

Esther B. Aresty papers

Ms. Coll. 1004

Finding aid prepared by Samuel Sfirri.

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2014 July 22

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Aresty, Esther B.
Title	Esther B. Aresty papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1004
Date [bulk]	1963-1989
Date [inclusive]	1937-1989
Extent	7 linear feet (14 boxes)
Language	English
Language Note	Primarily in English with some French.
Abstract	Esther B. Aresty (1908-2000) was a cookbook collector and culinary historian who wrote on food, cooking and etiquette. This collection documents Aresty's personal and professional activities, primarily through correspondence, publication drafts, and research materials regarding her books, entitled <i>The Grand Venture</i> (1963), <i>The Delectable Past</i> (1964), <i>The Best Behavior</i> (1970), and <i>The Exquisite Table</i> (1980).

Cite as:

Esther B. Aresty papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts,

University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Esther B. Aresty (1908-2000) was a cookbook collector and culinary historian who wrote on cuisine, cooking, cookbooks, and etiquette. Aresty and her husband, Julian Aresty, donated her exceptional collection of rare cookbooks and manuscripts to the University of Pennsylvania in 1996 shortly before they passed away in 2000 and 1999, respectively. Her publications include *The Grand Venture* (1963), *The Delectable Past* (1964), *The Best Behavior* (1970), and *The Exquisite Table* (1980), in addition to a number of pieces of non-fiction and fiction. She also drafted and published the teen romance novel, *Romance in Store* (1983) under the pseudonym Elaine Arthur.

"Esther Bradford Aresty was born March 26, 1908, in Syracuse, New York, the daughter of Lithuanian immigrants. Shortly after her birth, her family moved to the small town of Chariton, Iowa, where she and her siblings enjoyed a suburban life surrounded by a family that valued good food. Her mother was not only a talented pianist but a brilliant cook, who prepared delicious meals for family and friends. So enthralled was her mother by the art of cooking that in middle age she attended culinary classes offered locally by the gas and electric companies. Aresty's childhood exposure to the culinary arts informed much of her personal and professional pursuits throughout the rest of her lifetime" (Theophano, 1996).

Aresty met her husband while working for Mandel Brothers Department Store in Chicago. They married and shortly thereafter settled in Trenton, New Jersey, where they worked, raised their two children, Robert and Jane, and entertained a circle of friends.

After World War II, Mr. and Mrs. Aresty traveled to Europe nearly every year and twice circled the globe. It was on these trips that Aresty began her collection of varied and exquisite rare books.

Before delving into her historical writings, Aresty tested the publication waters with a romance novel, entitled *The Grand Venture* (1963), which tells the story of a young lady who develops a fascination with her employment in a department store, an environment quite familiar to her due to her own work experience and her husband's position as the head of a department store in New Jersey at the time of writing.

In 1964, she published *The Delectable Past*, the fruit of her research into her own vast collection of rare cookbooks and manuscripts, which she describes as "the joys of the table—from Rome to the Renaissance, from Queen Elizabeth I to Mrs. Beeton. The menus, the manners—and the most delectable recipes of the past, masterfully re-created for cooking and enjoying today" (Aresty, 1964).

Having already given a comprehensive account of culinary history in *The Delectable Past*, her next book featured the results of her inquiry into etiquette, entitled *The Best Behavior* (1970). This book, also drawing from her comprehensive understanding of her own collection, deals with "the course of good manners—from antiquity to the present—as seen through courtesy and etiquette books" (Aresty, 1970).

Aresty published *The Exquisite Table* in 1980, a book highlighting "the fascinating history of more than 300 years of remarkable cooking that has come out of the great kitchens of France" (Aresty, 1980), recounting the contributions to cuisine of the famous French chefs La Varenne, Carême, and Escoffier. Her final book, *Romance in Store* (1983), written under the pseudonym Elaine Arthur, marks a return to her romance novel bent. This publication is part of the First Love from Silhouette series marketed toward

young adults in the 1980s.

Aresty lived an equally productive work life. Among her many achievements, besides a career in advertising and promotion, was her role as writer/producer of Elsa Maxwell's radio show, *Elsa Maxwell's Party Line*. Interestingly, Maxwell was not only a gossip columnist and author, songwriter, and professional hostess renowned for her parties for royalty and high society figures of her day, but an accomplished pianist and culinary expert, like Aresty's mother, who was born in Keokuk, Iowa, just shy of 150 miles from where Aresty was raised in Chariton. As an accomplished woman in the thick of New York intellectual and cultural life, Aresty developed friendships with the well-known cookbook and magazine writers of the day. These associations enhanced her already outstanding reputation and widened her circle of influence.

