

UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA



The University Archives
and Records Center

A Guide to the
Ruth Branning Molloy Collection
1852-2002 (bulk 1925-1990)

5.0 Cubic feet

UPT 50 M726

Prepared by Seth S. Tannenbaum, Mira Shetty
August 2007, May 2018

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>PROVENANCE</u>	1
<u>ARRANGEMENT</u>	1
<u>BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE</u>	1
<u>SCOPE AND CONTENT</u>	3
<u>CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS</u>	4
<u>INVENTORY</u>	5
<u>CORRESPONDENCE</u>	5
<u>MISCELLANEOUS</u>	6
<u>PEOPLE</u>	6
<u>PHOTOS</u>	8
<u>UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA</u>	11
<u>WEST PHILADELPHIA</u>	12

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PROVENANCE

These papers were donated to the University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center by the family of Ruth Branning Molloy.

ARRANGEMENT

The papers of Ruth Branning Molloy, author and photographer, are arranged in several series. They include: Correspondence, Miscellaneous, People, Photographs, University of Pennsylvania, and West Philadelphia, (2.5 cubic ft.), and Books, (2 cubic ft.).

The vast majority of the documents and Photographs from the collection are from Mrs. Molloy extensive scrapbooks. In order to make research using the collection easier, the scrapbooks were taken apart and their contents reorganized. Mrs. Molloy's slides are also contained in the collection and can be found as a part of her photograph collection.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ruth Branning Molloy, a poet, writer, photographer, and Philadelphia historian, was born on July 24, 1910 in the Bronx, New York. At the age of fourteen, she graduated from West Philadelphia High School for Girls. Mrs. Molloy estimated that she lived at more than 30 different addresses in West Philadelphia, most of them during her youth.

In 1926, Ruth Branning enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania, where she participated in many clubs and activities, including Sphinx and Key, Bowling Green, and the Freshman Commission. She was also the editor of the 1930 Record Book, and a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.

After earning a B.S. in education from Penn, Ruth Branning went to work for The Philadelphia Inquirer. As an editorial assistant in the library, she researched material for "Everybody's Column" and "100 Years Ago," and helped build the department's reference file. In 1932, she married Joseph E. Molloy, librarian at The Philadelphia Inquirer. Most of their married life was spent in West Philadelphia, where they raised their three daughters. They lived for a time at 3822 Locust Street until the University purchased their house and the other houses on their block during a campus expansion. From Locust Street, the Molloyes moved to St. Mark's Square where Mrs. Molloy lived until her death in 2002.

Ruth Molloy was a prolific writer of essays, poems and other articles for publications such as the Saturday Evening Post, The Inquirer, The Evening Bulletin, and Mademoiselle and Good Housekeeping magazines. She also took photographs, which were published as photo essays. Her story "Twenty Below, at the End of a Lane," a fictionalized account of her childhood, originally printed in Mademoiselle magazine, was included in the Best American Short Stories of 1956. She was also a regular contributor to The Pennsylvania Gazette and the first ever female Chair of the Editorial Board of the General Alumni Society of the University of Pennsylvania.

Aside from chronicling the history of West Philadelphia for her personal scrapbooks, Molloy was one of the founders of the University City Historical Society. She often gave tours of the University City area and spoke about its history to school groups and organizations. On several occasions, Molloy created exhibits on various aspects of the history and traditions of West Philadelphia and frequently sent letters to possible descendants of West Philadelphians she wanted to know more about. In 1983, she initiated the "Adopt-a-Grave" program, designed to preserve the history of graves at Woodland Cemetery in West Philadelphia.

In 2000, Molloy's book of poems, *Finally*, illustrated with her photographs, was published by Sutter House. Despite her failing health, she continued to work on her multi-volume history of West Philadelphia until her death, on November 8, 2002.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Ruth Branning Molloy Papers mostly document Mrs. Molloy's life in West Philadelphia and her association with her alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania. Some of Mrs. Molloy's scrapbooks are dedicated to the history of West Philadelphia before she was born; however, the vast majority of the collection is in some way related to Mrs. Molloy's life in West Philadelphia.

