

4 record cartons, 1 oversize box
ArMs 1989.009 and 2005.005
4.62 cf
Location: 4C: 4.3.C & 4.5.C

DRAFT

Brooklyn Poetry Circle Collection
1935-2000

Brooklyn Historical Society
Othmer Library
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Introduction

This collection contains records and other materials related to the activities of the Brooklyn Poetry Circle and its individual members. The collection includes minutes, correspondence, and membership lists, as well as printed material created for, or generated by its member activities (including programs, flyers, tickets, printed anthologies, and newspaper clippings). The collection also contains a very large number of poems written by members of the Circle, the majority of which are undated, and a significant number of which are unsigned. These poems generally date from the 1940s and 50s, and many bear the handwritten emendations and suggestions of the Circle's official critic, Gertrude Ryder Bennett. Gabrielle Lederer, a long-term member of the Circle who served as its secretary throughout the 1960s and 70s, compiled extensive scrapbooks documenting the life of the group, which form the largest series in the collection.

The collection was accessioned in three parts: 1989.009, ten folders prepared for the Brooklyn Historical Society by Poetry Circle member Geri Dyer; 2005.05, the final binder in the scrapbook series; and the bulk of the collection, a large donation received in 1998 that never received its own accession number. There are no restrictions on access to the collection, but the rights status of many literary works has not been evaluated.

Administrative History

The Brooklyn Poetry Circle was founded in 1935 by Marie-Louise d'Esternaux, Maude Clark Hough, and Laura Spofford Wiltsie Lake. Marie-Louise's parents, Countess Ethelyn d'Esternaux and Count Max d'Esternaux, were active members of several artistic societies, and became especially close friends with the poet Edwin Markham. Markham encouraged the society and actively promoted it until his death in 1940. Other established poets also participated in the society during its early years and helped to define its aesthetic, the most well-known being Maude Clark Hough and Anna Hempstead Branch, poets whose work is characterized by the use of simple ballad meters, and by the predominance of traditional religious and family themes. The aesthetic defined in the Circle's changed little over time. The Poetry Circle promoted and admired formalist poetic techniques, as well as poems with religious themes, until its dissolution in the late 1990s.

The group's regular activities included two major annual events, a spring luncheon and a Christmas party. In the early years of the Circle, members often attended various cultural events around New York City, and participated in the New York World's Fair in 1939. The Circle also held monthly meetings, generally in the home of one of the members. Each month a poetic theme was assigned, and each member would submit a poem to the official critic several weeks before the meeting. For many years during the 1940s and 1950s, the critic was Gertrude Ryder Bennett, an author notable for writing many books and poems about the history of Brooklyn. Most active members of the circle joined in the relatively early years of the institution's history and remained members throughout their lives. During the 1980s and 1990s, very few people applied for membership, and the aging Circle members voted to disband in 1997.

Scope and Content

The collection contains records pertaining to the organizational activities and publications of the Circle, including minutes, annual reports, budgets, and membership lists. As the Circle was primarily a social organization, however, the bulk of the material pertains more to the social history of the Circle rather than its administrative history. The collection adequately covers the entire history, with no gaps in the chronology, although the very early years are documented most completely.

There are several photographs and a small collection of sheet music. Very little correspondence is included. The records have been divided into the following eight series:

1. Records, 1935-1989 and undated
2. Personal Papers of Marie-Louise d'Esternaux and Gabrielle Lederer, 1935-1989 and undated
3. Poems and Writings, undated
4. Printed Magazines and Publications, 1939-1985

5. Ephemera and Clippings, 1935-1989 and undated
6. Scrapbooks, 1936-2000
7. Books, 1914-1989; Series 8: Oversize, 1935-1978.

Series 1, Administrative Records, 1935-1989 and undated

The series consists of official minutes, programs, and financial statements related to the life of the Circle as an institution. Official bulletins and correspondence—that is, printed material addressing and concerning the membership in general—is included here, but correspondence addressing individuals is filed under ‘correspondence.’ Because most of the records in this collection were generated by Marie-Louise d’Esternaux or (the vast majority) by Lederer, the majority of the correspondence is addressed to Gabrielle Lederer. Some of this correspondence does contain poems, the majority of these included as membership materials or contest submissions. A very few letters are of more social or personal nature.

Series 2, Personal Papers of Marie-Louise d’Esternaux and Gabrielle Lederer, 1935-1989 and undated

The series contains handwritten notes and typescripts produced by d’Esternaux and Lederer, primarily Lederer. As Lederer served as Secretary, her notes are closely related to the records of the Institution, and those interested in the institutional records should also look at this series. In addition to the notes she took at meetings, however, there are many personal notes and sketches interspersed throughout the notebooks.

