

Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection

AFC 1940/004

Guides to the Collections in the Archive of Folk Culture



**LIBRARY OF
CONGRESS**

**American Folklife Center, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.**

2002

Revised August 2009

Contact information:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.contact>

Additional search options available at:

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/eadafc.af001001>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lccn.loc.gov/2002522665>

Prepared by Joanne Rasi

Collection Summary

Collection Number: AFC 1940/004

Title: Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection

Inclusive Dates: 1935-1950

Location: Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Extent (original): 3 boxes

Creator: Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967

Creator: Archive of Folk Song (U.S.)

Language: English

Summary: The Woody Guthrie manuscript collection includes unpublished correspondence, most are letters from Guthrie to Alan Lomax, assistant in charge of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress, dated 1940-1942; plus drawings; essays; song lyrics; and a songbook, "Songs of Woody Guthrie."

Scope and Content Note

Woody Guthrie was a prolific artist known for his achievements as a singer-songwriter and as an author. Guthrie toured and performed for a period of approximately twenty-five years, exhibiting a life-long dedication to social activism by playing his politically charged music for audiences around the nation. His output included nearly three thousand songs, several novels, and other writings in the form of articles, essays, poems, and letters. In addition, Guthrie also painted, drew cartoons, and often illustrated his writings.

From 1940 to 1950, Guthrie corresponded with staff at the Library of Congress. The most significant and frequent correspondence occurred between 1940 and 1942, when Guthrie wrote regularly to the Assistant in Charge of the Archive of American Folk Song, Alan Lomax. Their correspondence explores political issues, current events, career and recording issues, and includes personal exchanges. In addition, Guthrie sent Lomax prose pieces and other creative writings, some of which are reminiscent of journal or diary entries in their stream-of-consciousness nature. Some pieces are written on paper bags and tissue paper, some include doodles or sketches. In addition, Guthrie sent lyrics of his songs in several formats, including one large hand-bound set, smaller unbound sets, and single pages enclosed in letters. Most of these songs are ballads that used familiar melodies but addressed contemporary situations. Some of the manuscripts were written prior to 1940 and were subsequently sent to Lomax during their correspondence. In some cases Guthrie reworked or annotated old manuscripts before sending them.

Biographical History and Administrative History

Woody Guthrie, born in Okemah, Oklahoma in 1912 and raised in Texas, moved to California during the Depression, where he met actor and activist Will Geer and toured migrant labor camps documenting conditions and injustices in the camps for *The Light* newspaper. He also performed on Los Angeles radio KFVD-LA, singing old-time ballads, some of which he updated with lyrics about contemporary issues. Alan Lomax, assistant in charge of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress, first heard Woody Guthrie at a concert in New York City in March of 1940, shortly after Guthrie had relocated there.

Alan Lomax arranged for Guthrie to travel to Washington, D.C. to record an oral life history that included traditional and original songs, and encouraged him to write his autobiography. Guthrie performed on several "Folk Music of America" radio shows hosted by Alan Lomax on CBS's American School of the Air. In New York, Woody Guthrie joined Lomax's sister, Bess Lomax Hawes, Pete Seeger, and others in a singing group, the Almanac Singers, for which Guthrie wrote protest ballads and songs. More information on Woody Guthrie's life and career can be found through the Woody Guthrie Foundation and Archives at <http://www.woodyguthrie.org/>.

The Archive of American Folk Song was founded in 1928 at the Library of Congress to collect and preserve American folksongs. During the years when the earliest Guthrie collections were acquired, from 1940 to 1950, the Archive was directed by: John A. Lomax (1932-1942), Alan Lomax (assistant in charge, 1937-1942), Benjamin Botkin (1942-1945), and Duncan Emrich (1946-1954). It was through Alan Lomax's recording projects and his personal friendship with Woody Guthrie that these early materials were added to the Archive. When Alan Lomax's entire collection of papers and recordings

was acquired by the American Folklife Center in 2004, additional Woody Guthrie manuscripts were included, which add to the Archive's Guthrie holdings. To reflect its broader mission and collections the Archive was re-named the Archive of Folk Culture in 1981 and is now a part of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

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.

People

Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967, correspondent.
Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967--Correspondence.
Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967--Written works.
Lomax, Alan, 1915-2002--Correspondence.

