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Guide to the William Silver Papers

MS 1897

compiled by Mary Caldera and staff of Manuscripts and Archives

May 2008

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
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CALL NUMBER: MS 1897

CREATOR: Silver, William, 1947-2007

TITLE: William Silver papers

DATES: 1947-2007

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 8.25 linear feet (14 boxes)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 11 CD-Rs (490 files)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers document William Silver's personal life, seminary thesis, his application for ordination into the United Presbyterian Church, and his later life in the Cherry Grove community on Fire Island, New York. Particularly well documented is Silver's coming out process and the Presbyterian Church's debate on the ordination of homosexuals in the 1970s. The papers consist of journals, writings, sermons, correspondence, photographs, newsletters and newsletter design files, news clippings, and printed material.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1897

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1897.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

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

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of the Estate of William Silver, 2007, 2008, and 2011.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research. Original computer files may not be accessed due to their fragility. Researchers must consult access copies.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright for unpublished materials authored or otherwise produced by William Silver has been transferred to Yale University. These materials may be used for non-commercial purposes without seeking permission from Yale University as the copyright holder. For other uses of these materials, please contact beinecke.library@yale.edu.

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Preferred Citation

William Silver Papers (MS 1897). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical

William Silver, who was also known as Violet, was born September 8, 1947, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He received a Bachelor of Arts (1969) from Ohio Wesleyan University, majoring in Fine Arts and Pre-theology. He received a Masters of Divinity from the Union Theological Seminary in 1973. In his final year at Seminary, Silver came out as a gay man and based his thesis project on his coming out process, or "experience of liberation." The project consisted of a series of paintings and a journal where he documented his coming out process.

In 1975 Silver requested ordination in the Presbytery of New York. His request sparked a two year, church-wide debate on the ordination of gay men in the Presbyterian Church. The General Assembly of United Presbyterian Church in the United States adopted a policy that barred self-affirming, practicing gay men from ordination in 1978. The policy, while blocking ordination, allowed for accepting homosexuals into the church and even ordaining repentant homosexuals who led a celibate or heterosexual life-style. Additionally, the policy protected gay men who were ordained prior to 1978 from being removed from the ministry. Silver continued his involvement with the church as a layman until the 1980s.

He worked as a graphic artist and events organizer. He was a long-time resident and active member of the Cherry Grove, Fire Island (New York) community. He was known for his "High Purple Tea" events and as the publisher of the monthly "Violet's Wild Cherry" events guide. Silver died of complications due to AIDS in 2007.

Scope and Contents

The papers document William Silver's personal life, seminary thesis, his application for ordination into the United Presbyterian Church, and his later life in the Cherry Grove community on Fire Island, New York. Particularly well documented is Silver's coming out process and the Presbyterian Church's debate on the ordination of homosexuals in the 1970s. The papers consist of journals, writings, sermons, correspondence, photographs, newsletters and newsletter design files, news clippings, and printed material.

Arrangement

The papers are arranged by accession.

Collection Contents
Inventory, 1972-2007

	Biographical	
b. 1, f. 1	Resume and biographical sketch	1974, undated
b. 1, f. 2	Memorial service, print materials and photographs A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	2007
b. 4	Memorial service, digital photographs 2008-m-011-0031 *1 CD-R (23 files)* Includes images of people celebrating Silver's life. Date information was determined from EXIF file creation date metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2007 September 8
	Seminary thesis and request for ordination	
	Thesis, "Liberation Becoming Free"	
b. 1, f. 3	Journal	1972-1973
b. 1, f. 4	Exhibition (Newspaper clipping and promotional materials)	1973
b. 1, f. 5	Central Presbyterian Church and the Central Arts Ministry	1975-1976
b. 1, f. 6	Correspondence	circa 1970-1979
b. 1, f. 7	Gay Caucus Synod of the Northeast	1975-1976
	Presbyterian Gay Caucus/Presbyterians for Gay Concerns	1974-1978
b. 1, f. 8	General	circa 1974-1978
b. 1, f. 9	Correspondence A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1974-1978
b. 1, f. 10	Newsletter A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access to the digital copy.	1974-1978
b. 1, f. 11	*Presbytery News* (Presbytery of New York City)	1976-1977
	United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America	