Series 3: Poems and Writings, undated

The majority of these poems are from the 1940s, based on the names of the (known) poets and the fact that many of them shown Bennett’s markings and marginalia. Poems whose authors are known are arranged alphabetically by author, other poems are arranged alphabetically by title. There are some poems written by later members of the Circle included here, as well as in Lederer’s scrapbooks. Any user seeking permission to use any poem in a publication must consult with the archivist, as the rights status of these poems has not been evaluated.

Series 4: Printed Magazines and Publications, 1939-1985 and undated

The relatively small series consists of all printed magazines and booklets in the collection. The Brooklyn Poetry Circle produced several commemorative anthologies which are included in this series. As not all the magazines can be dated, they are arranged alphabetically by publication title. Of greatest general interest is perhaps a rare copy of *The Raven Poetry Circle Anthology* from 1944¹.

Series 5: Ephemera and Clippings, 1935-1989 and undated

This series contains a variety of material. Commercially printed material such as tickets, flyers, stationery, and promotional material for books and publications, forms the bulk of it. A small collection of news clippings, most of it pertaining to the lives and achievements of club members, is included here. All material seemingly unrelated to the structure, social life, or literary life of the institution—including greeting cards, postcards, and sheet music—is also included here.

Series 6: Scrapbooks, 1936-2000

The material Lederer collected and presented in these scrapbooks is similar in form and content to the material arranged and described in the previous five series. This series could be seen as the logical and chronological continuation of the previous five, although there is some overlap in the chronology. The scrapbooks are generally arranged in very precise chronological order, and the final binder includes some personal remembrances and histories written by several long-time members of the Circle. A scrapbook documenting the very early life of the institution, created by Marie-Louise d’Esternaux, is included in the oversize box and should be handled with great care.

¹ Guide to the Raven Poetry Circle of Greenwich Village Collection. The New-York Historical Society, 2002. Machine-readable finding aid created by Jenny Gotwals.
<http://dlib.nyu.edu/eadapp/transform?source=nyhs/Raven.xml&style=nyhs/nyhs.xsl>

Series 7: Books, 1914-1989

These books presumably represent some portion of the Poetry Circle's library. The first box (Box 3) contains books written by members of the Circle and their associates. The second contains all other books originally included in this accession, all of which were printed by large-scale mainstream publishing houses. A complete inventory is available as an appendix to this finding aid.

Series 8: Oversize, 1935-1978

The oversize box contains three items: the scrapbook of Poetry Circle founder Marie-Louise d'Esternaux, a large sketch of a flower, and the sheet music for 'Drew', signed by the poet and lyricist Maude Clark Hough.

Processing Note

Pratt Institute intern Jessica Nauright processed the collection in July 2007. She reorganized items, grouped items in series and then placed them in chronological order within their groups, photocopied news clippings onto acid-free paper, and created the finding aid. Clippings and duplicates were discarded in accordance with the policies of the Brooklyn Historical Society. Two photographs of Poetry Circle members at the World's Fair should be removed to the image collection.

Establishing order and defining series for this collection was problematic. The collection was neither in complete disarray nor did it appear to reflect any original administrative order, although it did follow a rough chronological order. The order eventually imposed was one that seemed to follow from the order of the original folders and the types of documents that predominated. The majority of this material was collected by Gabrielle Lederer, and came from her collection. Many of the later administrative records bear her emendations, and many administrative matters and minutes are collected in her personal notebooks. The series are functional, but users are encouraged to examine records by date as well as by document type, for the aforementioned reasons. Cataloging access points are appended.

Related Material

Several photographs taken during the 1939 World's Fair have been removed to the image collection.

Container List

Series 1, Administrative Records, 1935-1989 and undated

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	1	Administrative Records	1935-1937
	2	Administrative Records	1938-1945
	3	Administrative Records	1951-1960
	4	Administrative Records	1961-1970
	5	Administrative Records	1971-1989
	6	Events	1937-1939
	7	Events: 1939 World's Fair	1939-1965
	8	Events	1940-1947
	9	Events	1957-1991

10	Correspondence	1936-1939
11	Correspondence	1940-1949
12	Correspondence	1952-1960
13	Correspondence	1961-1970
14	Correspondence	1971-1988

Series 2: Personal Papers of Marie-Louise d'Esternaux and Gabrielle Lederer, 1935-1989 and undated

1	1	Papers of Marie-Louise d'Esternaux	circa 1930s/1940s
	2	Papers of Gabrielle Lederer: Notebook 1	1939-1953
	3	Papers of Gabrielle Lederer: Notebook 2	1952-1956
	4	Papers of Gabrielle Lederer: Notebook 3	1962
	5	Papers of Gabrielle Lederer	1965-1989

Series 3: Poems and Writings, undated

1	1	Poems and Writings: Authors A-F
	2	Poems and Writings: Authors G-M
	3	Poems and Writings: Authors N-W
	4	Poems and Writings: Authors unknown (alpha by title)