Esther Bradford Aresty's scholarship and insight both foreshadow and contribute to a growing body of research in culinary and social history. Books on the culinary arts explore social history from the vantage point of food and cooking, from the perspectives of men and women whose writings focus on, but are not limited to, the kitchen. The books provide a sensate view from which to observe changes in language, culture, economics, and society from the fifteenth to the twentieth century.

References:

Aresty, E. B. (1964). *The Delectable Past*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Aresty, E. B. (1970). *The Best Behavior*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Aresty, E. B. (1980). *The Exquisite Table*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Theophano, J. (1996). *Household Words: Women Write to and for the Kitchen*. Philadelphia: Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

See also:

HOUSEHOLD WORDS: Women Write from and for the Kitchen, An Exhibition from the Esther B. Aresty Collection of Rare Books in the Culinary Arts, Department of Special Collections, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania

Scope and Contents

The Esther B. Aresty papers, dating from 1937 to 1989 (bulk 1963 to 1989) document Aresty's personal and professional life as a collector of rare cookbooks and manuscripts, a writer, and an expert on the cooking, cookbooks, and etiquette. The bulk of this collection consists of incoming and some outgoing correspondence with publishers and other individuals and organizations about her publications and culinary expertise, in addition to drafts and research materials pertaining to her books *The Grand Venture* (1963), *The Delectable Past* (1964), *The Best Behavior* (1970), and *The Exquisite Table* (1980).

Aresty's rare cookbook and manuscripts collecting is best represented by her auction and dealer catalogs spanning the years 1937 to 1989, some correspondence with individuals and organizations, and lecture notes that discuss her history as a collector and her fascination and knowledge of the culinary world. Additionally, the collection contains incoming correspondence from the American Institute of Wine and Food (founded in 1981) pertaining to her position on the board of advisors. This material includes early administrative paperwork such as its statement of purpose, bylaws, membership forms, agendas, newsletters, and other documentary evidence of the organization's early life. Otherwise, there is a substantial portion of incoming correspondence from individuals and organizations regarding Aresty's expertise in the culinary arts, civic activities in which Aresty took part, and some records supporting the auction and dealer catalogs, in addition to some personal associations and activities. Items within the

correspondence sub-series are arranged alphabetically; however, researchers should be aware that when Aresty indicated a filing convention, that convention has been preserved. Therefore, researchers should search for the correspondent's name as well as the organization for who he or she was affiliated. The collection also contains records of her writing career, through correspondence with a variety of publishers, drafts of books, other publications, and unpublished work, and research materials. The correspondence is arranged chronologically and primarily deals with publication details, edited drafts, potential publications, contracts, and copyright transfers with companies including the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Simon and Schuster, Meredith Press, Hawthorn Books, among others. The publications that are most well-represented in terms of drafts and research materials are two of her books entitled, *The Delectable Past* (1964) and *The Best Behavior* (1970). There is also documentation of a variety of other publications, including drafts and research materials for her other two books *The Grand Venture* (1963) and *The Exquisite Table* (1980), a romance novel written under the pseudonym Elaine Arthur, *Romance in Store* (1984), and a number of drafts of articles, chapters, and other writings of fiction and non-fiction.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2014 July 22

Finding aid prepared by Samuel Sfirri.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Gift of Julian and Esther Aresty, 1996.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Auction catalogs
- Color slides
- Correspondence
- Drafts (documents)
- Printed ephemera
- Publications (documents)
- Research notes

SUBJECT(S)

- Authors
- Authors, American--20th century
- Cookbooks
- Cooking
- Etiquette
- Etiquette for women
- Women authors

Collection Inventory

I: PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE, 1937-1989.

Scope and Contents note

A: AUCTION AND DEALER CATALOGS, 1937-1989.

	Box	Folder
American Institute of Wine and Food - Brentano's Bookstores, Inc., circa 1953-1985.	1	1
California Book Auction Galleris - Bibliothèque G. Dartois, circa 1977.	1	2
Douwma, Robert - Hammond, Frank, circa 1956-1989.	1	3
Harper, Lathrop C. - Hoppen, Stephanie, circa 1964-1984.	1	4
Levinson, Harry A. - Lyle & Davidson Ltd., circa 1957-1979.	1	5
Maggs Bros. Ltd. - The New York Public Library, 1937, 1958.	2	1
Reichner, Herbert - Schab, William H., circa 1968.	2	2
Soete, Edgar, circa 1975-1981.	2	3
Soete, Edgar, circa 1982-1987.	2	4
Shircliffe, Arnold - Sotheby & Co., circa 1954-1971.	2	5
Staack, F. & G. Antiquarian Booksellers - Wormser, Richard S., circa	2	6

1947-1962.