Seminary thesis and request for ordination > United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (continued)

	General Assembly	
b. 1, f. 12	Assembly meeting	1978
b. 1, f. 13	*General Assembly Daily News*	1976, 1978
b. 1, f. 14	News clippings and articles on the ordination of homosexuals	1978
b. 1, f. 15	Permanent Judicial Commission, decision of	1978
b. 1, f. 16	Task Force on Homosexuality	[1978]
b. 1, f. 17	Writings and sermons	circa 1972-1978
b. 1, f. 18	Miscellaneous	1978 and undated
	Cherry Grove, Fire Island	
b. 2, f. 19	Cherry Grove Garden Club	1995-1998
b. 2, f. 20	Community service awards	2006
b. 2, f. 21	High Purple Tea, posters and invitation	1992-2003
b. 2, f. 22	News clippings from *Fire Island News* and *Fire Island Tide*	1995-2005
	Photographs	
b. 2, f. 23	Silver, William	1998-2003
b. 2, f. 24-25	Friends and events	1999-2002
b. 4	As the Grove Turns 2008-m-011-0009 *1 CD-R (3 files)* Date information was determined from file last modified date metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	Circa 2008

Cherry Grove, Fire Island > Photographs (continued)

b. 4	Flowers 2008-m-011-0028 *1 CD-R (5 files)* Date information was determined from EXIF file creation date metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2006 August 24
b. 4	Lucia Sutera photographs of Fire Island Invasion and Gay Pride Day 2008-m-011-0007 *1 CD-R (120 files)* Photographs taken by Lucia Sutero, some of which may have been used for Violet's Wild Cherry. Date information was determined from EXIF file creation date metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2006 June-July
b. 4	People, animals, and scenery 2008-m-011-0025 *1 CD-R (21 files)* Photographs were created by an event photographer named RodzDigiPix. Date information was determined from CD label text. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2001
b. 4	Portraits by Gimmi Hoffa 2008-m-011-0024 *1 CD-R (17 files)* Portraits of people on Fire Island. Some portraits appear to have been taken for Violet's Wild Cherry, and some document the Cherry Grove Community Association Inc. Awards. Date information was determined from CD label text and file names. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2006

Cherry Grove, Fire Island > Photographs (continued)

b. 4	Portraits of people and photograph of swans 2008-M-011-0004 *1 CD-R (10 files)* Contains black and white digital portraits of people. Also includes one black and white digital photograph of swans. Date information was determined from CD label text. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2002 August
b. 4	Violet's Wild Cherry 2008-m-011-0011 *1 CD-R (21 files)* Date information was determined from file directory metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2001 May-July
b. 4	Violet's Wild Cherry and Gay Pride Invasion 2008-m-011-0016 *1 CD-R (20 files)* Date information was determined from EXIF file creation date metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2006 June-July
b. 3, f. 26-28	"Violet's Wild Cherry," events guide English	1996-2007

Cherry Grove, Fire Island (continued)

b. 4	"Violet's Wild Cherry" photographs, advertisements, and event schedules 2008-m-011-0026 *1 CD-R (248 files)* Includes digital photographs of people, graphics files (.eps, .psd, .pub, .rtf, .sig, and .qxd formats) for the "Violet's Wild Cherry" newsletter, and schedules for bars and events in Cherry Grove. Date information was determined from EXIF file creation date metadata and file names. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2001–2003
b. 4	"Violet's Wild Cherry" photographs and design files 2008-m-011-0020 *1 CD-R (2 files)* Date information was determined from filename metadata. As a preservation measure, original materials may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at beinecke.library@yale.edu to request access. This material was imaged or captured by Manuscripts and Archives staff for preservation and access. Additional information about actions taken may be available at the repository.	2004 June
b. 3, f. 29	Miscellaneous	1995-2007

Accession 2011-M-060: Additional Material, 1947-2006

The addition to the William Silver papers consists of photographs, slides and negatives; Gay Presbyterian-related materials; personal and business correspondence; drawings, childhood and academic materials; and materials related to Fire Island events.

