George Field Collection of Freedom House
Files, 1933-1990 (bulk 1941-1969): Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: MC048
Repository: Princeton University. Library. Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections
Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library.
Public Policy Papers.
65 Olden Street Princeton, New Jersey 08540 USA
Size: 3.70 linear feet
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract:
This collection contains George Field's files of the organization Freedom House (1933-1990; Bulk Dates 1941-1969). Freedom House was formed in October 1941 as an organization dedicated to the defense of freedom throughout the world--a cause perceived to be in great danger. Founding members included George Field, Dorothy Thompson, Wendell L. Willkie, Herbert Agar, Herbert Bayard Swope, and Rex Stout. These and other members had been involved in both Fight For Freedom and in the New York Chapter of the Committee to Defend America By Aiding the Allies. Freedom House carried on the spirit of these two organizations by acting as a clearing house of information. Its first agenda was to work, during World War II, to prepare the country for peace, and then after the war to continue to defend
peace and freedom throughout the world. Throughout the period from 1941 to 1967 George Field was the Executive Director of Freedom House and was in charge of the day-to-day activities as well as the long-range planning for the organization. These records reflect Field's position in Freedom House during this time. The collection contains only the records that George Field retained from Freedom House, not the official records of the organization. Included in these records are Field's copies of Freedom House meeting minutes, correspondence, newspaper clippings, publications and writings, financial files, legal files, and photographs.

Location: This collection is stored onsite at the Mudd Manuscript Library.
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"The vital test of freedom...is the degree to which the individual may differ from society and still be protected by it in the right to make his own decisions." [Levenstein, Freedom's Advocate: A Twenty-Five Year Chronicle, p.x.]

This statement characterizes the philosophy of freedom as practiced by the organization Freedom House, which was founded in October, 1941 just before the entry of the United States into World War II. Among its founding members figured George Field, Dorothy Thompson, Wendell L. Willkie, Herbert Agar, Herbert Bayard Swope, Ralph Bunche, Father George B. Ford, Roscoe Drummond, and Rex Stout. It was an organization that took as its goal the defense of freedom, and its founders saw Freedom House as "both a physical structure in New York and a social force in America." [Levenstein, p.x] An outgrowth of the groups, Fight For Freedom, Inc., and the New York City Chapter of the Committee to Defend America By Aiding the Allies (under the direction of George Field), Freedom House carried on the momentum that had been built by these two pre-war organizations through their efforts to create an awareness of the concept of freedom as practiced by many individuals in a democracy. In order to house the organization and to serve as a memorial to Wendell L. Willkie, the Willkie Memorial Building was bought in 1945. In addition, the Willkie Memorial Building housed many other non-profit agencies that reflected similar philosophies as Freedom House and Wendell Willkie's vision. These agencies were invited by Freedom House to work in the building.

During its existence under the direction of George Field, Freedom House sponsored Annual Freedom Awards. These awards were presented to individuals or groups of individuals who had significantly aided the cause of freedom and had done so in a way that was sympathetic with the views of Freedom House. Freedom House also hosted conferences, sponsored research projects, lectures series and other educational programs, and published policy statements, pamphlets, and other written materials relating to issues of freedom of individuals and geographical regions.

In 1967 George Field retired as director of Freedom House, and in 1970 he left his position on the board as Secretary, permanently severing all ties with Freedom House. Disagreements in matters of ideology and administration had cause great resentment between George Field and his successor, Leonard Sussman. Perhaps the greatest disagreements centered around the handling of financial matters of Freedom House. George Field and Leonard Sussman had very different ways of approaching the budgetary concerns of Freedom House, especially in relation to the philosophy of Freedom House and the Willkie Memorial Building. In 1985 George Field entered into the life of Freedom House once more for a short time when the Willkie Building was sold to the Republic National Bank and all organizations were ordered to vacate the building, and the non-profit agencies sued Freedom House and the Willkie Memorial for protection from this order. The eleven agencies were awarded $700,000 to help in their relocation. Freedom House retained the balance of the amount for which the Willkie Building was sold, approximately $2,000,000. The legal files for the case are in the collection, as well as many letters and other materials relating to the case. In George Field's mind, the settlement of this case was extremely unsatisfactory. The entire case revolved around issues of "restricted" funds and other financial concerns, which he felt jeopardized the ideological bases of Freedom House, and represented a great degree of secrecy and misrepresentation--all for quick profit. George Field writes that "President Reagan's rationalizations and the rationalizations of Freedom House spring from the same polluted wells. In place of the future I had once envisioned, I now see complacency and poverty of spirit....If we are to recapture our democratic values, the
pendulum must swing again, and an inspiring leader devoted to the goals of a free society must come forth before it is too late” (George Field, 1988).

**Description**

Consists of records assembled by George Field relating to Freedom House, a clearinghouse for major organizations dedicated to promoting the principles of freedom and democracy. Included are correspondence with world leaders, educators, journalists, authors, and others, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fiorello LaGuardia (mayor of New York City), Charles Poletti (New York State Supreme Court justice), Herbert Morrison (secretary of the London Labour Party), and author Hendrik Willem van Loon; reports on the Patterson Memorial Conference (1958) concerning race relations; photographs; Freedom House printed matter; meeting minutes of the board of directors (1941-1969); and financial reports (1949-1968).