Series 4: Printed Magazines and Publications, 1939-1985

1	1	Publications: titles A-E	1958-1985
	2	Publications: titles F-V	1939-1970

Series 5: Ephemera and Clippings, 1935-1989 and undated

1	1	Ephemera: Tickets	1947-1980
	2	Ephemera: Official stationery and member booklets	1936-circa 1940
	3	Ephemera: Fliers and Printed Material	1939-1965
	4	Ephemera: Sheet Music	1938-1943
	5	Ephemera: Other	1935-1961
	6	Ephemera: Clippings	1938-1989
	7	Ephemera: Old Clippings	1941-1989 and undated
	8	Ephemera: Duplicates	1960-1985 and undated

Series 6: Scrapbooks

2	1	Gabrielle (possibly Natalie?) Lederer's Scrapbook 1	1938-1966
	2	Gabrielle Lederer's Scrapbook 2, 1 of 2	1966-1972
	3	Gabrielle Lederer's Scrapbook 2, 2 of 2	1966-1972
	4	Gabrielle Lederer's Scrapbook 3, 1 of 2	1973-1978
	5	Gabrielle Lederer's Scrapbook 3, 2 of 2	1973-1978
	6	Gabrielle Lederer's Scrapbook 4, 1 of 2	1979-1986
	7	Gabrielle Lederer's Scrapbook 4, 2 of 2	1979-1986
	8	Natalie Lederer Scrapbook	1960s
2	9	Final Years of the Brooklyn Poetry Circle: Binder	1981-2000

Series 7: Books

4	1	Books written by Poetry Circle members and associates	1918-1982
5	2	Other books in the Poetry Circle collection	1914-1989

Series 8: Oversize

6	1	Sheet Music for 'Drew', lyrics by Maude Clark Hough	circa 1935
	2	Drawing of a flower pot by Patrice McConnell	1978
	3	Scrapbook of Marie-Louise d'Esternaux	1935-1949

Access PointsPersonal Names

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder
 Branch, Anna Hempstead, 1875-1937
 Hough, Maude Clark
 Lilly, Othelia, 1908-
 Markham, Edwin, 1852-1940
 Palen, Jennie M.

Corporate Names

Brooklyn Poetry Circle (Brooklyn, N.Y.)

Topics

Clubs – Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
 Literary societies – Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
 Small press books

Geographic Terms

Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) – Social life and customs
 New York (N.Y.)–Social life and customs

Forms and Genres

Annotations

Books

Clippings

Correspondence

Magazines (Periodicals)

Membership Lists

Minutes

Poetry

Printed ephemera

Scrapbooks

Occupations

Poets—Twentieth Century

Appendix: Book inventory

Box 3

Bagliore, Virginia. *Oracles of Light*. New York: Pella Publishing Company, 1986.
[Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]

Benét, Laura. *In Love With Time*. Sanbornville, New Hampshire: Wake-Brook House,
1959. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *Ballads of Colonial Days: With Historical Background*.
Francestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1972. [Inscribed to
Gabrielle Lederer.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *Etched in Words*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938.
[Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *Fugitive: With Historical Background*.
Francestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1975. [Inscribed to
Gabrielle Lederer.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *The Harvesters*. Francestown, New Hampshire: The Golden
Quill Press, 1967. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *The Hessian Lieutenant Left His Name*. Francestown, New
Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1976. [Inscribed to Gabrielle
Lederer.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *Living In a Landmark*. Francestown, New Hampshire: Marshall
Jones Company, 1980. [Signed by the author.]

Bennett, Gertrude Ryder. *Turning Back the Clock*. Francestown, New Hampshire: The
Golden Quill Press, 1982. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer by Frank Curtis
Williams, includes note from FCW to GL.]

Brooklyn Poetry Circle Silver Anniversary: 1935-1985. Privately printed, 1985.

Brooklyn Poetry Circle Silver Anniversary: 1935-1960. Privately printed, 1960.