Organizations

American Folklife Center.
Archive of Folk Song (U.S.), collector.
Library of Congress. National Digital Library Program.

Subjects

Folk singers--United States--Correspondence.
Political ballads and songs--United States--Texts.
Protest songs--United States--Texts.
Songbooks--United States.
Songs, English--Texts.

Titles

Songs of Woody Guthrie.
Woody Guthrie and the Archive of American Folk Song: correspondence, 1940-1950

Form/Genre

Correspondence.
Drawings.
Essays.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

In 1987, archivist Marsha Maguire and Archive head Joseph C. Hickerson processed and summarized the materials, based in part on an earlier list compiled by researcher Richard A. Reuss. The manuscripts are organized in the following order: administrative, song lyrics, writings, correspondence, and oversize material.

Access

Materials are located in the Archive of Folk Culture. Viewing access to the materials is unrestricted, though restrictions apply concerning the use, duplication, or publication of items. Consult a reference librarian in the Folklife Reading Room for specific information. Selected letters and manuscript materials are available online through the American Memory web presentation "Woody Guthrie and the Archive of American Folk Song: Correspondence, 1940-1950" at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wwghhtml/wwghome.html>.

Acquisition

The materials were acquired through Woody Guthrie's correspondence and personal acquaintance with Alan Lomax, who was assistant in charge of the Archive of American Folk Song from 1937-1942. The majority of the materials, mostly Guthrie's writings dating from 1935 to 1950, were accessioned between 1940 and 1951.

Preferred Citation

Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection (AFC 1940/004), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Related Material - Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collections at the American Folklife Center

Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence

AFC 2005/006. Ken Lindsay (1923-2001) was a founding partner of the Challenge Jazz Club in London, England, and worked for the International Bookshop, London, at the time of this correspondence, 1952 to 1953, in which he encouraged Guthrie's writing projects and invited him to consider touring in Europe; 29 items.

Alan Lomax Collection

AFC 2004/004. Woody Guthrie correspondence within the Alan Lomax Collection dates from 1940 to 1953, most written by Woody Guthrie to Alan Lomax, whose friendship with Guthrie continued after Lomax left the Library of Congress in 1942. Also included are collections of songs, essays, clippings, a birth announcement for Arlo Guthrie, and issues of the *Woody Guthrie Newsletter*, 1960-1966, which documents Guthrie's activities and failing health up to the time of his death in 1967; circa ten linear inches in 3 boxes, including oversize.

Related Material - Woody Guthrie Sound Recordings at the American Folklife Center

Alan Lomax Collection of Woody Guthrie Recordings

AFC 1940/007. Recorded March 21, 22 and 27, 1940, at Radio Broadcasting Division of the Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. Seventeen 12-inch discs: 4 hours, 27 minutes duration. Conversation, songs, stories, and life story or autobiography as told by Woody Guthrie to Alan and Elizabeth Lomax. Recorded by Nev. Rumble.

Alan Lomax CBS Radio Series Collection

AFC 1939/002, AFS 4507. American School of the Air radio broadcast aired April 2, 1940, from New York, Columbia Broadcasting System. One 16-inch disc: 14 minutes duration (5 minutes feature Guthrie). Part I of the 22nd American School of the Air "Folk Music of America" series segment, "Poor Farmer Songs." Features Alan Lomax, the Golden Gate Quartet, and Woody Guthrie.

Alan Lomax CBS Radio Series Collection

AFC 1939/002, AFS 4508. American School of the Air radio broadcast aired April 2, 1940, from New York, Columbia Broadcasting System. One 16-inch disc: 15 minutes duration (13 minutes feature Guthrie). Part II of the 22nd American School of the Air "Folk Music of America" series segment, "Poor Farmer Songs." Features Alan Lomax, the Golden Gate Quartet, and Woody Guthrie.

Alan Lomax CBS Radio Series Collection

AFC 1939/002, AFS 13498-99. American School of the Air radio broadcast aired April 23, 1940, from New York, Columbia Broadcasting System. One 16-inch disc: 27 minutes duration (3 minutes feature Guthrie). The final broadcast of "Folk Music in America" for the 1939-1940 season, featuring Alan Lomax with the Golden Gate Quartet, Woody Guthrie, and Leadbelly.

Leadbelly Radio Audition

AFC 1991/018. One 16-inch disc: 15 minutes duration. Leadbelly performs for NBC radio on June 9, 1940, with narration by Woody Guthrie.