**Access and Use**

Access

Collection is open for research use.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. For quotations that are fair use as defined under U. S. Copyright Law, no permission to cite or publish is required. For those few instances beyond fair use, researchers are responsible for determining who may hold the copyright and obtaining approval from them. Researchers do not need anything further from the Mudd Library to move forward with their use.

**Acquisition and Appraisal**

Provenance and Acquisition

The papers were given to Princeton University Library by George Field in March of 1977; additional papers were given in December of 1990.

**Processing and Other Information**

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); George Field Collection of Freedom House Files, Box and Folder Number; Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Encoding
Subject Headings

- Freedom House (U.S.)
- Patterson Memorial Conference (1958 : Harriman, N.Y.)
- Nonprofit organizations -- United States -- 20th century.
- Civil rights -- United States -- 20th century.
- Congresses and conventions -- New York (State) -- Harriman -- 20th century.
- Liberty.
- Patriotism -- United States -- 20th century.
- Segregation -- United States -- 20th century.
- World politics -- 20th century.
- Annual reports.
- Correspondence.
- Files.
- Minutes.
- American history/20th century
- American politics and government
- Cold War
- World War II
SERIES I: BY-LAWS, 1941-1966

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES I: BY-LAWS (1941-1966) consists of the by-laws of Freedom House dating from 1941 through 1966, as well as the by-laws and certificate of incorporation of the Willkie Memorial of Freedom House, Inc. from 1945-1946.

Freedom House By-Laws, 1941, 1966 Box: 1
Willkie Memorial of Freedom House, Inc. Certificate of Incorporation and By-Laws, 1945-1946 Box: 1

SERIES II: MINUTES, 1941-1966

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES II: MINUTES (1941-1966) includes the minutes of the Trustees Meeting of Freedom House on May 10, 1966 in which the trustees discussed Freedom House's views on the Vietnam War. These are the only Trustee Meeting minutes. Also included are the minutes of the Board of Directors, dating from 1941 to 1969; this run is complete. The minutes are arranged chronologically. Additional copies of meeting minutes can be found in Series XII: Legal Files, where they have been kept as legal documents supporting the court case against Freedom House.

Trustees Meeting, 1966 May 10 Box: 1
Board of Directors, 1941-1969 Box: 1
Size: 8 folders

SERIES III: CORRESPONDENCE, 1934-1985

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES III: CORRESPONDENCE (1934-1985) consists of correspondence files, arranged chronologically. The majority of the correspondence is incoming only to George Field, although there are a few letters from him. There is both business and personal correspondence, however the majority is business. Correspondents include individuals such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Charles Poletti (Justice, Supreme Court, New York State), Herbert Morrison (Secretary of the London Labour Party), Hendrik Willem Van Loon, and many others. There is quite a bit of correspondence that is substantial in nature, rather than simply an exchange of pleasantries. The correspondence of Herbert Morrison and Hendrik Willem Van Loon is especially substantial.
SERIES IV: SUBJECT FILES, 1942-1969

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES IV: SUBJECT FILES (1942-1969) consist of folders, arranged alphabetically by subject, that were put together by Field. Often the folders only include newspaper clippings and other printed materials.

- Civil Rights, 1949, 1966
- Churchill, Winston, 1942
- Cousins, Norman, 1962
- Cuba, 1963
- John Birch Society, 1961
- McCarthy, Joseph, 1954
- Thompson, Dorothy, 1944
- Vietnam, 1966-1968

SERIES V: ANNUAL REPORTS, 1943-1966

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES V: ANNUAL REPORTS (1943, 1950, 1961-63, 1966) contains an incomplete run of reports written by the Public Affairs Committee of Freedom House. The report dating from 1943 is a typical annual report that lists the activities of the organization during its second year of existence. The other reports are titled as a "Balance Sheet of Freedom" and list national and international major events effecting freedom, thus providing an summary of the views of Freedom House on these events. There is also an annual report to the President of the United States in 1950 stating Freedom House's support of the Korean War, specifically the events of June 25, 1950 and after.

- Annual Reports, 1943, 1961-1963, 1966
- Report to the President of the United States, 1950

SERIES VI: FINANCIAL FILES, 1949-1969

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.
Series VII: Patterson Memorial Conference (1958), 1958 January

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES VII: PATTERSON MEMORIAL CONFERENCE (1958) consists of the transcripts of the panel proceedings of a conference in which twenty Southern and twenty Northern leaders met to engage in a discussion of race relations. On the flyleaf of one of the notebooks George Field wrote that this conference would be a time when these individuals would be "free from personal public identification until after the report [was] completed and each of them indicate a willingness to endorse the report of the conference."

Panel I and Joint Session Panels I & II, 1958 January
Size: 2 folders
Box: 3

Panel II, 1958 January
Box: 3

Series VIII: Annual Freedom Award, 1942-1969

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES VIII: ANNUAL FREEDOM AWARDS (1942-1969) contains information on the awards ceremonies and individuals presented with the Freedom Awards each year. The amount of material varies with each year, but in most cases there is always a program for the ceremony. Correspondence with the recipients can be found in the correspondence series, and photographs can be found in the photographs series.

