Guide to the Percy Marks Papers

YCAL MSS 4

by T. Michael Womack

February 1987

P. O. Box 208330
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Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

**CALL NUMBER:** YCAL MSS 4

**CREATOR:** Marks, Percy, 1891-1956

**TITLE:** Percy Marks papers

**DATES:** 1900–1961

**BULK DATES:** 1920–1940

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3.75 linear feet (11 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The Percy Marks Papers contain manuscripts, correspondence, and personal papers documenting aspects of the life and career of Percy Marks.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.marks

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.marks.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box  
f. folder

Administrative Information

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

The Papers were donated to The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library by the author’s widow, Mrs. Bernard Barton, in November 1962.

**Conditions Governing Access**

The materials are open for research.
Percy Marks was born in Covelo, California, on September 9, 1891. He received a Bachelor of Letters degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1912 and a Master of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1914. Over the next decade he served successively as supervisor of education at Tewksbury (Massachusetts) State Infirmary, and as instructor of English at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dartmouth College, and Brown University. In 1925 he gave up his teaching career in order to devote himself to writing and lecturing. Between 1925 and 1949 most of his major works were written. In the latter year he resumed teaching as instructor of English and literature at the University of Connecticut at Waterbury, a post he held until shortly before his death.

Marks wrote some twenty books, mostly novels, and contributed short stories and essays to several prominent American literary magazines. His major works include Martha, Lord of Himself, A Tree Grown Straight, And Points Beyond, The Days Are Fled, Between Two Autumns, Knave of Diamonds, Shade of Sycamore, Blair Marriman, The Craft of Writing, and his most famous novel, The Plastic Age.

During World War I, Marks served as second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He was married to Margaret Ellen Gates in Gardena, California, on December 17, 1927; they had one daughter, Sally Jean. Percy Marks died in New Haven, Connecticut, on December 27, 1956.

For further biographical information, see the National Cyclopadeia of American Biography, Vol. 46, pp. 321-22, as well as folders 131-33 of this collection.
reveal the widely varying public reaction to this provocative work. The Beinecke Library owns inscribed first edition copies of many of Marks’s works.

The second section, *Shorter Works*, consists mainly of short stories, but also includes essays, articles, and a book review. Of interest is his essay on Brown University, in which he extols the institution for its traditions and dedication to excellence. Marks was on the faculty of the English Department at Brown when he wrote *The Plastic Age*.

Within this series, material related to a specific literary work is grouped in the following order: notes, manuscripts, fan mail, reviews, and publicity, although not all types of material are included for every work. Some manuscripts contain penciled changes in the margins, but for the most part these typescripts are carbons of final copies sent to the publisher.

**Series II, Correspondence**, consists primarily of personal and professional letters written to Marks, with a few copies of replies. Of interest are letters from family members, personal and professional friends, publishers, critics, authors, and former professors. The oldest item in the series is a letter from Marks’s mother, written while he was a student at the University of California. The correspondence of Paul R. Reynolds, Marks’s publisher during the twenties, provides insight into the author’s successes and failures during the first decade of his career. Isabel Paterson, critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* during the twenties, writes a letter challenging Marks’s philosophy on education and culture. Literary correspondents include Carl Van Doren (1 letter), Upton Sinclair (2 letters), and H.L. Mencken (24 letters). The letters of Van Doren and Sinclair make reference to recent publications by Marks. The letters of Mencken, written for the most part while he was an editor at *The Smart Set* and *The American Mercury*, cover a twenty-three-year period and present some insightful comments on Marks’s works. Until their deaths, Marks maintained correspondence with L. B. R. Briggs and Bliss Perry, two of his professors at Harvard.

**Series III, Personal Papers**, is divided into three sections. The first section, *Biographical Material*, contains numerous obituaries of Marks, as well as such disparate items as a poem, entitled “Susan Brown,” written by Marks around the age of nine, his World War I draft card, and a diploma from the University of California, Berkeley. The second section, *Photographs*, contains one photograph each of Marks’s mother and father, and eight of the author. The third section, *Textbook*, contains a copy of a cherished classroom textbook on English poetry used by Marks at Berkeley.
Collection Contents

Series I. Writings

2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)

Boxes 1-6 contain Series I, Writings, which is divided into two sections, Books and Shorter Works. Both sections are arranged alphabetically by title and under title according to the hierarchy: notes, manuscripts, fan mail, reviews, and publicity. Fan mail that does not relate to any single work is placed at the end of each section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And Points Beyond</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1-5</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 7</td>
<td>Reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Two Autumnns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 8</td>
<td>Fan mail</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 9</td>
<td>Reviews</td>
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<td>Blair Marriman</td>
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<td>b. 1, f. 15</td>
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<td>The Craft of Writing</td>
<td></td>
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<td>b. 2, f. 16</td>
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<td>A Dead Man Dies</td>
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<td>Reviews</td>
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<td>b. 3, f. 37</td>
<td>Fan mail</td>
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**SHORTER WORKS**

“The Blind Date”
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Dear Enemy”</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Guilded Log”</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Hood on His Hands”</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Master of Donald Jamieson (Master of Himself)”</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;A Matter of Accent”</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Miss Mooney”</td>
<td>1948</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Muddy Water”</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Nancy Disposes”</td>
<td>1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Now and Forever Just”</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Old Lady Albright”</td>
<td>1946</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;One Swell Airdale”</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Overworked Words and Trite Phrases”</td>
<td>1930</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Paint and Puffs”</td>
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SHORTER WORKS > “Paint and Puffs” (continued)