- d'Esternaux, Ethelyn, ed. *The Brooklyn Poetry Circle Anthology*. Dallas: The Story Book Press, 1952. [Two copies: one signed by Gabrielle Lederer/with dust jacket, one signed by Natalie Lederer/without dust jacket.]
- Esternaux, Marie-Louise. *Outdoor Voices*. New York: The Poets Press, 1936. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle; BPC bookplate.]
- Esternaux, Max. *Nearer to Goethe*. Printed copy of address to Phi Beta Kappa Alumnae of Columbia University, 1936.
- Frost, Frances. *This Rowdy Heart*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1954. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]
- Garde, Edna. *Harp of One String*. New York: Pageant Press, 1963. [Signed by Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Grenelle, Lisa. *No Light Evaded*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1957. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Grenelle, Lisa. *No Scheduled Flight*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1973.
- Grenelle, Lisa. *Self is the Stranger*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1963. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Grenelle, Lisa. *Woman Walking*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1978. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Hough, Maude Clark. *In Another Living Room: Poems of Consolation*. New York: Call Press, 1938. [Two copies: one inscribed to the Brooklyn Poetry Circle; BPC bookplate.]
- Hough, Maude Clark. *Lines on Life*. New York: The Poets Press, 1936. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle; BPC bookplate.]
- Hough, Maude Clark. *Out of My Heart*. New York: House of Field, 1940.
- Hough, Maude Clark. *Youth Dies Not*. Washington, D.C.: National Congress of Mothers, 1918. [Signed by the author.]
- Hoyer, Mildred N. *Leaves of Laughs*. Milwaukee: Peacock Press, 1974. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]
- Hoyer, Mildred N. *The Master Key*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1965. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]
- Lederer, Natalie. *Communion*. Brooklyn, New York: Midnight Rainbow Press, 1970.
- Lilly, Othelia. *Leaping the Boulder Years: New and Selected Poems*. Portland, Oregon: Binford and Mort, 1976. [Signed by Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Lilly, Othelia. *Wing Your Joy!* Lederer, Street, and Zeus Company, 1953. [Signed by author.]
- Markham, Edwin. *Star of Araby*. Stapleton, New York: The John Willig Press, 1937. [Contains Edwin Markham Memorial Society membership application; BPC bookplate.]

- Markowitz, David. *Fling Your Spear*. Privately printed by Mrs. David Markowitz, 1961.
- Marx, Anne. *Face Lifts For All Seasons*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1980. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]
- Mason, Madeline. *The Cage of Years*. New York: The Bond Wheelwright Company, 1949. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]
- Mason, Madeline. *Sonnets in a New Form*. Georgetown, California: Dragon's Teeth Press, 1975. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]
- New York Poetry Group. *Poems 1942-1943*. New York: The Alexander Press, 1943.
- Palen, Jennie M. *Moon Over Manhattan*. Mill Valley, California: The Wings Press, 1949. [Signed by the author.]
- Palen, Jennie M. *Stranger, Let Me Speak*. Frankestown, New Hampshire: The Golden Quill Press, 1964. [Inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle.]
- Reyburn, Morris. *Dreams Beyond Wings*. Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1970. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Rice, William J. *Poems*. Privately printed, 1961. [Signed by the author; includes letter from C. E. B. Röell, Private Secretary to H. M. the Queen of the Netherlands to WJR]
- Strickland, Jim. *Being Alive*. New York: Diameter Publishers, 1974. [Inscribed to Gabrielle Lederer.]
- Tremble, Stella Craft, ed. *From Sea to Sea in Song*. Charleston, Illinois: Prairie Press Books, 1966.
- Wagner, Mary Boyd. *Roots*. Mill Valley, California: The Wings Press, 1954. [Two copies: One with author's bookplate/dust jacket, one inscribed to Brooklyn Poetry Circle/no dust jacket.]
- Box 4
- Altenbrand, Lynn and Leslie L. Lewis, eds. *Introduction to Literature: Poems*. New York: Macmillan, 1975.
- An American Omnibus*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Dorran, and Company: 1933.
- Blake, William. *Selections From Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Penwritten by Reynard Biemiller. New York: Archway Press, 1946.
- Coffin, Robert P. Tristram. *Collected Poems*. New York: Macmillan, 1943. [BPC bookplate.]
- Georgian Poetry: 1913-1915*. London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1915.
- Gordon, Elias. *Bards of the North: Favorite Verse and Folk Songs From the Russian, Scandinavian, and Finnish*. New York: American Cultural Federation Press, 1936. [BPC bookplate.]
- Jones, Daniel. *An English Pronouncing Dictionary*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1924.

- Levertov, Denise. *Poems 1968-1972*. New York: New Directions, 1989.
- Mearnes, Hughes. *Creative Power*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Dorran, and Company, 1930.
- Robinson, Edwin Arlington. *Tristram*. New York: Macmillan, 1928.
- Russell, Peter, ed. *Ezra Pound: A Collection of Essays Edited by Peter Russell To Be Presented To Ezra Pound On His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. London: Peter Nevill Limited, 1950.
- Shakespeare, William. *Sonnets of William Shakespeare*. New York: Avenel Books, 1980.
- Spender, Steven, ed. *A Choice of English Romantic Poetry*. New York: The Dial Press, 1947. [Inscribed by Estelle J. Ellison to the Brooklyn Poetry Circle]
- Tate, Allen. *Poems 1922-1947*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.
- Wilkinson, Marguerite, ed. *New Voices: An Introduction to Contemporary Poetry*. New York: Macmillan, 1924. [Inscribed to Natalie Lederer.]
- Williams, Blanche Colton. *Gnomic Poetry in Anglo-Saxon*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1914.