B: CORRESPONDENCE, CIRCA 1950-1989.

	Box	Folder
Allen, Dorothy - Alumni Association of New Jersey Institute of Technology, 1965-1985.	3	1
American Institute of Wine and Food: Correspondence, statement of purpose, bylaws, membership forms, agendas, newsletters, and photocopied publicity, 1981-1983.	3	2
American Institute of Wine and Food: Correspondence, bylaws drafts, membership forms, charters, program, newsletters, and photocopied publicity, 1983-1984.	3	3
American Institute of Wine and Food: Memo from AIWF President to Aresty and publications: <i>The Andre L. Simon-Eleanor Lowenstein Collection of Gastronomic Literature, A Preliminary Bibliography</i> ; <i>The Andre L. Simon-Eleanor Lowenstein Collection of Gastronomic Literature, 1600-1860</i> , 1982.	3	4
American Meat Institute - Bauer, Eleanor, 1963-1980.	3	5
Better Homes and Gardens Books - Curtis, Mary W., 1946-1983.	3	6
The Culinary Institute of America, circa 1950-1989.	3	7
Dale Publications Limited - Highlights for Children, 1957-1985.	4	1
Holden, Miriam Young - McGovern, George, 1948-1986.	4	2
Meyner, Robert - Newhouse, S.I., 1960-1975.	4	3
New York Public Library - Scott, Catherine, 1951-1987.	4	4

Segal, David - Switlik, Irene, 1947-1981.	4	5
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Taylor, Jean Sharley - Zorn, Fay, 1960-1984.	4	6
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First names only, 1964-1975.	4	7
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C: LECTURE NOTES, CIRCA 1963-1980.

	Box	Folder
Lecture notes on collecting rare cookbooks and their contents, circa 1963-1980.	5	1
Lecture notes from "cookbook talk", circa 1963-1980.	5	2
Lecture notecards on cookbook history, circa 1963-1980.	5	3
Notes for talks: Drafts and printed material, circa 1961.	5	4

II: WRITING AND PUBLICATION RELATED MATERIALS, 1955-1984 (BULK, 1963-1980) .

A: CORRESPONDENCE (INCOMING AND OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE AND CONTRACTS WITH PUBLISHERS), 1962-1987.

	Box	Folder
1962-1965.	5	5
1967-1971.	5	6
1972-1981.	5	7

1982-1987.

5

8

B: DRAFTS AND RESEARCH NOTES ON *THE DELECTABLE PAST* & *THE BEST BEHAVIOR*, CIRCA 1964-1970.

Box

Folder

The Best Behavior: Drafts and research notes, circa 1970.

6

1-5

The Best Behavior: Drafts, research notes, newspaper clippings and related materials, circa 1970.

6

6-7

The Best Behavior: Discarded drafts and research notes, circa 1970.

7

1-5

The Best Behavior: Outlines accompanying the first draft, circa 1970.

7

6

The Delectable Past: Correspondence, 1968.

7

7

The Delectable Past: Drafts and newspaper clippings of recipes, circa 1964.

7

8

The Delectable Past: Drafts and photocopied printed material on cookbooks, circa 1964.

7

9

The Delectable Past: Research notes, circa 1964.

8

1

C: ARTICLES, CHAPTERS, AND OTHER WRITING, FICTION AND NON-FICTION, CIRCA 1963-1980.

Box

Folder

Ancestral Apple Pies: Drafts, circa 1963-1980.

8

2

Basic Ladies: Incoming and outgoing correspondence regarding a potential article or book on Lizzie Black Kander; Two drafts of *Basic Ladies*, research notes, and printed material, circa 1965.

8

3

Brats: Drafts, research notes, and printed materials; Correspondence with

8

4

German Market regarding *The Exquisite Table* and *The Delectable Past*, circa 1980.

Ethics into Etiquette: Newspaper clippings and research notes, circa 1963-1980. 8 5

Etiquette: Research notes, photocopied printed material, drafts, and correspondence with *Encyclopedia Americana* regarding an article commission on etiquette, 1967-1971. 8 6

Fictional short story drafts, circa 1963-1980. 8 7

Help! Help!: Drafts and research notes, circa 1963-1980. 8 8

Polish on Rough Diamonds: Draft, circa 1963-1980. 8 9

D: RESEARCH MATERIALS, CIRCA 1963-1980.