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<td>b. 6, f. 103</td>
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<td>“Retreating Barriers”</td>
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<td>b. 6, f. 104</td>
<td>Fan mail</td>
<td>1927</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
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<td>b. 6, f. 105</td>
<td>Nuhn, Ferner, <em>The Wind Blew from the East</em></td>
<td>1942 Sep 10</td>
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<td>“The Stoughton House”</td>
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<td>b. 6, f. 106</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“What’s a Fellow to Do about His Mother?”</td>
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<td>b. 6, f. 107</td>
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<td>n.d.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The Wind’s Will”</td>
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</tr>
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<td>b. 6, f. 108</td>
<td>Manuscript</td>
<td>1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 109</td>
<td>Fan mail</td>
<td>1925</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous Fan Mail</td>
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<td>b. 6, f. 110</td>
<td>Fan mail</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
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Series II. Correspondence

0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Series II, Correspondence, is alphabetically arranged and unidentified correspondence is placed at the end of the series.

<table>
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<td>b. 7, f. 111</td>
<td>Allen, Frederick L.</td>
<td>1924</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Andrews, Frank D.</td>
<td>1954 Mar 30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ashbey, George R. (Reg)</td>
<td>1943 Mar 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 112</td>
<td>Benefield, Barry</td>
<td>1924 Sep 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 113</td>
<td>Briggs, L. B. R.</td>
<td>1924–32</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 114</td>
<td>Brush, Katharine</td>
<td>1939 Dec 13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Burgess, Eugene S.</td>
<td>1943–44</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 115</td>
<td>Dallas, John T.</td>
<td>1938 Dec 13</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Voto, Bernard</td>
<td>1937 Mar 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 116</td>
<td>Hart, Walter Harris</td>
<td>1913 Dec 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hawksley, Clara W.</td>
<td>1942, 1943</td>
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<td>Howland, Clarke</td>
<td>1930 Jul 21</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 117</td>
<td>Jensen, Carl J.</td>
<td>1955 Dec 29</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 118</td>
<td>Kapstein, I. J.</td>
<td>1938, 1944</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 119</td>
<td>Lamson, Carl</td>
<td>1939 Nov 16</td>
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<td>Lando, Edward</td>
<td>1938 Oct 19</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 120</td>
<td>Marks, Emma</td>
<td>1949 Mar 6</td>
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<td>Marks, J. Paul</td>
<td>1929 Mar 3</td>
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<td>Marks, Sarah Lando</td>
<td>1910 May 6</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 121</td>
<td>Mencken, H. L.</td>
<td>1922–45</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 122</td>
<td>Morley, F. V.</td>
<td>1928 Nov 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 123</td>
<td>Neill, William</td>
<td>1940 Nov 11</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 124</td>
<td>Paterson, Isabel</td>
<td>1927 May 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Paxton, Helen and William</td>
<td>1938</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 7, f. 125</td>
<td>Perry, Bliss</td>
<td>1916–49</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 126</td>
<td>Reynolds, Paul R.</td>
<td>1926–30</td>
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<td>b. 7, f. 127</td>
<td>Seawell, Lucy</td>
<td>1924 Feb 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Sinclair, Upton</td>
<td>1924, 1926</td>
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<td>Soulé, Elizabeth</td>
<td>1950 Feb 8</td>
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<td>Van Doren, Carl</td>
<td>1938 Oct 15</td>
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<td>Wheeler, John N.</td>
<td>1925 Jan 5</td>
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<td>Williams, George V.</td>
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<td>1938, n.d.</td>
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**Series III. Personal Papers**

*0.25 linear feet (1 box)*

Box 8 contains Series III, *Personal Papers*, which is divided into three sections, *Biographical Material*, *Photographs*, and *Textbooks*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>b. 8, f. 131</td>
<td>Biographical material</td>
<td>1913–57</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 8, f. 132</td>
<td>Marks, Henry and Sarah Lando</td>
<td>ca. 1900</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 8, f. 133</td>
<td>Marks, Percy</td>
<td>1910–35</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 8, f. 134</td>
<td>Gayley, Charles Mills and Clement C. Young, <em>The Principles and Progress of English Poetry</em></td>
<td>1905</td>
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### Series IV. Printed Material

**0.25 linear feet (1 box)**

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<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| b. 11, f. 158-159 | “The Gilded Log,” *California Monthly*  
2 folders | 1932 May |
| b. 11, f. 160     | “Master of Himself,” *College Humor*  | 1936 August |
Restricted Fragile Papers

0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)

Boxes 9 and 10, Restricted Fragile Papers, contain fragile originals. The material is arranged in folder order.

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<td>b. 10, f. 146</td>
<td>Box 4, folder 48</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 10, f. 147-157</td>
<td>Box 6, folders 91-92, 95, 97-98, 100-101, 103, 106-108</td>
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</table>
Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Authors, American
Best sellers

Names
Briggs, Le Baron Russell, 1855-1934
Marks, Percy, 1891-1956
Mencken, H. L. (Henry Louis), 1880-1956
Perry, Bliss, 1860-1954
Reynolds, Paul Revere, 1864-1944

Corporate Body
Brown University