Most of the collection was originally contained in Mrs. Molloy's 33 scrapbooks. Her scrapbooks were titled, "Advertisements" (2 volumes), "Art and Artisans," "Correspondence, Bills (and Letterheads), Wills and Lists," "Crime, Fire, Poetry, and Misc.," "Exteriors, Demolition, and Real Estate," "Exteriors and Interiors" (3 volumes), "(Remember Me?) Forget-Me-Not, Remembrance of Things Past (and Future)," "Groups and Crowds," "Miscellaneous" (3 volumes), "A New Beginning," "Obituaries etc.," "Occasions and Events" (2 volumes), "People" (2 volumes), "Portraits," "Scattered Headlines," "Street Scapes and Open Spaces," "Titles, Dedication, Maps, Introduction, and Interiors-Exteriors," "Untitled" (4 volumes), and "West Philadelphia 20th Century and Me" (5 volumes). While some of these titles have been recycled as folder titles in the collection, many have not been. The titles, dedication page, index, bibliography and other parts of the scrapbook can be found in the miscellaneous series.

The Correspondence series includes both letters addressed to and written by Mrs. Molloy as well as letters pertinent to the history of West Philadelphia that have nothing directly to do with Mrs. Molloy. Aside from the remnants of the scrapbooks, the miscellaneous series contains poetry written by Mrs. Molloy herself as well as a number of other West Philadelphians. Mrs. Molloy's essays and remembrances about her life are contained in a folder under her name in the people series.

The collection also contains Mrs. Molloy's memorabilia from the University of Pennsylvania, histories of West Philadelphia, Penn, and residents of West Philadelphia, photographs, photographic negatives and slides. The memorabilia includes a relief sculpture of Penn professor Joseph Leidy and memorabilia from Mrs. Molloy's University Class of 1930 among Penn others. The photographs are divided into three groups, buildings, groups and events, and portraits. Within

these groups, the photographs are subdivided into Penn photographs and West Philadelphia photographs. The slides are divided into three groups, buildings, groups and events, and portraits. Notable slides include a series on the construction of the Women's Dormitory (now known as Hill College House) and St. Elmo's, as well as numerous slides from Class of 1930 Alumni Events throughout Mrs. Molloy's lifetime.

Almost all the books in the collection have something to do with the history of the University or its graduating classes. There are a number of reunion books of various classes ranging from 1879 until 1907, several versions of The University of Pennsylvania Illustrated and many other books on the history of the University. In the book collection are also brochures from student events and the mathematics thesis of Anne and Elizabeth Linton, sisters who taught math to Mrs. Molloy at West Philadelphia High School for Girls in the 1920s. Also included are the yearbooks of Penn's College for Women Classes of 1923 and 1924 as well as the Record of the Class of June 1928 of the Philadelphia High School for Girls.

CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

Corporate Name(s)

- University of Pennsylvania. -- General subdivision--History.;

Geographic Name(s)

- West Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.)--History.

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INVENTORY

CORRESPONDENCE	Box	Folder
Regarding "Agnew Clinic" painting by Thomas Eakins to Mark Lloyd	1	1
From Aunt Emily - "Little Visits Around Historic Philadelphia"	1	2
Branning Family and RBM	1	3
Class of 1930 and RBM	1	4
Authored by clergyman	1	5
Regarding exhibits put on by RBM	1	6
Licht, Walter and daughters of RBM regarding scrapbooks	1	7
Miscellaneous	1	8
Letters from RBM with clippings	1	9
Letters to RBM	1	10
Regarding Pine Street, 4102	1	11
Trumbauer, Horace to M. M. McLanahan regarding box to hold Shakespeare Folio	1	12
University of Pennsylvania, history of	1	13
University of Pennsylvania, site of first campus	1	14
West Philadelphia events	1	15

