

Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence

AFC 2005/006

Prepared by Sarah Bradley Leighton



American Folklife Center, Library of
Congress

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Encoded by Amarantha Dyuaaxchs,
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Latest revision: March 2010

Collection Summary

Collection Number: AFC 2005/006

Title: Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence

Inclusive Dates: February 1952 – September 1953

Repository: Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/folklife.home>

Extent (original): 34 leaves (29 items) in 2 boxes

Creator: Lindsay, Ken, 1923-2001

Language: English

Abstract: This collection contains unpublished correspondence between Woody Guthrie, two of his wives, and British recording distributor, Ken Lindsay.

Scope and Content

The correspondence between Ken Lindsay and Woody Guthrie began in 1952, while Lindsay was responsible for the mail order record department at the International Bookshop on Charing Cross Road in London, England. Lindsay first wrote to Guthrie encouraging him to write and record material for the European market. Although the recording projects and the European tours discussed in their letters never materialized, this correspondence (1952-1953) captures the development of a special relationship between two men who never met, but shared a passion for music. The correspondence also provides a glimpse at the creative flair and the personal challenges that shaped this period of Guthrie's life.

In his letters to Lindsay, Guthrie discusses music, politics, and family relationships and reveals his struggle with alcoholism and the disease that claimed his life, Huntington's chorea. The letters also document Guthrie's whereabouts during these years as he writes from Brooklyn, New York; Jacksonville, Florida; and Topanga, California. Additionally, there is correspondence from Guthrie's second and third wives, Marjorie Mazia Guthrie and Anneke Van Kirk, who communicate details about Guthrie's personal health and professional endeavors to Lindsay. Letters MS01, MS03, MS04, and MS24 are even embellished with sketches made by Guthrie and Anneke Van Kirk.

Interestingly, Guthrie concluded many of his letters with the number "30." This symbol is often found at the closing of a press release and is believed to have descended from the practice of typing "XXX" at the conclusion of telegraph transmissions during the Civil War.

Biographical History

Ken Lindsay (1923-2001) was a founding partner in the Challenge Jazz Club, the first sizable jazz club in London after World War II. As a jazz and folk enthusiast, Lindsay was connected with the jazz revival and folk movement of the 1950s in the United Kingdom, and made a career of promoting such musicians and organizing performances. Lindsay also worked for the International Bookshop where he oversaw the department that would import records from America and Europe and sell them by mail. This was the period during which he established a correspondence relationship with Woody Guthrie. Lindsay went on to work for other record shops and continued to manage bands, lecture on music at universities, and write articles for such music publications as *Melody Maker* and *Music Mirror*.

Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Guthrie (1912-1967) was a singer, songwriter, and social activist who influenced twentieth-century American music and culture. Having lived through the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl Migration, World War II, and the political upheavals that resulted in the labor union movement, Guthrie called upon these experiences as he expressed the plight of common people through his songs, prose, and poetry. He was a seminal figure in the folk music

revival of the 1950s, and his songs and philosophy had a profound impact on society and on contemporary musicians such as Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen.

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, Marjorie--Correspondence.
Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967--Correspondence.
Guthrie, Woody, 1912-1967.
Lindsay, Ken, collector, correspondent.
Van Kirk, Anneke--Correspondence.

Titles

Woody Guthrie correspondence, 1952-1953
Hard travelin'
Love says no
Sunny sun sun
Un Americans

Administrative Information

Arrangement

There are fifteen letters written by Ken Lindsay, seven written by Woody Guthrie, two written by Marjorie Guthrie (Guthrie's second wife), and two written by Anneke Van Kirk (Guthrie's third wife). In addition to the letters, there are four pages of song lyrics written by Woody Guthrie that he sent to Ken Lindsay with his letters. Some of the letters and song lyrics are embellished with drawings. The letters written by Ken Lindsay are carbon copies that Lindsay kept of his original letters.

The letters are arranged in chronological order to represent the development of communication between Ken Lindsay and Woody Guthrie. Sarah Bradley Leighton processed the collection in June 2005. Each letter was assigned a unique manuscript (MS) number and the recto and verso of the letter's leaves were assigned decimal derivations of that unique manuscript number. For example, in the number "MS01.02," "MS01" represents the first item of correspondence in the collection and ".02" signifies the verso of the first leaf of the item. Decimal derivations were not assigned if the side of an item is blank.

Access

This collection is available for research in the Folklife Reading Room. Duplication of the collection materials may be governed by copyright and other restrictions.

Acquisition

The Archive of Folk Culture acquired the collection on June 7, 2005, from Wendy Lindsay, daughter of Ken Lindsay, and her siblings.

Preferred Citation

Ken Lindsay Collection of Woody Guthrie Correspondence (AFC 2005/006), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Related Materials

Selections from this collection will be added to the Archive of Folk Culture's online American Memory presentation, *Woody Guthrie and the Archive of American Folk Song: Correspondence*, located at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wwghhtml/wwghome.html>.

