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FINDING AID TO THE GEORGE PALMER PUTNAM PAPERS, 1937- circa 1999

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Processed by: Mary A. Segó, September 14, 2015

Descriptive Summary

Creator Information	Putnam, George Palmer, 1887-1950
Title	George Palmer Putnam papers
Collection Identifier	MSP 20
Date Span	1937-1999, predominant 1937-1950
Abstract	The George Palmer Putnam papers include correspondence, news clippings, and articles related to the life of Putnam. Also included are his will and various obituaries.
Extent	0.2 cubic feet (1 mss box)
Finding Aid Author	Mary A. Sego
Languages	English
Repository	Virginia Kelly Karnes Archives and Special Collections Research Center, Purdue University Libraries

Administrative Information

Location Information:	ASC
Access Restrictions:	Collection is open for research.
Acquisition Information:	Donation received from Sally Putnam Chapman (Putnam's granddaughter), December 6, 2012
Accession Number:	20121206
Preferred Citation:	MSP 20, George Palmer Putnam papers, Karnes Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries
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Related Materials	George Palmer Putnam collection of Amelia Earhart papers: https://apps.lib.purdue.edu/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=27&q=putnam

Information: Amelia Earhart at Purdue papers:
<https://apps.lib.purdue.edu/archon/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=1457&q=putnam>

Subjects and Genres

Persons

Putnam, George Palmer, 1887-1950

Earhart, Amelia May, 1897-1937

Organizations

Putnam Publishing Group

Topics

Publishers and authors

Publishers and publishing--United States--History

Form and Genre Types

Articles

Clippings

Correspondence

Files and filing (Documents)

Obituaries

Wills

Occupations

Publishers

Author

Explorer

Promoters

Publicist

Biography of George Palmer Putnam

George Palmer Putnam II was born in Rye, New York on September 7, 1887. He was the third and last child, all boys, born to John Bishop and Frances Faulkner Putnam. He was named after his grandfather who was the founder of the renowned New York and London Publishing House, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

In 1904, at seventeen years of age, George was enrolled in The Gunnery School at Washington, Connecticut. In the fall of 1906 George entered Harvard, but early in 1907 ill health forced him to withdraw. When his health permitted, he worked at G.P. Putnam's Sons. In early 1908 Putnam matriculated at the University of California during the fall semester in economics, French, literature, and short story writing.

Putnam was editor of a newspaper in Bend, Oregon from 1910 to 1913, and twice was elected mayor there while still in his early twenties. After serving as a lieutenant in the field artillery during World War I, he joined his father's firm and became treasurer of George P. Putnam Sons, a post which he held until 1930. He was vice president of another publishing house, Brewer & Warren, from 1930 to 1932, and chairman of the Editorial Board of Paramount Productions from 1932 to 1935.

Mr. Putnam's greatest personal prominence was achieved as the result of two expeditions which he led to the Arctic. In 1926, under the sponsorship of the American Museum of Natural History, he proceeded by steamship up the west coast of Greenland with Captain Bob Bartlett and radioed daily dispatches of his adventures to *The New York Times*. The trip covered 8,500 miles.

A member of the Explorers' Club, Putnam was a close friend of Richard E. Byrd, Roy Chapman Andrews, William Beebe and Sir Herbert Wilkins. His interest in exploration and aviation led him as a publisher to present a number of books on these subjects, including "We," by Charles A. Lindberg. He himself was the author of ten books, including, "Soaring Wings," a biography of Amelia Earhart, his second wife; "Wide Margins," an autobiography, and three volumes on Death Valley.

Putnam married four times; Dorothy Binney in 1911, the daughter of Edwin Binney, inventor and co-owner, the company that made Crayola crayons. They had two sons, David Binney Putnam (1913–1992) and George Palmer Putnam, Jr (1921-2013). They divorced in 1929.

In 1930, the various Putnam heirs voted to merge the family's publishing firm with Minton, Balch & Co., which became the majority stockholders. George P. Putnam resigned from his position as secretary of G. P. Putnam's Sons and joined New York publishers Brewer & Warren as vice president. A significant event in Putnam's personal and business life occurred in 1928, before the merger. Because of his reputation for working with Lindbergh, he was contacted by Amy Guest, a wealthy

American living in London who wanted to sponsor the first-ever flight by a woman across the Atlantic Ocean.

