



The Wittliff Collections

Guide to the Winifred Sanford Papers 1911-2003

Collection SWWC-076

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Sanford, Winifred M., 1890-1983
Title:	Guide to the Winifred Sanford Papers
Dates:	1911-2003
Abstract:	Correspondence, printed material, handwritten notes, tearsheets, newspaper clippings, published magazines, and one VHS cassette, document the literary career of the author and posthumous publication of her works.
Identification:	SWWC-076
Extent:	3 boxes, 2 Linear Feet
Language:	English
Repository:	The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University

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Biographical Notes

Born in Duluth, Minnesota on March 16, 1890 to Henry S. Mahon and Helen Brooks Mahon, Winifred Mahon Sanford enjoyed a brief but noteworthy literary career from 1925 to 1931. Her 15 short stories appeared popular magazines of the day such the *American Mercury* and the *Woman's Home Companion*. She has been called an “unjustly forgotten” Texas author whose work realistically captures the social transition in post-World War I Texas brought about by the oil boom.

Educated for a year at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts (1909), she received a degree in English from the University of Michigan in 1913. Before marrying law student and naval officer Wayland H. Sanford in 1917, Winifred Mahon taught high school in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and in Idaho, then worked as a librarian in New York City. In 1920, the Sanford's first daughter, Emerett, was born in Duluth. Soon after that, Winifred Sanford followed her husband to Wichita Falls, Texas, where he had found employment as an oil and gas attorney. Their second daughter, Helen, was born in their new home in 1922. Although she is known primarily for her short stories, Sanford's first published work, “England and the Home-Rule Question,” appeared in the *South Atlantic Quarterly* in 1913 when she was still at the University of Michigan. Her early work includes unpublished, possibly autobiographical stories she wrote as a child and portraits of family members. Once established in Wichita Falls, Sanford joined The Manuscript Club, a literary group that met for the first time in 1922 and included published authors Anne Pence Davis and Fay M. Yauger. Along with three other members of The Manuscript Club, Sanford was elected as a member of the Texas Institute of Letters. The women belonging to this club encouraged each other's writing aspirations, providing a forum in which to discuss and critique members' works. By January 1925 Sanford's story “Wreck” was published in the *American Mercury*, edited by H. L. Mencken. Sanford and Mencken established a regular correspondence in which he encouraged her writing endeavors. She went on to publish eight more short stories in the *American Mercury*, as well as others in the *Woman's Home Companion*, *The North American Review*, and *Household* until 1931. In addition, three of her works were listed in J. O. O'Brien's *The Best Short Stories of 1926*, which brought her to the attention of several literary agencies. One such agency was the Paget Literary Agency, which represented Sanford for several years. Sanford began working on a novel in 1925 that she submitted to Paget two years later. In 1931 the Sanford family moved to Dallas,

where Winifred Sanford continued to work on her novel but had little success publishing it, nor is there any record of short stories written during this time. Because no copy of her novel appears in her Papers, it is assumed that she disposed of it. The Sanford's third daughter, Mary, was born in 1933. The next year an article entitled "Derrick Jargon," co-authored with Clyde Jackson, was published in 1934 by Southern Methodist University in *The Southwest Review*. Winifred Sanford suffered a long-term illness in 1937 which kept her bed-ridden for over a year, after which no other new articles, novels, nor stories were published. In 1938 Sanford submitted a detective novel to the Paget Literary Agency with no success. She attempted to sell one last short story, "Deep C," to three magazines in 1945, but none of the editors thought the story would appeal to their readers. Sanford's story "Windfall" was reprinted in several anthologies and textbooks from 1928 to 1988, and other stories appeared in collections in 1982 and 1998. However, no collection was dedicated solely to her works until 1980. She and her family privately published *Windfall and Other Stories*, a collection of 13 of her 15 short stories originally printed between 1925 and 1931, as well as two stories not originally intended for publication. Winifred Mahon Sanford died at the age of 93 on March 24, 1983, but she left a distinguished legacy. *Windfall* had caught the attention of Suzanne Comer, senior editor at Southern Methodist University Press, who in 1987 began the process of securing permission to reprint the collection as a part of the Southwest Life and Letters Series of SMU Press. The family agreed to the reprinting, and in November 1988 it appeared and gained regional acclaim, with reviews appearing in newspapers and such publications as *Legacies*, *Belles Lettres*, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, *Western American Literature*, and *Texas Books in Review*.

