

# **"American Pulp Fiction" true crime magazine collection**

**Ms. Coll. 1375**

**Finding aid prepared by Sam Allingham.**

---

Last updated on December 03, 2018.

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

2018 December 3

## Table of Contents

---

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	4
Controlled Access Headings.....	5
Collection Inventory.....	6

## Summary Information

---

<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Title</b>	"American Pulp Fiction" true crime magazine collection
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 1375
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1936-1943
<b>Extent</b>	0.5 linear foot (1 box)
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	This collection contains incomplete annual series of several true-crime magazines from the 1930s and 1940s, including <i>Crime Confessions</i> , <i>Official Detective Stories</i> , <i>Secret Detective Cases</i> , <i>Sensational Detective Cases</i> , and <i>Tru-Life Detective Cases</i> . They are collected in three binders, under the title "American Pulp Fiction, Volumes 1-3."

**Cite as:**

"American Pulp Fiction" true crime magazine collection, 1936-1943, Ms. Coll. 1375, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

## Biography/History

---

Evidence of writings about true crime dates to the 16th century; however, according to an article in the *Independent*, "the birth of what we now accept to be true crime--detailed reportage of real criminal incidents--[was] 1924, when American publishing magnate Bernarr Macfadden unleashed upon the world a magazine called *True Detective Mysteries*," (Barnett). Magazines like this one became increasingly popular during the 1930s through the 1950s. Examples included in this collection are: *Crime Confessions* (published by Hillman Periodicals, Inc. from 1939 to 1957); *Official Detective / Official Detective Stories* (published by Official Detective Stories, Inc. from 1935 to 1995); *Secret Detective Cases* (published by Starlike Magazines, Incorporated from 1942 to 1943); *Sensational Detective Cases* (published by Histrionic Publishing Company from 1941 to 1958); and *Tru-Life Detective Cases* (published by Trysak Publications, Inc. from 1941 to 1948).

Works cited:

Barnett, David. " True crime pays: the history of real-life crime magazines," *The Independent*, 2017 March 26 (accessed 2018 December 3).

---

## Scope and Contents

---

This collection contains incomplete annual series of several true-crime magazines from the 1930s and 1940s, including *Crime Confessions*, *Official Detective Stories*, *Secret Detective Cases*, *Sensational Detective Cases*, and *Tru-Life Detective Cases*. They are collected in three binders, under the title "American Pulp Fiction, Volumes 1-3," and are fastened with nylons. These magazines contain stories, purported to be true, of sensational criminal escapades, often with a cautionary or redemptive moral message. As their main audience was female, many of the stories center on women who played a central role in the purported crimes, either as victim or accomplice. In addition, the magazines contain lurid, sensational photographs that pass as documentary evidence of the crimes.

---

## Administrative Information

---

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

2018 December 3

Finding aid prepared by Sam Allingham.

### **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**

Sold by Helford Book Gallery, 2018

---

## **Controlled Access Headings**

---

### **Form/Genre(s)**

- Periodicals

### **Subject(s)**

- Crime--Periodicals
- Literature
- Popular culture--United States
- Women's periodicals, American

## Collection Inventory

	Box	Album
<i>Crime Confessions</i> (1939 November, 1940 July, 1941 January, April-August), 1939-1941.	1	1
<i>Crime Confessions</i> (1942 September-December, 1943 January); <i>Tru-Life Detective Cases</i> (1941 October-November, 1942 January); and <i>Secret Detective Cases</i> (1942 February), 1941-1943.	1	2
<i>Sensational Detective Cases</i> (1941 June-July, November-December, 1942 February) and <i>Official Detective Stories</i> (1936 May-June, September), 1936-1942.	1	3