Guest asked Putnam to find a suitable candidate, and he eventually came up with the then-unknown aviatrix, Amelia Earhart. As it turned out, they shared many common interests: hiking, swimming, camping, riding, tennis and golf. When Putnam first met Earhart, he was still married to Binney. After Earhart successfully completed her flight across the Atlantic, Putnam offered to help her write a book about her flight, following the formula he had established with Charles Lindbergh in the writing of "*WE*". The resulting Earhart book was "20 Hrs., 40 Min," (1928). He later published Earhart's book, "The Fun of It," (1932).

When they began writing, Putnam invited Earhart to live in his home because he felt like it would make the process easier. Shortly after, Binney left for South America which was followed by the divorce of George and Dorothy Putnam in 1929. Putnam had undertaken to heavily promote Earhart in a campaign that included a series of lecture tours and using pictures of her image in mass market endorsements for products including luggage, Lucky Strike™ cigarettes.

Putnam and Earhart made their relationship official shortly after his divorce was finalized, but they didn't marry until 1931. Earhart's ideas on marriage were liberal for the time as she believed in equal responsibilities for both "breadwinners" and pointedly kept her own name rather than being referred to as Mrs. Putnam. GP, as she called him. Earhart joined the faculty of Purdue University College of Technology in 1935 as a visiting faculty member to counsel women on careers and as a technical advisor to the Department of Aeronautics. She disappeared in 1937 while on her second attempt to complete a flight around the world.

In 1938, Putnam set up a new publishing company in California, George Palmer Putnam Inc. After Earhart was officially declared dead in 1939, he married Jean Consigny. With America's entry into World War II in 1941, Putnam rejoined the active military, serving in an Intelligence unit, enlisting as a captain and rising to the rank of major by 1942. In 1945, he and "Jeannie" divorced; she had initiated the action, citing incompatibility. Shortly after, he remarried again, to Margaret Haviland and together, they operated the Stove Pipe Wells resort in Death Valley, California. George Palmer Putnam died on January 5, 1950 at the age of 63 from uremic poisoning, after a month's illness.

Sources:

Obituaries, and "Reminiscences of GPP," by playwright Robert E. Lee, found among the papers.

George P. Putnam, *Wikipedia*. Web, 14 Sept. 2015
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_P._Putnam>

Collection Description

Scope

The George Palmer Putnam papers (1937-1999; 0.2 cubic feet) are comprised of material from the original files provided by Sally Putnam Chapman, Putnam's granddaughter. Much of the material is correspondence, news clippings, and articles related to the life of Putnam, and various publishing projects. Also included are his will and various obituaries.

Some of the unique items feature, "Reminiscences of GPP," by Robert Edwin Lee, playwright, close friend and one time business partner of Putnam; a "first draft copy" of a chapter from the book, *Amelia Earhart: The Mystery Solved*, co-written by Elgen and Marie Long." Correspondence (handwritten and signed) from George Palmer Putnam, on the letterhead of Dow Hotel, Lone Pine, California, in an envelope addressed to "Mrs. George Palmer Putnam / (Nee Haviland)," Also included is correspondence from friends of Putnam's addressed to Peg Putnam expressing sympathy upon his death. One is from Laurence M. Gould, President, Carlton College, and in this letter he expresses his sympathy and condolences to GPP's wife, and his gratefulness for GPP's hand in "getting me started in exploration and on the First Byrd Expedition." Other letters are from George Agnew Chamberlain, author and screenwriter; Robert W. Sawyer, journalist, politician and conservationist; and Rockwell Kent, American painter, printmaker, illustrator, and writer.

Descriptive Rules

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Processing Information

All materials have been housed in acid-free folders and acid-free boxes. The material has been left in the original order found in the files, and marked as originally indicated. The original files have also been retained, and placed in the archival box behind their respective archival folders. All newsprint has been photocopied and in most cases original newspaper clippings have been retained, with photocopies made available for research.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