Alan Lomax Collection of Woody Guthrie Recordings, AFS 3407-3423

Alan Lomax CBS Radio Series Collection, AFC 1939/002

Almanac Singers Audition for Wm. Morris & Co., AFS 6100-6105 (Recorded in January 1942)

Songs by Woody Guthrie, AFS 4491 (Recorded on January 4, 1941)

Woody Guthrie Manuscript Collection, AFC 1940/004

Woody Guthrie Concert and Conversation, AFC 1991/003 (Recorded on April 14, 1951)

Collection Concordance by Format

Quantity	Physical Extent (original)	Location	Item Numbers
Manuscript Materials 29 items	34 leaves of paper	Boxes 1-2	MS01-MS29

Description of Series

Container

Series

Manuscripts

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
	Manuscripts
BOX 1 FOLDER 1	Finding Aid. 7 leaves.
BOX 1 FOLDER 2	MS01. February 15, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 2 leaves. MS01.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS01.02 [leaf 1, verso] MS01.03 [leaf 2, recto] MS01.04 [leaf 2, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 3	MS02. February 26, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 2 leaves. MS02.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS02.02 [leaf 2, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 4	MS03. February 21, 1952. Song lyrics, "Un Americans," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. [EMPTY FOLDER: See Oversized Box 2 of 2, Folder 31]
BOX 1 FOLDER 5	MS04. February 21, 1952. Song lyrics, "Sunny Sun Sun," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. [EMPTY FOLDER: See Oversized Box 2 of 2, Folder 31]
BOX 1 FOLDER 6	MS05. February 1952. Song lyrics, "Love Says No," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. [EMPTY FOLDER: See Oversized Box 2 of 2, Folder 31]
BOX 1 FOLDER 7	MS06. March 14, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 2 leaves. MS06.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS06.02 [leaf 1, verso] MS06.03 [leaf 2, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 8	MS07. March 27, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS07.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 9	MS08. May 1, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS08.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 10	MS09. May 31, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS09.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS09.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 11	MS10. June 18, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS10.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 12	MS11. June 26, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf. MS11.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1	MS12. July 17, 1952. Letter from Marjorie Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf.

Manuscripts

Container

Contents

FOLDER 13

MS12.01 [leaf 1, recto]

BOX 1

MS13. July 21, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Marjorie Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 14

MS13.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS13.02 [leaf 1, verso]

BOX 1

MS14. July 31, 1952. Letter from Marjorie Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 15

MS14.01 [leaf 1, recto]

BOX 1

MS15. August 8, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Marjorie Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 16

MS15.01 [leaf 1, recto]

BOX 1

MS16. September 23, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 17

MS16.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS16.02 [leaf 1, verso]

BOX 1

MS17. September 30, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 18

MS17.01 [leaf 1, recto]

BOX 1

MS18. September 30, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 2 leaves.

FOLDER 19

MS18.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS18.02 [leaf 2, recto]

BOX 1

MS19. September 31, 1952. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 20

MS19.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS19.02 [leaf 1, verso]

BOX 1

MS20. November 10, 1952. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 21

MS20.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS20.02 [leaf 1, verso]

BOX 1

MS21. April 16, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 22

MS21.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS21.02 [leaf 1, verso]

BOX 1

MS22. April 17, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Marjorie Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 23

MS22.01 [leaf 1, recto]

BOX 1

MS23. June 18, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 24

MS23.01 [leaf 1, recto]

BOX 1

MS24. June 22, 1953. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay dictated to Anneke Van Kirk. Accompanied by letter from Anneke Van Kirk to Ken Lindsay. 2 leaves.

FOLDER 25

MS24.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS24.02 [leaf 2, recto]

BOX 1

MS25. July 7, 1953. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie. 1 leaf.

FOLDER 26

MS25.01 [leaf 1, recto]

MS25.02 [leaf 1, verso]

Manuscripts

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1 FOLDER 27	MS26. September 13, [1953]. Letter from Ken Lindsay to Woody Guthrie and Anneke Van Kirk. 1 leaf. MS26.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS26.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 28	MS27. [September 15, 1953]. Letter from Anneke Van Kirk to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS27.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS27.02 [leaf 1, verso]
BOX 1 FOLDER 29	MS28. September 16, 1953. Letter from Woody Guthrie to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS28.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 1 FOLDER 30	MS29. September 1953. Song lyrics, "Hard Travelin'," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf MS29.01 [leaf 1, recto]
BOX 2 (oversize) FOLDER 31	MS03 and MS04 February 21, 1952, and MS05 February 1952. Song lyrics, "Un Americans," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS03.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS03.02 [leaf 1, verso] Song lyrics, "Sunny Sun Sun," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS04.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS04.02 [leaf 1, verso] Song lyrics, "Love Says No," by Woody Guthrie sent to Ken Lindsay. 1 leaf. MS05.01 [leaf 1, recto] MS05.02 [leaf 1, verso]