

# **Margaret Matches Newman papers**

**1072.1986.33**

**Finding aid prepared by Lawrence Rosen.**

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Last updated on March 02, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

June 2009

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Newman, Margaret Matches, 1898-1986
<b>Title</b>	Margaret Matches Newman papers
<b>Call number</b>	1072.1986.33
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	1927-1930
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1919-1959
<b>Extent</b>	1.25 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	The Margaret Matches Newman collection documents Newman's travels to Papua New Guinea and her subsequent career as an author, most notably of the book . Materials include some correspondence, a diary, personal snapshots, and memorabilia.

**Cite as:**

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Margaret Matches Newman papers. Penn Museum Archives.  
Accessed [Date accessed].

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## Biography/History

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We know very little about Margaret Matches (married to George Augustus Newman in 1931) beyond her trip to New Guinea in 1927 and the publication of her book *Savage Paradise*, which documents that experience. Born in 1898 in New Jersey, she attended Kent Place School in Summit, N. J., and prior to her trip worked for the Mentor periodical in the Correspondence Department (part of the Customer Service Division). After returning to the states, she devoted considerable time to the writing of her book, and several articles about her trip (Asia, New York Times, King Features). This seems to be the only time in her life that was devoted to professional activity, having subsequently settled in the Newark, New Jersey area with extensive involvement in the Junior League. She died in 1986.

Although her primary motivation for the trip to New Guinea was not for a systematic study of the various cultures of New Guinea (she reports a simple desire for adventurous travel) her journal, book and articles do contain attempts of descriptive observations of behavior and ritual practices of various native groups. Not being trained as an anthropologist, these observations were not subjected to any integrated and systematic interpretations. is primarily a travel narrative, and the reaction and publicity it gained seemed largely due to the view at the time of its publication that it was an unusual and potentially risky adventure for a young single woman to undertake on her own.

Her accounts did precede extensive field work in New Guinea by anthropologists; with the first systematic academic investigations of New Guinea (primarily by Margaret Mead and her husband Reo F. Fortune) undertaken shortly after (1928–1929 and 1931–1933).

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## Scope and Contents

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With the exceptions of some personal correspondence and materials from her employment with Mentor, the collection contains documents and materials that relate to her travel to New Guinea (April, 1927-April, 1928. Because of the paucity of personal materials there is little that can be deduced about her life, save the New Guinea experience. We do not know her family genealogy, her education, or the details of her work experiences. There are some autobiographical tidbits in her publications, but much of it centers on her motivation to embark on that fateful trip.

She kept an extensive journal that not only documented her observations in new Guinea, but her personal experiences relating to her travels and relationships with various non-native individuals, which for the most part are not included in *Savage Paradise*. What else can be gleaned about the New Guinea experience beyond what she stated in the publications is scattered in the correspondence during the trip to and after the departure from New Guinea. Since there are virtually no copies of the letters she sent, that source is of limited value.

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## Administrative Information

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## **Use Restrictions**

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Photographs

### **GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)**

- New Guinea (island)
- Papua New Guinea

### **PERSONAL NAME(S)**

- Merrow, Wolcott
- Newman, Margaret Matches, 1898-1986

## Collection Inventory

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### CORRESPONDENCE, 1919-1959.

#### Scope and Contents note

Personal letters unrelated to her trip to New Guinea, as well as from individuals she met during her New Guinea experience, but of a very personal nature. Letters from the files of Mentor not directed to her, that included some well known individuals (Harry Houdini, Artic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, travel writer Rosita Forbes, sculptor Daniel C. French, and British writer Cosmo Hamilton.), and extensive correspondence with a reader of Mentor (James Wallis) from December, 1925 to May, 1926

	Box
Personal 1919-1926 (1 of 3).	1
Personal 1927-1928 (2 of 3).	1
Personal 1928 (3 of 3).	1
Otto Bieri, 1927.	1
Betty Brown, 1927-1929.	1
Donald Cameron, 1927.	1
Capt. Tom Kippins 1927-1959.	1
John Barrow Town 1929-1958.	1
Mentor related: General.	1
Mentor related: James Wallis (1 of 2).	1

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Mentor related: James Wallis (2 of 2).

1

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**NEW GUINEA.**

**Scope and Contents note**

Correspondence beginning with the planning of the trip through to a period of time after her return to the states. Included are letters from travel writer and novelist Blair Niles, and Merlin Moore Taylor, author of *The Heart of Black Papua*. An extensive journal covering the entire year of the trip, which includes observations of native villages and non-natives (missionaries, government officials, plantation owners, etc.). The journal is also in part a personal diary relating emotional feelings, views about the natives, some opinions about how natives are treated as well as very personal details about the relationships with some of the people she encountered. A story in of Adam and Eve in Pidgin English told by a native boy and transcribed by Matches.

	Box
Correspondence: Trip preparation.	1
Journal 1927 (1 of 3).	1
Journal 1927 (2 of 3).	1
Journal 1927-1928 (3 of 3).	1
Story of Adam and Eve told by New Guinea native.	1
Photograph lists.	1
Miscellaneous.	1

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**PUBLICATIONS, 1929-1932.**

**Scope and Contents note**

Correspondence related to the publication of Savage Paradise and articles in Asia, as well as letters from the Governor of Arizona complementing the book. The four editions of Asia containing the New Guinea articles. Two copies of the book, one of which was her personal copy. Page proofs of King Features syndication of Savage Paradise

	Box
Correspondence: Regarding, publication of book and Asia articles.	1
Correspondence: Governor of Arizona, regarding book.	1
Asia, December, 1929.	1
Asia, January, 1930.	1
Asia, May, 1930.	1
Asia, July, 1930.	1
New York Times article and related correspondence.	1
Matches personal copy of Savage Paradise.	2
Second copy of Savage Paradise.	2
	Box
Original dust cover of Savage Paradise.	M-26-1
Page Proofs — King Features Syndicated, Savage Paradise.	M-26-1

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**PHOTOGRAPHS, 1927-1928.**

**Scope and Contents note**

Taken in New Guinea, Australia, and on board several ships upon which she traveled. In addition there are some photos taken in port Said and Singapore, stops made on her return trip to the United States. Several photos are included in her two photo lists, and their numbers are indicated on the sleeves of the photos (usually upper right hand corner).

	Box
New Guinea.	2
	Box
<b>PORT SAID AND SINGAPORE.</b>	2

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**MISCELLANEOUS, 1927-1931.**

**Scope and Contents note**

Page proofs of advertisements for Cunard Lines which we surmise were written by her. Newspaper clippings mainly concerned with the book. Ticket for the 1927 passage to Sydney Australia from New York aboard the SS Port Pirie.

Personal items (1 of 2).	Map-case
Personal items (2 of 2).	M-26-1
Newspaper Clippings about Margaret Matches Newman.	M-26-1
Page Proofs-Print advertisements for Cunard Lines.	M-26-1
Ticket for passage to Sydney from New York.	M-26-1