes and Ale*.

Container List:

- Box 1
 - Folder 1- Newspaper clippings, correspondence, and photographs pertaining to Maugham's death and burial, 1965-1966
 - Folder 2- Correspondence from Maugham to George and Raymond Bullock, 1932-1947. 16 items.
 - Folder 3- Correspondence between Vogt and rare booksellers, 1965-1966.
 - Folder 4- Correspondence between Vogt and rare booksellers, 1965-1966
 - Folder 5 (Released in 2017)- Correspondence between Vogt, Whittier College, Alan Searle, David Magee (antiquarian bookseller), and Wilmon Menard (biographer), 1965-1977.
 - Photocopies of 1934 letter from Fred Beson (biographer).
 - Mailing envelopes from G. F. Sims (rare bookseller) that previously contained autographed and original letters, now empty, 1965.
 - Folder 6-
 - Letter from Vogt to Whitten regarding correspondence included in the collection
 - Clipping from Spring 1973 edition of "Synergy"

- Whittier College press release announcing the donation of the Collection, 1968
 - Whittier College press release announcing a display of the Collection, 1971
 - Newspaper clipping of a review of Maugham as an author
 - Leaflet from an exhibition of Maugham materials at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library
 - Itemized lists of collection material
- Folder 7- 1966 list of books given to the King's School, Canterbury by W. Somerset Maugham
- Folder 8- The New York Times Book Review, October 9th, 1966
- Folder 9- Parade, March 6th, 1966
- Folder 10-
 - Sports Illustrated, January 17th, 1966
 - Theatre Arts, November 1955
 - Time, December 24, 1965
- Folder 11-
 - Vogue, August 15, 1966
 - Show, August 1962
 - Look, October 18, 1966
 - Show, July 1962