Descriptive Summary

Title: Dashiell Hammett Family Papers, 1918-1999

Collection Number: Mss. 2015:1

Creator: Hammett Family

Extent: 4 boxes

Administrative Information

Provenance: Gift/Purchase, 2015.

Processed by: Erin Patterson

Access Restrictions: Open to research

Preferred Citation: [Item], Dashiell Hammett Family Papers, Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina Libraries

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Scope and Contents Note

On May 27, 1894, Samuel Dashiell Hammett was born in Maryland the second of three children. When he was 13 he dropped out of school to help support his family. He joined the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in 1915. The time he spent here would be his inspiration for many of his infamous crime fiction and detective stories. At some point in his early years, Hammett dropped his first name, going by his middle name Dashiell or Dash.

When the United States joined the First World War, Hammett enlisted and soon contracted Spanish influenza and tuberculosis. While Hammett recuperated, he never fully recovered from these illnesses and their effects followed him for the rest of his life. Hammett was honorably discharged in 1919. Still suffering from the aftermath of his illnesses, Hammett was sent to an Army hospital in Washington State at the end of
It was here that he met his wife, Josephine Dolan. Josephine was one of the nurses at the hospital. They were married in 1921. They had two children together. Mary Jane was born in 1921 and Josephine in 1926. After Josephine was born, Hammett had a relapse with his tuberculosis and it was recommended that, for the girls’ health, he no longer live with them. The marriage suffered and was ended with a Mexican divorce in 1937. Hammett had found a partner with playwright Lillian Hellman in the early 1930s. They were together for 30 years.

Hammett began writing detective stories when he was no longer able to physically work for the Pinkerton National Detective Agency in the early 1920s. His main characters were no-nonsense men that became a staple in the “hard-boiled” crime drama genre. His first novel, The Red Harvest, was serialized in 1929. The majority of his writings, both novels and short stories, were published in various magazines, including Black Mask where he was a staff writer. Some of these publications are in this collection in their serialized format. One of his most famous work, The Maltese Falcon, was made into a movie starring Humphrey Bogart in 1941.

In 1942, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hammett re-enlisted in Army at age forty-eight despite his poor health. He had to pull strings in order to be admitted. Private Samuel D. Hammett was stationed in Aleutian Islands where he created and edited the local Army newspaper, The Adakian. In 1945 he was once again honorably discharged at the rank of Sergeant. In the collection are materials relating to his time in service in both world wars, including his dog tag and honorable discharges.

While he was not a present father, Hammett did sporadically correspond with his family. The letters that he sent to his daughters and to Josephine are in the collection. After his death, his partner Lillian Hellman was the executrix of his estate and frequently wrote to his daughters concerning the management of the estate. These letters are also included in the collection.

Hammett was politically active for decades, participating in several organizations including the Communist Party USA. In the age of McCarthyism, Hammett was swept up in the Red Scare and was imprisoned for refusing to name the sources of bail funds for communists. Later in 1953, he was blacklisted after testifying to a Senate Committee and his writings were branded “subversive”. In the collection are many publications relating to the various political causes that Hammett supported. From the Spanish Civil War to U.S. government guide to subversive organizations.

Following his long history of poor health, drinking, smoking and a heart attack in 1955, Dashiell Hammett died of lung cancer on January 10, 1961 in Lenox Hill.
Hospital in New York City. Hellman was the executrix of Hammett’s estate and had difficulty making it solvent. Back taxes, loans, and other issues left it in shambles.

To this day Dashiell Hammett remains one of the most influential writers in the crime fiction genre. Authors such as Raymond Chandler, Robert B. Parker, Ross MacDonald, James Ellroy and countless others. His characters, narrative, and authenticity in his writings left a profound impact on both print and film.

The Hammett Family Papers contain many types of materials relating to the personal lives of Dashiell Hammett and his family. Items relating to Hammett’s family life include a significant amount of correspondence between Hammett and his family, especially his daughters, photos and artwork. Outside of family life there are materials about Hammett’s time in military service, financial documents and publications both professional and political. There are also clippings relating to the Hammett family, particularly Dashiell Hammett’s writings. A collection of books also accompanied the Hammett Family Papers. These have been catalogued and are searchable in the University of South Carolina’s library catalog.