The addition is arranged chronologically within four sections: Personal Writings and Memorabilia, Presbyterian Files, Photographs and Drawings.

	Personal writings and memorabilia	
	Diaries and correspondence	
b. 1, f. 1-2	Correspondence to parents with notes and diary	1965-1968, 1994
b. 1, f. 3	Postcards	Circa 1970s, 1994
b. 1, f. 4	Personal calendars	1973, 1977
b. 1, f. 5	Correspondence Includes some business correspondence.	1976-1983
b. 1, f. 6	Diary	1980-1989, 2006
b. 1, f. 7	Greeting cards and event invitations	1984-1994
	Ephemera and memorabilia	
b. 2, f. 1	School and personal memorabilia Includes baby book, baptismal certificate, 4-H Club material, high school diploma, and graduation invitation and program.	1947-1968
b. 2, f. 2	School memorabilia Includes report cards, PSAT and SAT scores, junior class play script and program, and scholarship certificates.	Circa 1952-1965
b. 10, f. 1	Scrapbook	Circa 1957
b. 2, f. 3	Boy Scouts of America ephemera and memorabilia Includes postcards, brochure, menu, badges and book mark from Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, NM.	1962
b. 2, f. 4	Ohio Wesleyan University event ephemera (mainly flyers)	1965-1969
b. 2, f. 5-6	Collegiate records and memorabilia Contains scholarship award certificates (including Phi Beta Kappa), Union Theological Seminary transcript, and undergraduate and graduate student identification, grade cards, commencement programs and diplomas.	1965-1973
b. 3, f. 1	"Field Work and Social Welfare," class report English	1967
b. 3, f. 2	Personal memorabilia Items include business cards, employee identification, and Montour wooden rings.	1972-1977

Personal writings and memorabilia > Ephemera and memorabilia (continued)

b. 3, f. 3	Pennsylvania State University College of Argriculture, "4-H Club Games"	Undated
b. 3, f. 4	Collected writings	Undated
	Presbyterian files	
b. 3, f. 5-7	Sermons and writings	Circa 1970-2006
	Publications and ephemera	
	General	
b. 3, f. 8	*Central Arts News* English	1975-1976
b. 3, f. 9	*Presbytery News*	1975-1977
b. 3, f. 10	Central Arts Ministry budget and church mission statement	1976-1977
b. 3, f. 11	Village Presbyterian Fellowship ephemera and church documents	1977-1978
b. 3, f. 12	*The Presbyterian Layman*	1978
b. 3, f. 13	190th General Assemby of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (U.P.C.) policy statements	1978
b. 3, f. 14	Judson Memorial Church parishioner memorabilia	1978-1979
b. 3, f. 15	Presbyterian churches brochure and service programs	1978, undated
b. 3, f. 16	*General Assembly Daily News* English	1978-1979
b. 3, f. 17	*Frying Pan* English	1978-1983
b. 3, f. 18	Hymnals and sheet music	1979-1980s
	Gay and lesbian	
b. 4, f. 1-3	Articles on homosexuality	1975-1981, undated
b. 4, f. 4	Presbyterians for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, Presbyterian Gay Caucus: budgets, reports, and membership ephemera	1977-1982
b. 4, f. 5	U.P.C. reports on the church and homosexuality	1978, 1981
b. 4, f. 6	Presbyterian publications on homosexuality	1978-1979
b. 4, f. 7	National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights event ephemera	1979
b. 4, f. 8	*More Light* English	1979-1980, 1997
b. 4, f. 9	Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns event ephemera	1980
b. 4, f. 10	Professional Church Leadership (P.C.L.) Committee Task Force reports	1980-1982