	Box	Folder
Aresty coobook collecting history: Outline ideas for book on cookbooks, recipes, great chefs, timelines, circa 1963-1980.	8	10
Bibliographic and research material, circa 1967.	8	11
Book ideas, newspaper clippings, and other printed material regarding services in New Jersey and Pennsylvania area; American and European contact information, circa 1950-1989.	8	12
Book printing: Articles and publications on the history of printing, undated.	8	13
Chefs: Drafts, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, and research notes, circa 1980.	8	14
Cookbooks, recipes, and chefs: Newspaper and magazine articles, 1984.	9	1

Cookbooks and Chef Books: 3"x5" notecards covering a variety of topics including culinary-related quotations and anecdotes, food and recipes, magazines, best-seller cookbooks, research sources, circa 1970-1980.		12
Courtesy, chivalry, politeness: Printed materials from a wide variety of cultures and times, circa 1970.	9	2
Culinary Review: Unannotated journal publications, 1955 June, 1957 January, 1959 June.	9	3
Culinary books and people: Newspaper clippings and notes on culinary figures, circa 1947-1970.	9	4
Culinary information: Alphabetized 3"x5" notecards containing anecdotes, definitions, and encyclopedic information, circa 1963-1980.		13
<i>Le Cuisinier</i> by François Pierre de la Varenne: Annotated photocopy of the 1682 edition in French, circa 1970-1980.	9	5
Escoffier: Obituaries, Savoy Hotel, Booklet and other material from Musée de L'art Culinaire, 1930-1965 (Bulk, 1962-1965) .	9	6
Escoffier: Photocopies of <i>Trésors Culinaires de la France - Book I</i> (pp. 1-91); <i>Trésors Culinaires de la France - Book II</i> (pp. 1-80), circa 1970-1980.	9	7
Escoffier: Photocopies of <i>Trésors Culinaires de la France - Book III</i> (pp. 1-77); <i>Trésors Culinaires de la France - Book IV</i> (pp. 1-57), circa 1970-1980.	9	8
Etiquette: Newspaper clippings, circa 1965-1968.	9	9
<i>The Exquisite Table</i> : Drafts, magazine clippings, photocopied printed material, research notes, circa 1980.	9	10
<i>The Exquisite Table</i> : Duplicates of recipes, circa 1980.	10	1

<i>The Exquisite Table</i> : Alphabetized 3"x5" notecards of anecdotes and quotations, circa 1980.		12
Food and eating habits: Photocopied printed materials, circa 1966.	10	2
Food history and anecdotes: Newspaper and magazine clippings, circa 1956.	10	3
French cookbooks: Annotated photocopies of table of contents from <i>Cuisinier Bourgeois</i> (1767) (pp. 498-528), books by Massialot (pp. 518-545) (pp. 442-455), Preface to (unknown) (pp. vij-xlvij or 7-47), <i>Le Dons de Comus</i> (pp. 2-239, 394-469), <i>Le Dons de Camus, Vol. 2</i> (pp. 462-490) in French, circa 1980.	10	4
French cuisine: Newspaper releases and other printed materials collected in Europe, 1973.	10	5
French cuisine: Photocopied printed materials and research notes in French, circa 1980.	10	6
French cuisine: Research notes, newspaper clippings, correspondence, drafts mostly regarding Escoffier for <i>The Exquisite Table</i> , chapter entitled "Little Chef from Nice", 1965.	10	7
<i>The Grand Venture</i> : Correspondence, newspaper and magazine clippings, research notes, circa 1963.	10	8
Magazine clippings about cookbooks: Printed material, photocopies and actual newspaper and magazine clippings, 1931-1934, 1963.	10	9
<i>Magic, Myth, and Medicine</i> by Donald Taylor Atkinson: Photocopy, unannotated (pp. 21-319), undated.	10	10
Manners: Photocopied articles, printed materials, and research notes, circa 1970.	11	1
Manners and personalities: Magazine/newspaper clippings and photocopied printed material, circa 1962.	11	2

Newspaper clippings on etiquette, fashion, food, cooking, cookbooks, manners, etc., circa 1959-1975.	11	3
Recipes for entertaining, undated.	11	4
Recipes on 3"x5" notecards, undated.	11	5
Recipes: R.M.S. Queen Elizabeth, Diamond Walnut Growers, Corner Cupboard Cookbook, 1969.	11	6
Research notecards: Information regarding bibliographic research, calling cards, etiquette, food habits, general culinary encyclopedic information, manners, marriage, and notes from books, circa 1970.		14
Slides: Photographs of cookbooks and two large bibliographic cards and slide viewer (stored in box 12), circa 1970-1980.	11	7
Spices: Printed materials, 1959-1961.	11	8
"3-Squares-A-Day" cooking classes: Recipes and lesson plans (possibly taught by Aresty), undated.	11	9
Tobé-Coburn, Abraham & Straus: Informational package and application forms for the Tobé-Coburn School for Fashion Careers, 1958-1959.	11	10