Additional notes and description occur at the beginning of series in the finding aid. All unique folder titles and usages recorded in quotes are from the Hammett Family and have not been supplied by the processors.

Related Material

The Richard Layman Collection of Dashiell Hammett is also located in Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of South Carolina.

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series I: Biographical</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series II: General</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series III: Financial and Legal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series IV: Military Service Related Materials</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series V: Political Publications</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series VI: Writings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series VII: Clippings 1
Series VIII: Realia 1
Series IX: Correspondence 2
Series X: Artwork 3
Series XI: Photographs 3
Series XII: Photograph Albums and Scrapbooks 4
Series XIII: Oversize

Container List

Series I: Biographical

Box 1
Hammett, Dashiell
   Death certificate, 1961
   Spoof edition of The Adakian for Hammett’s 50th birthday, 1944
Hammett, Josephine Dolan
   Address Book, no date
   Card, Miss J. Dolan, no date
   Nursing licenses, 1954-1965
Marshall, Josephine Hammett
   Birth booklet, 1926
Miller, Mary Hammett
   Birth announcement and certificate, 1921

Series II: General

Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address pamphlet, no date
Blank Postcards, no date
Catalogue Pages
   Christie’s Auction photocopy pages, 1990
Series III: Financial and Legal

The bulk of material in this series regards the management of Hammett’s estate after his death in 1961. Correspondence in each of the subseries is arranged chronologically and not by recipient or sender.

Copyright

Application for Registration of a Claim to Renewal Copyright, no date

List of contracts, no date
Literary Executrix contract draft, 1961
Notes, no date
Related correspondence, 1960-1972

_Estate_
Application for Social Security Funeral Expense Repayment, 1961
Bills, 1961
Copies of checks, 1961-1979
Estate Schedule of Distribution, c. 1961
Last Will and Testament of Samuel Dashiell Hammett, 1952
List of publications, no date
Memorandum in Support of Objectives of United States of America, 1961
Notice of Federal Tax Liens under Internal Revenue Laws, 1950-1960
Notice of Sale of Copyright Interests, Publisher’s Weekly, 1963
Promissory Note, 1937
Proof of Claim for Internal Revenue Taxes, 1961
Proposed Settlement draft, 1964
State of New York Notice of Additional Assessment Income Tax, 1951-1955, no date
U.S. Fiduciary Income Tax Return, 1961
Related Correspondence, 1952 -1980, no date (4 folders)

**Series IV: Military Service Related Materials**

This material relates to Hammett’s time that was served in the U.S. Army. Both of Hammett’s honorable discharges are present, along his promotion of Sergeant in World War I and a Letter of Commendation from World War II. Correspondence in this series primarily deals with Hammett’s veteran benefits. The correspondence to Josephine Dolan Hammett relates to both her and Hammett’s time in military service. This series is arranged chronologically.

Order of Induction into Military Service, 1918
Promotion to Sergeant, 1919
Enlistment Record/Honorable Discharge, 1919
Hammett’s Disability Log, 2 drafts, 1918-1926,  
Clipping of Hammett’s enlistment, 17 September 1942  
Orders, 1943-1945  
Letter of Commendation, 1944  
Certificate of Remarkable Service, 1945  
Enlisted Record and Report of Separation – Honorable Discharge, 1945  
Separation Records, 1945  
Certificate of Social Insurance Award  
State of New York Application for Veteran’s Bonus, no date  

Correspondence  
From Treasury Department Bureau of War Risk Insurance to Hammett, 1920-1921  
From Veteran’s Bureau/Administration to Hammett, 1922-1959, no date (3 folders)  
From Veteran’s Administration, American Red Cross, United Civil Service Commission to Hammett, Josephine Dolan, 1919-1962 (3 folders)  
From Veteran’s Administration to Alexander, Muriel, 1950-195  
From Veteran’s Administration to Hellman, Lillian, 1961  