West Philadelphia history	1	16
West Philadelphia neighbors	1	17
West Philadelphia personal histories	1	18

MISCELLANEOUS	Box	Folder
Bills	1	19
Headlines, incomplete documents, etc.	1	20
Poetry by RBM	1	21
Poetry by various authors	1	22
Scrapbook pieces (indices, titles, etc.)	1	23

PEOPLE	Box	Folder
A-L	1	24
M-Z	1	25
Avil Family	1	26
Boice Family	1	27
Brookhouser, Frank	1	28
Callaghan, Gordon Bottomley	1	29
Cole, Orlando	1	30
Dechert Family	1	31
East, Nic	1	32
Ferris, Edythe	1	33
Gibbons, Louise Jackson	1	34
Harbeson, William	1	35
Hess, Kathryn (Kay) Finkel	1	36

Horner, Anton	1	37
Jackson, Lorraine	1	38
Jacobs, Bertha Flicker	1	39
Kahn, Louis (and Esther)	1	40
Kynett, H. H. (Doc) and family	1	41
Lamond, Melani	1	42
Linton, Anne and Elizabeth	1	43
Malcomson, Ruth	1	44
Mauchly, John William	1	45
McIntyre, John T.	1	46
Melville, Georgina	1	47
Molloy, Joseph Edmond	1	48
Molloy, Ruth Branning	1	49
Moursund, Dorothy Cook (and family)	1	50
Nichols, Roy F. and Jeanette P.	1	51
Rittase, Evelyn Searles	1	52
Sayen, Gertrude Kimball	1	53
Scott, John W.	1	54
Smith, Edgar Fahs and Margie	1	55
Smith, Lew	1	56
Stewart, Douglas	1	57
Wettlin, Margaret	1	58
Widersheim, John A. (and family)	1	59
Woodin, John	1	60

PHOTOS	Box	Folder
Buildings		
University of Pennsylvania Buildings	1	61
West Philadelphia exteriors: "El" removal, 1956 (w/ neg.)	1	62
West Philadelphia exteriors: houses, stores, streets (dated) I	1	63
West Philadelphia exteriors: houses, stores, streets (dated) II	1	64
West Philadelphia exteriors: houses, stores, streets (undated) I	1	65
West Philadelphia exteriors: houses, stores, streets (undated) II	1	66
West Philadelphia exteriors: landscapes (dated)	1	67
West Philadelphia exteriors: landscapes (undated)	1	68
West Philadelphia exteriors: Walnut Street, 4940	1	69
West Philadelphia interiors (location known)	1	70
West Philadelphia interiors (location unknown)	1	71
Groups and Events		
1928 Bennett News Staff		1
Lea School	1	72
University of Pennsylvania building dedications and ground breakings	1	73
University of Pennsylvania reunions	2	1
University of Pennsylvania Special Events (commencements, visitors, lectures, etc.)	2	2
University of Pennsylvania undergraduate life	2	3
West Philadelphia community events/gatherings	2	4
West Philadelphia identified	2	5
West Philadelphia unidentified	2	6

Negatives		
Assorted	2	7
Portraits		
A-Z	2	8
No name	2	9
Slides		
Pages 1-10	2	10
Pages 11-20	2	11
Pages 21-30	2	12
Philadelphia Inquirer		
Astronomical Observatory (Drawing) 1955 June 3	4	1
Atom-Smasher 1946 June 10	4	2
Bio Pond n.d.	4	3
Christian Association Building at 35th and Locust Sts. 1929 April 11	4	4
Christian Association Proposed Building (Drawing) n.d.	4	5
Dedication of War Memorial 1952 November 19	4	6
Dietrich Hall 1952 September 7	4	7
Dietrich Hall (Drawing) 1952 March 20	4	8
Dietrich Hall, Wharton School (Drawing) ca. 1950's	4	9
Engineering Building n.d.	4	10
Event at Franklin Field 1906	4	11
Gates Memorial Pavilion (Drawing) 1950 February 15	4	12
Group of students talking under a tree n.d.	4	13
Hayden Hall n.d.	4	14