Presbyterian files > Publications and ephemera > Gay and lesbian (continued)

b. 4, f. 11	*Gay and Lesbian Pride Guide* English	1982-1983
b. 4, f. 12	Central Arts Gallery events ephemera	Undated
b. 4, f. 13	Creative Ministry in an Age of Ambiguity ephemera	Undated
b. 4, f. 14	Ordination request	Undated
	Photographs	
	Prints	
b. 5, f. 1-2	Family and friends	Circa 1950-circa 1969
b. 5, f. 3	Boy Scouts of America	1962
b. 5, f. 4	High school classmates	1965
b. 5, f. 5	Family photographs, Pittsburgh	1967
b. 5, f. 6	William Silver art	1967-1968
b. 5, f. 7	Travel photographs: Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia	1968
	William Silver photography Includes prints and contact prints.	
b. 5, f. 8	"Architecture"	1968
b. 5, f. 9	"People in Motion"	1968
b. 5, f. 10	"Martin Luther King"	1968
b. 5, f. 11	"Night Plus"	1968
b. 5, f. 12	"Laundromat, Indoor"	1968
b. 5, f. 13	William Silver -- Ohio Wesleyan University	1968-1969
b. 6, f. 1	Family and friends	1970-1979
b. 6, f. 2	Union Theological Seminary	1971-1973
b. 6, f. 3	World Trade Center	1977
b. 6, f. 4	Family and friends	1980-1989
b. 6, f. 5	*Architectural Digest* events	1986, undated
b. 6, f. 6	Family and friends	1990-1999
b. 6, f. 7	Christmas parties	1990-1999
b. 6, f. 8-9	Miss Cherry Pageant	1990-1999
b. 6, f. 10	Cherry Grove, printout of photographs	1993-1994

Photographs > Prints (continued)

b. 6, f. 11-12	Cherry Grove, New York	1994 summer
b. 7, f. 1-2	"Invasion of the Pines"	1996
b. 7, f. 3-4	Cherry Hills	1996-1997
b. 7, f. 5	Miss Cherry Pageant	1998
b. 7, f. 6-7	"Cherry Grove with Bill's new apartment: Violet's Gate" and Miss Cherry Pageant	1998-1999
b. 7, f. 8-9	Captioned photographs	Undated
b. 7, f. 10	Chelsea Garden Club Gay Pride events	Undated
b. 7, f. 11	Cherry Hills charity events and Violet's Purple Party	Undated
b. 8, f. 1-2	Events	Undated
b. 8, f. 3	Friends and pets	Undated
b. 8, f. 4	Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns Pride March	Undated
b. 8, f. 5	Rawhide and Rawhidettes	Undated
b. 8, f. 6	William Silver personal portraits	Undated
b. 8, f. 7-8	William Silver roof garden	Undated
b. 8, f. 9	"Violet's Purple Party"	Undated
b. 8, f. 10-11	Untitled photo album	Undated
b. 9, f. 1-6	Untitled prints and contact prints	Undated
	Slides	
b. 9, f. 7	Personal slides	1975-1981, 1997
	Negatives	
b. 9, f. 8	"Abbey"	Undated
b. 9, f. 9	"Architecture and Conference"	Undated
b. 9, f. 10	"Arts Board: Mozelle/Bill Silver et al. -- group for christmas card"	Undated
b. 9, f. 11	"Christmas"	Undated
b. 9, f. 12	"Designs - Nature and Man"	Undated
b. 9, f. 13	"Laundry"	Undated
b. 9, f. 14	"Martin Luther King"	Undated
b. 9, f. 15	"Mother and Arch"	Undated
b. 9, f. 16	"Night Shots"	Undated
b. 9, f. 17	"People in Action"	Undated

Photographs > Negatives (continued)

b. 9, f. 18	"Senior Show"	undated
b. 9, f. 19	"Spring"	Undated
b. 9, f. 20	"Upward Bound"	Undated
b. 9, f. 21	Unidentified	Undated

Drawings

b. 10, f. 2	Crayon drawings, card designs, pen sketches	1979, undated
b. 10, f. 3	Sketchpad with watercolor, charcoal, ink, and pencil drawings	Undated
b. 10, f. 4	Anatomical ink drawings and sketchpad with crayon drawings	Undated
b. 11, f. 1	Pencil sketches and crayon drawings	1970, 1975, undated

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

Gay community -- New York (State) -- Fire Island (Island)
Gay men
Homosexuality -- Religious aspects -- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
LGBTQ resource
Ordination of gays -- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Geographic Names

Cherry Grove (N.Y.)
Fire Island (N.Y. : Island)

Genres / Formats

Born digital
Computer files

Names

Silver, William, 1947-2007

Corporate Body

United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A