Series V: Political Publications  
These publications are related to Hammett in some fashion if they were not written by him directly. The publications are arranged chronologically.  
“Spain”, American Friends of Spanish Democracy, c. 1936-1939  
“Don’t Buy Silk!”, Committee for a Boycott against Japanese Aggression, 1937  
“Japan Fears a Boycott”, Utley, Freda, Provisional Committee for a Boycott against Japanese Aggression, 1937  
“Questions and Answers about the Boycott”, Provisional Committee for a Boycott against Japanese Aggression, c. 1937  
“Spain – Battleground of Democracy”, Herring, Hubert, c. 1937  
“The Crimes of Francisco Franco”, The North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, c.1937-1938  
“Shopping Guide for Boycotts”, Lyon, Jean, Provisional Committee for a Boycott against Japanese Aggression, 1938
“Writers take Sides”, The League of American Writers, 1938
“A Soldier of Liberty Returns”, Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade”, c. 1939-1940
“An Open Letter to All People of Good Will”, Equality, 1939
“Francis J. Gorman talks about America’s Soldiers of Liberty”, Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, c. 1940
“Statement to the President and Congress”, The Initiating Committee, c. 1940
“Stop the Slaughter of Innocents in China!”, Committee for Boycott against Japanese Goods, c. 1940
“Americans : Your right to vote as you please is in Danger!”, Committee on Election Rights, 1940
“Election Platform of the Communist Party 1940”, Workers Liberty Publishers Inc., 1940
“Defend Your Right to Vote!”, Committee on Free Elections, c. 1941
“Keeping Elections Free : A Model Election Law”, Committee on Free Elections, 1941
“Investigate Martin Dies”, National Federation of Constitutional Liberties, 1942
“Guide to Subversive Organizations and Publications (And Appendix)”, Committee on Un-American Activities, 1951

Series VI: Writings

The majority of Hammett’s writing were serialized in magazines. He also worked for Samuels Jewelers in advertising for a time. Books that came with this collection have been catalogued individually.

“The Master Mind”, The Smart Set, January 1923
“Shall We Write Sex Stories”, The Writer’s Digest, June 1924
“The Advertising Man writes a Love Letter”, Judge, 26 February 1927
Samuels Jewelers Newspaper advertisement proof, 1927
The Stratford Magazine, March 1927
The Stratford Magazine, June 1927
“The Maltese Falcon”, reviews sent to Josephine Dolan Hammett from Hammett, c. 1930
“Woman in the Dark” part one, Liberty Magazine, 8 April 1933
“Woman in the Dark” part two, Liberty Magazine, 15 April 1933
“Woman in the Dark” part three, Liberty Magazine, 22 April 1933
“The Thin Man”, Redbook, c. 1934
“The Thin Man”, Knopf promotional flyer, 1934
Original synopsis sheet for “The Thin Man Goes Home” film, c. 1944
“The Battle of the Aleutians… A Graphic History 1942-1943”, 1944
“The Battle of the Aleutians… A Graphic History 1942-1943”, Josephine’s copies, 1944
“Wind Blown and Dripping: A Book of Aleutian Cartoons”, 1945
“El Halcon del Rey”, Revista Literaria Novelas y Cuentos, 1963
“Tulip” an unfinished novel, no date

Series VII: Clippings
Clippings are arranged chronologically. Named folders were received as such. These categories are also reflected in the oversized clippings.
1920-1939
1940-1957
1961-1978
1980-1988
1993-1999
No date
“Crit”, 1980, no date
“Lillian”, 1993, no date
“Thin Man”, no date

Series VIII: Realia
Hammett’s Bear Insignia Patch was from his time stationed in the Aleutian Islands during World War II. Hammett’s World War II dog tag has his daughter Mary Hammett listed as his next-of-kin since he and Josephine were divorced by this time. Other pieces of realia are listed under oversize materials and are located at the end of the box run.
Bear Insignia Army Alaska Shoulder Patch, 2 inches, 1942
Hammett’s World War II Dog tag, 1942

Series IX: Correspondence
Correspondence is arranged by the last name of the recipient and are arranged to maintain the original order of the collection.