1 Box [File – “Publishing Books”] and [File - “G.P.P. History and Obit.”], 1937-circa 1999

Folder

1. [File – “Publishing Books”] 1937-1954

Item

1. “Last Will and Testament of George Palmer Putnam,” June 8, 1945 (carbon copy, 4 pages)
2. “No. 2540: Order Settling First and Final Account, and for Distribution under Will,” November 23, 1953 (carbon copy, 4 pages, signed by John P. McMurray, Judge of Superior Court of Inyo County, California)
3. “No. 2540: Order Settling First and Final Account, and for Distribution under Will,” November 23, 1953 (carbon copy, 4 pages, unsigned)
4. Four carbon copies of typed letters, dated early 1954, related to bringing the royalty accounts to date for the published works of George Palmer Putnam, deceased
5. Two photostat copies of an agreement between George Palmer Putnam and Harcourt, Brace and Company, for a biography of Amelia Earhart, to be entitled, *Last Flight*, dated October 7, 1937 and May 31, 1938, respectively, each with revisions, each 3 pages
6. A photostat copy of an agreement between George Palmer Putnam (as co-author with L.F.V. Drake) and Doubleday, Doran and Company for a book to be entitled, *Vertical Warfare*, dated March 2, 1943, 3 pages, along with a letter of acknowledgement from the publisher, and an accounting of royalties
7. Eight newspaper clippings related to publishing projects of George Palmer Putnam, circa 1943-1950
8. Five photocopies of material related to publishing projects of George Palmer Putnam, circa 1942-1950
9. Ten pages of magazine clippings related to publishing projects of George Palmer Putnam, circa 1930-1949
10. Correspondence, Vera Eikel, on Blue Network Company letterhead, requesting permission to use biographical material in producing a radio show recounting the achievements of George Palmer Putnam and Amelia Earhart, June 18, 1942, 2 pages

2. [File - “G.P.P. History and Obit”] 1945-circa 1999

Item

1. “Lengthy obituary for George Palmer Putnam from the *Los Angeles Times*,” January 5, 1950 (14 originals and one photocopy)
2. Cover and obituary for Putnam from *Fortnight: The Newsmagazine of California*, January 30, 1950
3. Eight clippings reporting the death of or detailing the life of Putnam, circa 1945-1950

4. Fourteen photocopies of articles reporting the death of or detailing the life of Putnam, 1945-1950
5. Six copies related to the death and disposition of the remains of Putnam, 1955-1966
6. Five photocopies of articles related to the life of Putnam, circa 1950
7. "Reminiscences of GPP," by Robert Edwin Lee, playwright, close friend and one time partner of Putnam, original computer printout, 7 pages, written summer of 1988 (one original typescript, and 2 photocopies)
8. "Chapter Two: George P. Putnam, computer print-out, 15 pages, A "first draft copy" of a chapter from the book, *Amelia Earhart: The Mystery Solved*, co-written by Elgen and Marie Long," A handwritten inscription on the first page, reads: "To Sally Putnam Chapman // This is a First draft copy of the / chapter on your grandfather. / It is not included in the present / format presented to the Smithsonian / but might be recycled back in. / Please share with your uncle / George and your family, but I / may use it still and ask it / for family use only. / [signed] Elgen Long," circa 1999
9. Correspondence from Laurence M. Gould, President, Carlton College, Northfield, MN, addressed to "Mrs. Putnam," on Carleton College letterhead, dated January 5, 1950, 24 lines. Gould was second in command of Richard Byrd's first expedition to Antarctica, and a widely respected scientist. In this letter he expresses his sympathy and condolences to GPP's wife, and his gratefulness for GPP's hand in "getting me started in exploration and on the First Byrd Expedition." (includes original and 2 photocopies)
10. Correspondence from George Agnew Chamberlain, author and screenwriter, addressed to "Peg Putnam," on personal letterhead, dated January 28, 1950, 24 lines. Remembering his relationship with GPP and expressing condolences and sympathy, reading in part: "He fought a good fight against odds to the end and you have the lasting knowledge that your love and companionship brightened the last years of his troubled life." (includes original and one photocopy)
11. Correspondence from, Robert W. Sawyer, journalist, politician and conservationist, addressed to "Peg," on personal letterhead, dated May 3, 1950, 4 lines, with an enclosure of a typed memorial to GPP, 14 lines
12. Correspondence, Robert W. Sawyer, journalist, politician and conservationist, addressed to "Peg," on personal letterhead, dated December 19, 1958, 8 lines, expressing holiday wishes
13. Correspondence, Rockwell Kent, to Margaret, dated January 31, 1950, 30 lines. Writing in sympathy at the time of Putnam's death, in part: "I have never forgotten the ardent period when we lived together, nor been forgetful of the great friendship and belief in me that prompted him, over the disapproval of the older Putnams, to undertake the publishing of the first book, "Wilderness," and

- subsequently of "Voyaging," and "N by E." (2 copies)
14. Correspondence, George Palmer Putnam, on the letterhead of Dow Hotel, Lone Pine, California, in an envelope addressed to "Mrs. George Palmer Putnam / (Nee Haviland)," 14 lines. Reads in part: "I love you dearly & happily & / am immeasurably proud of you / and conceited no end because / you are taking a chance on me," undated
 15. Correspondence from Clyde E. Holley, addressed to George P. Putnam, Jr., regarding the disposition of the remains of his father, dated May 13, 1955 and June 24, 1955, respectively (2 copies)
 16. Two magazine articles detailing the life of Putnam, circa 1948-1978