Henry Phipps Institute 1931 May 6	4	15
Houston Hall 1946 August 16	4	16
Houston Hall 1950 April 28	4	17
Houston Hall 1954 October 26	4	18
Houston Hall n.d.	4	19
In-Patient and Out-Patient Hospital Buildings (Drawing) 1948 March 18	4	20
In-Patient Building of the Hospital (Drawing) 1947 November 19	4	21
Inside of New Gymnasium 1927 October 4	4	22
Irvine Auditorium 1928 June 17	4	23
Irvine Auditorium (Drawing) 1926 November 14	4	24
John Morgan Building n.d.	4	25
Logan Hall 1934	4	26
Louis Marshall House 1948 November 1	4	27
Man, woman, and child in garden n.d.	4	28
Medical Building, 37th and Spruce Sts. 1945 March 13	4	29
Medical Building, 37th and Spruce Sts. 1945 March 13	4	30
Medical School Laboratories 1954 October 26	4	31
Morgan Labs 1934	4	32
New Chemistry and Science Building - First Pillar Tightened 1941 June 10	4	33
New Dormitory Construction on Hamilton Walk 43217	4	34
Out-Patient Building of the Hospital (Drawing) 1947 November 19	4	35
Palestra 1927 October 4	4	36
Physics Building (33rd and Walnut Sts.) (Drawing) - 2 copies 1953 February 17	4	37

Proposed Building for Anatomy and Bio-chemistry (Drawing) 1925 July 17	4	38
Quadrangle Dormitories 1953 May 10	4	39
School of Engineering 1934	4	40
Smith Statue facing 33rd St. ca. 1930's	4	41
Smith Statue facing 33rd St. ca. 1930's	4	42
Student in the Quad n.d.	4	43
Students walking in the Quad n.d.	4	44
Unidentified building 1934	4	45
Unidentified building 1934	4	46
Unidentified gate ca. 1930's	4	47
View of woods from terrace n.d.	4	48
War Memorial Bronze Statues 1952 August 27	4	49
Wharton School of Finance and Commerce (Drawing) 43246	4	50
Wharton School of Finance and Commerce (Drawing)1948 February 9	4	51
Zoology Labs 1934	4	52
2 men, woman, and child at a creek n.d.	4	53
2 Students in the Quad n.d.	4	54
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA	Box	Folder
Alumni Association	2	13
Buildings/houses	2	14
Class Day brochures	2	15
Class of 1887	2	16
Class of 1927	2	17

Class of 1930	2	18
History (essays and clippings)	2	19
General Alumni Society Editorial Board (RBM chair)	2	20
And West Philadelphia (documents and clippings)	2	24
Memorabilia		
Assorted	2	21
Lambda Chi printing tablet	2	22
Relief of Joseph Leidy	2	23
WEST PHILADELPHIA	Box	Folder
Advertisements (undated)	2	25
Advertisements: 1890-1919	2	26
Advertisements: 1920-1929	2	27
Advertisements: 1930-1959	2	28
Advertisements: 1970-1999	2	29
Art	2	30
Buildings/houses	2	31
Buildings/houses (drawings and sketches)	2	32
Buildings: Blair Funeral Home/Ronald McDonald House	2	33
Businesses	2	34
Clippings and documents: 1878-1929	2	35
Clippings and documents: 1930-2001 (and undated)	2	36
Crime	3	1
Crime solutions	3	2
Fires	3	3

Food and restaurants	3	4
Gazebo column by RBM in University City News	3	5
Grand's Restaurant	3	6
History (essays and clippings)	3	7
House tours	3	8
Invitations (undated)	3	9
Maps	3	10
MOVE	3	11
Places and Events (undated and miscellaneous)	3	12
Personal histories	3	13
St. Leonard's Academy	3	14
Transportation	3	15
University City Historical Society	3	16
West Philadelphia High School	3	17
Woodlands Cemetery and Mansion	3	18