Alan Lomax CBS Radio Series Collection

AFC 1939/002, AFS 4510. Aired August 19, 1940, from New York, Columbia Broadcasting System. One 16-inch disc: 30 minutes duration (12 minutes feature Guthrie). The pilot broadcast of "Back Where I Come From," on the topic of "Weather," featuring Clifton (Kip) Fadiman, host; Len Doyle, "The Expert"; the Golden Gate Quartet, Woody Guthrie, Burl Ives, Willie Johnson, and Josh White.

Mike Seeger Collection

AFC 1995/004 and dub numbers 14A5-14A9; recorded circa 1940 in New York. One 7-inch reel copied from a disc recording: 10 minutes duration. Woody Guthrie performs with Pete Seeger.

Songs by Woody Guthrie

AFC 1941/031 recorded January 4, 1941, in the Recording Laboratory at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. One 16-inch disc: 28 minutes duration. Seven songs performed by Woody Guthrie; each song includes spoken introduction. Recorded by Alan Lomax and John Langenegger.

Almanac Singers Recording

AFC 1942/013. Recorded January 1942 in New York. Two 10-inch, four 12-inch discs: 18 minutes duration. The Almanac Singers and Alan Lomax, John A. Lomax, and Earl Robinson.

Woody Guthrie Concert and Conversation, April 14, 1951

AFC 1991/003; recorded April 14, 1951, at St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland. Cassette copy of a wire spool recording: 24 minutes duration. Guthrie performs in concert at St. John's College. There are very few recordings of Guthrie concerts; this recording is the last known recorded concert performance.

Related Materials at the Library of Congress

Other divisions of the Library of Congress have additional archival materials pertaining to Woody Guthrie. The Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division holds 12 hours of sound recordings and one 20-minute film; the Music Division holds microfilmed manuscript material; and the Prints and Photographs Division holds 33 items in the form of photographic prints and printed materials.

For further details on the materials in these divisions, visit:

Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/>

Music Division at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/perform/>

Prints and Photographs Division at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/>

Collection Concordance by Format

Quantity	Physical Extent (original)	Location	Item Numbers
1	manuscript box	AFC	Box 1
2	oversize boxes	AFC	Boxes 2-3

Description of Series

Container

Series

Correspondence, essays, prose, doodles, and song lyrics written by Woody Guthrie between 1935 and 1950.

Collection Inventory

Container

Contents

Correspondence, essays, prose, doodles, and song lyrics written by Woody Guthrie between 1935 and 1950.

BOX 1

FOLDER 1	Collection Finding Aid
FOLDER 2	Inventories and Case File
FOLDER 3	Correspondence: Letters (mostly to Alan Lomax, Duncan Emrich), 1940-50 and undated
FOLDER 4	Correspondence: Letters of Permission, 1942-48
FOLDER 5	Correspondence: Post Cards, 1941
FOLDER 6	Correspondence: Letters to Record Companies, 1940, and circa June 1942
FOLDER 7	Correspondence: Library of Congress to Guthrie, 1940-50 and undated
FOLDER 8	Correspondence: Library of Congress concerning Guthrie, 1940-42 and undated
FOLDER 9	Lyrics: "Alonzo M. Zilch's Own Collection of Original Songs and Ballads," 1935
FOLDER 10	Lyrics: "Farther Along," March 1941
FOLDER 11	Lyrics: "The Final Call," April 1941
FOLDER 12	Lyrics: Old Time Hill Country Songs, undated
FOLDER 13	Lyrics: <i>Songs of Woody Guthrie</i> , songbook, undated Carbon copy. For original, see Box 2 of 3.
FOLDER 14	Lyrics: "Ten of Woody Guthrie's Songs: Book One," April 1945
FOLDER 15	Lyrics: Wartime Songs, 1940-42 and undated
FOLDER 16	Writings: "No Title," undated
FOLDER 17	Writings: "The Railroad Cricket," 1941
FOLDER 18	Writings: Undated essay on 8" x 12" envelope, circa Fall 1940
FOLDER 19	Writings: Three essays written between September and November 1940 Reference photocopy of oversize materials. For originals, see Box 3 of 3.

BOX 2

Lyrics: *Songs of Woody Guthrie*, original songbook, undated

BOX 3

Writings: Three essays written between September and November 1940
Original