*. Her writing skills have been compared to Katherine Ann Porters', and one critic claimed that Sanford's fiction was "some of the best creative work to date on Texas during the oil boom of the 1920s." ** This flurry of attention to Sanford's work led to a film entitled *The Stars Fell on Henrietta* in 1995. The screenplay, based on Sanford's story "Luck," was written by Sanford's grandson Philip Railsback and produced by Clint Eastwood's production company. In early 1997 The Dallas Museum of Art and the Friends of the Dallas Public Library hosted a program called "Arts and Letters Live: A Literary Celebration," in which Sanford's "Windfall" was read by Sheriden Thomas. In 2004, Helen Sanford donated her mother's literary papers to the Southwestern Writers Collection. * *Legacies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1989); *Belles Letters* (Spring 1990); *SHQ* (Apr 1990); *WAL* (vol XXV no. 2); *TBIR* (Summer 1989) ** attributed to a member of the SMU Press in *Dallas Woman*, (Dec 1988); *San Marcos Daily Record* (Dec 4, 1988);

Literature & History (Winter 1988) Bibliography: Sanford, Winifred. *Windfall and Other Stories*, 1980. Sanford, Winifred, *Windfall and Other Stories*, Dallas : Southern Methodist University Press, 1988.

Scope and Contents

Correspondence, printed material, handwritten notes, tearsheets, newspaper clippings, published magazines, and one VHS cassette (1 linear foot), document the literary career of the author and posthumous publication of her works.

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Helen J. Sanford

Physical Location

Materials may be stored off-site. Advance notice is required for use:
<https://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/makearesearchappointment.html>.

Preferred Citation

Winifred Sanford Papers, The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University.

Conditions Governing Use

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<https://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/visit/policies/publication.html>

Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open for research.

Controlled Access Headings

- Authors
- Literature
- Women authors, American

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Personal Documents, 1911-1983

Box Folder

1	1	University of Michigan Records; Funeral service documents, 1911-1938, 1983
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Series II: Correspondence, 1924- 2003

Winifred Sanford by date, 1924-1981, undated

1	2	Literary Correspondence, 1924-1927
1	3	Literary Correspondence, 1928-1931, undated
1	4	Literary Correspondence, 1932-1945
1	5	Literary Correspondence, 1953-1962
1	6	Personal Correspondence - Letters and cards, 1980-1982, undated

Helen Sanford by date, 1981-2003

1	7	Permissions, 1980-1983
1	8	Permissions, 1984
1	9	Permissions, 1987-1988
1	10	Permissions, 1989-2003
1	11	Personal Correspondence - Letters and cards, 1983-1990

Series III: Writings by Winifred Sanford, 1924-1988

Published Works by title, 1924-1980

1	12	Tearsheets of stories, collected by Helen Hall Sanford
1	13	Tearsheets from original publications
1	14	Tearsheets from original publications and typescripts
1	15	Copyright Documents, 1924-1926
2	1	Copyright Documents, 1927-1980
2	2	Translation Materials, 1926

Unpublished Works by title, 1945-1986, undated

2	3	Typescripts and Manuscripts
2	4	Typescripts

Series IV: Reviews, 1925-1996

2	5	Reviews, 1925-1982
2	6-7	Reviews, 1988
2	8	Reviews, 1989
2	9	Reviews, 1990-1997

Series V: Writings by Others, 1933-1995

2	10	Stories, Articles written by members of Wichita Falls Manuscript Club; Articles collected by Winifred Sanford
2	11	Typescript of The Stars Fell on Henrietta
2	12	Newspaper articles about The Stars Fell on Henrietta; VHS cassette of The Stars Fell on Henrietta

Series VI: Clippings, 1947-1990

2	13	Newspaper Clippings, Broadsides collected by the author
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Series VII: Printed Materials, circa 1929-1940

3		American Mercury and Woman's Home Companion issues containing contributions by Sanford
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