Box 2

From Hammett to Family

To Hammett, Josephine Dolan from Hammett, Dashiell, 1921-1951, no date (9 folders)
To Marshall, Josephine Hammett from Hammett, Dashiell, 1931-1958 (11 folders)
To Miller, Mary Jane Hammett from Hammett, Dashiell, 1928-1950, no date (18 folders)
To Hammett family from Hammett, Dashiell, no date
To Hammett family from Hammett, Dashiell, clippings, 1938-1939, no date (3 folders)
To Hammett family from Hammett, Dashiell, empty envelopes, 1934-1936, no date

From Hellman to Family

To Marshall, Josephine Hammett from Hellman, Lillian, 1951-1984 (6 folders)
To Miller, Mary Jane Hammett from Hellman, Lillian, 1942-1977

From others to others

To Hammett, Dashiell, Re: “Watch on the Rhine”, 1942
To Hammett, Dashiell from Colman, Hila, 1948
To Hammett, Dashiell from Davidson, Karla (MGM) re: “The Thin Man”, 1960
To Hammett, Dashiell from Haydon, Charles, 1956
To Hammett, Dashiell from Murphy, Dudley, 1937
To Hammett, Dashiell from Shaw, Joseph (Black Mask), 1927
To Hammett, Josephine Dolan from Miller, Mary Hammett, 1952-1968, no date
To Hellman, Lillian from Marshall, Josephine Hammett, 1972
To Marshall, Josephine Hammett from Alexander, Muriel, 1951
To Marshall, Josephine Hammett from Hammett, Josephine Dolan, 1941
To Marshall, Josephine Hammett from Werman, David, 1996
To May, Marjorie “Marjie” from Hammett, Dashiell, 1946-1949
To Miller, Mary Hammett from Alexander, Muriel, 1951
To Miller, Mary Hammett from Hammett, Josephine Dolan, 1941
To Potter, Jean from Hammett, Dashiell, 1950
Fragments, no date

**Series X: Artwork**

There are approximately 255 cartoon prints from *The Adakian*, the U.S. Army newspaper, Hammett created and worked on during the Second World War while stationed in Adak, Alaska. The prints were created by three different artists over the run of *The Adakian*. There are also 20 pencil sketches of Hammett and his family that were drawn around 1936. Five of these are framed and are in this box.

**Box 3**

- Cartoon print proofs from *The Adakian*, 1944-1945 (6 folders)
- Penciled sketches of Hammett and Family, artist unknown, c. 1936 (5 folders)

**Framed Artwork**

- Sketch of “Loco Princess” possibly by Hammett
- Penciled sketches of Dashiell Hammett and family, artist unknown, c. 1936 (5)

**Series XI: Photographs**

The majority of the photos in this collection are family photos dating from the early 20th century to the 1950s. There are also some photos from Hammett’s time in Alaska during World War II. Photographs are also located in photo albums. Framed photographs are also in this box.

- c. 1900-1919
- c. 1918-1919
- c. 1920-1929
- 1922
- 1923-1926
- c. 1927
- c. 1930-1939
- 1934
- c. 1940-1949
- 1942-1945
- c. 1950-1959
- c. 1960-1961
- 1978
1987
No date

Negatives

1922 and no date
30s family, c.1930-1939
“Book A”, c.1900-1929 (2 folders)
“Book B”, c.1929-1960
“Other”, c.1919-1945

Framed Photographs

Newspaper Conference, Mt. McLinley, Alaska 1944
Hammett with his daughters at the Stork Club, c. 1940-1942
Josephine Dolan Hammett, 1978

Series XII: Photo Albums and Scrapbook

Box 4

Photo Albums, c. 1900-1920, fragile
Photo Albums, c. 1920-1960, fragile
Scrapbook, no date, fragile

Series XIII: Oversize

Oversize materials are located in the map drawer. Oversize realia is located at the end of the box run.

Artwork

Portrait painted on black velvet, Acrylic, “Hilda of Hollywood”, no date
The Glass Key movie poster, no date
Portrait of Hammett, pencil on board
Corkscrew, Chapter Three art, Draft, By Paul Norris, no date

Clippings

c. 1920-1998

No date
Crit
Lillian
Red Harvest
The Thin Man.

Realia

The hatbox belonged to Josephine Dolan Hammett and may have been used to store letters and other items.

Hammett’s Burial Flag, 1961
Dunlap New York Hatbox

Photo Albums and Scrapbook

Photo Albums, c.1900-1929
Photo Albums, c. 1930-1961

Writings

“They Can only Have you Once”, Collier’s Weekly, 19 November 1932
“Two Sharp Knives”, Collier’s Weekly, 13 January 1934