Inaugural Dinner, 1942
Box: 3

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1945 October 7
Box: 3

Wendell Willkie Birthday Dinner, 1946 February 18
Box: 3

George C. Marshall, 1947 October 19
Box: 3
Sen. Arthur H. Vandenberg, 1948 October 10
Lucius D. Clay & David E. Lilienthal, 1949 October 13
James B. Conant & Matthew B. Ridgway, 1952 October 5
United Nations Soldiers in Korea, 1953 November 22
Winston Churchill, 1955 October 9
Arkansas Gazette, 1958 October 14
Dr. Paul-Henri Spaak, 1959 November 16
Alan Paton, 1960 October 5
Mayor Willy Brandt, 1961 October 6
Jean Monnet, 1963 January 23
Mrs. Medgar Evers, 1964 November 26
Rev. George Barry Ford, 1964 December 1
Hon. Harry S Truman, 1965 April 13
President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966 February 23
Pablo Casals, 1968 April 8
Hon. Earl Warren, 1969 October 14

SERIES IX: PUBLICATIONS, 1938-1969

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES IX: PUBLICATIONS (1938-1949) consist of the various publications put out by Freedom House including programs, pamphlets, letter to the editor by Field, newsletters, and newspaper clippings.

Programs, 1944-1949
Pamphlets, undated
Pamphlets, 1938, 1945
Pamphlets (scattered dates), 1951-1969
Size: 10 folders
Letters to the Editor, 1946-1970
Newsletter, 1940-1967
Newspaper Clippings, undated
Newspaper Clippings, 1933-1970
Size: 21 folders
SERIES X: WRITINGS, 1962-1990

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES X: WRITINGS (1962-1990) contains writings by George Field related to Freedom House. "To Complete the Record" and "The End of a Dream. A Freedom House Memoir" both relate, in Field's words, the disappointment and frustration he felt at the end of Freedom House's existence and tell his story of events.

Outline for City College Gov't and Law Society, 1962 Box: 4
To Complete the Record, 1970 Box: 4
To Complete the Record: Part II, 1985 Box: 4
The End of a Dream. A Freedom House Memoir, 1990 Box: 4

SERIES XI: OUR SECRET WEAPON, 1942-1943

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES XI: "OUR SECRET WEAPON" (1942-1943) consists mostly of samples of letters written in by listeners to the CBS radio program produced by Freedom House and hosted by Rex Stout that debunked Axis propaganda. The program reach millions of Americans in the United States, and was sent via shortwave to the Armed Forces, to Latin America and was reprinted for use in army camps. People wrote in to compliment Rex Stout and Freedom House for the show, as well as to complain, ask questions, and most often, to ask that they be sent a transcript of a show. Also included are letters from soldiers in the Army, sailors in the Navy, and publicity materials. Photographs of Rex Stout and other people affiliated with "Our Secret Weapon" can be found in the photographs series. Some later correspondence from Rex Stout to George Field can be found in the correspondence series.

Listener Responses, 1942 August-1943 August

1942 August 9 - August 16 Box: 4
Size: 2 folders
1942 August - 1943 August Box: 5
Size: 54 folders
Army Letters, 1942 September - 1943 May Box: 5
Navy Letters, 1942 August - 1943 April Box: 5
Press Letters, 1942 September - 1942 December Box: 5
Newspaper Clippings, 1942-1943 Box: 6
Publicity, 1942 August - 1942 October Box: 6
General, 1943 January - 1943 June Box: 6
SERIES XII: LEGAL FILES, 1985

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES XII: LEGAL FILES (1985) consist of the court transcripts and affidavits produced during the legal case that ensued after the Willkie Memorial Building was sold in 1985 to the Republic National Bank. All of the non-profit organizations that had existed in the building were ordered to leave, but refused, and sued Freedom House and the Willkie Memorial for protection from the effects of the order. The case files contain the affidavits, and also contain copies of letters, newspaper clippings, and meeting minutes that were used as evidence in the hearing. Because many of these items are not found in appropriate series in this collection these legal files constitute an important source for the George Field Collection of Freedom House Files.

Willkie Memorial Building Lawsuit, 1985
Site: 4 folders
Box: 6

SERIES XIII: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1941-1969

Arrangement: No arrangement action taken or arrangement information not recorded at the time of processing.

Description: SERIES XIII: PHOTOGRAPHS (1941-1969) contains photographs taken throughout the existence of Freedom House, although some photographs predate Freedom House and are from the period during 1941 when the New York City Chapter of the Committee to Defend America By Aiding the Allies and Fight For Freedom were working together. The photographs from the Freedom Rally in Madison Square Garden (May 7, 1941) all pre-date Freedom House, but a majority of the individuals were closely involved with Freedom House. Most are publicity shots taken at events sponsored by Freedom House.

Freedom House, dates not examined
Box: 7

"Our Secret Weapon", dates not examined
Box: 7