Finding aid for the J. Paul Getty Diaries, 1938-1946, 1948-1976 IA40009

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Institutional Records and Archives

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Summary Information

Repository: Institutional Records and Archives

Creator: Getty, J. Paul (Jean Paul), 1892-1976

Title: J. Paul Getty diaries

ID: IA40009

Dates: 1938-1946,

Dates: 1948-1976

Extent: 4.3 Linear Feet (5 boxes; 29 volumes)

Request materials: To access physical materials at the Getty, go to the library catalog record for this collection and click "Request an Item." Click here for general library access policy. See the Administrative Information section of this finding aid for access restrictions specific to the records described below. Please note, some of the records may be stored off site; advanced notice is required for access to these materials.

Language: English .

Abstract: The collection comprises twenty-nine handwritten diaries (1938-1946, 1948-1976) of billionaire J. Paul Getty. The diaries focus on his travels, business dealings, art collecting, and interests, providing insights into his personality, priorities, politics, relationships, tastes, and values. They contain daily accounts of Getty's activities, briefly describing social events, business meetings, museum visits, historical and archaeological sites, art objects, and the various people with whom he interacted. They reveal his business practices and philosophies, his passion for history and art, and his cultivation of friendships with influential people. The diaries also illustrate Getty's relations with people in the art world and contain his personal opinions on particular art objects, demonstrating how he developed the collections of decorative arts, antiquities, paintings, and sculpture that evolved into the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Preferred Citation

[Cite the item and series (as appropriate)], Diaries, J. Paul Getty. Institutional Archives, Getty Research Institute (IA40009).

http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifaia40009

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Biographical Note

American oil tycoon and art collector Jean Paul Getty was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on December 15, 1892 to George Franklin Getty (1855-1930) and Sarah Catherine McPherson Risher Getty. Around 1906 the Getty family moved to Los Angeles. Jean Paul, called "Paul," attended a private military school before going on to the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and the University of California, Berkeley. In 1911, Paul went to Oxford to study economics and political science, completing his diploma in 1913. Afterwards he embarked on a year-long Grand Tour of Europe, which no doubt sparked his interest in art and antiquities.

In 1914 Paul joined the family petroleum business and spent a year in the oil fields of Oklahoma. An investment in 160 acres in Oklahoma led to Paul's announcement two years later that he had earned his first million dollars. He returned to Los Angeles and took a break of more than a year before returning to the oil business. Paul then persuaded his father to shift the focus of the family business to the Los Angeles basin. Paul continued to work for the family company in addition to conducting oil drilling of his own, securing the family fortune by the time the stock market crashed in 1929. Upon his death in 1930 George left controlling interest in the company to Sarah. In 1934 Paul forced Sarah out of control of the company and gave her an annuity. His fortune grew as he acquired the controlling interest in several companies and became the head of a vast organization with activities in oil exploration, transportation, production and marketing, as well as minerals, manufacturing, real estate and agriculture. In the mid-1940s Getty bought the Saudi Arabian portion of the lease on the mineral rights in the Neutral Zone between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait; his wealth dramatically increased when this site produced oil in 1953.

Beginning in the early 1930s Getty lived in a house he built next to William Randolph Hearst's on the beach in Santa Monica. During World War II he moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma for four years to supervise wartime production of parts for Allied aircraft at his Spartan Aircraft plant. In 1946 he purchased 64 acres in Malibu, California and renovated the existing hacienda, known as the Ranch House, where he lived until 1951. When Getty departed the United States for Europe in 1951, he kept his Malibu estate for the display of his art collection and for the possibility of his eventual return.

Getty had been traveling throughout Europe and collecting art since the 1930s. In 1938 he made his first major purchases: a group of furniture; a carpet that had belonged to Louis XIV, often called the "Ardabil Carpet"; and Rembrandt's *Marten Looten* (he donated the Ardabil Carpet and the Rembrandt to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1954). His other interest was antiquities, fueled by visits to the Vatican Museums that began in 1939. He took pride in being knowledgeable in the areas in which he was collecting and in finding bargains. Getty continued to collect art throughout his lifetime, despite occasional assertions that he was no longer in the market. By 1968 his art collection had begun to outgrow the Ranch House and he began planning a new building on the property to properly house these works. He chose to pattern this new museum building after a first-century Roman country house, based

primarily on the plans of the ancient Villa dei Papiri near Herculaneum. This museum, often called the Villa, opened to the public on January 16, 1974.

After leaving the United States Getty lived in hotel suites in Europe until 1960 when he moved to Sutton Place, a historic 72-room Tudor manor located 25 miles southwest of London. In 1957 *Fortune* magazine designated Getty as the world's wealthiest man, and he became the object of considerable public interest. For the rest of his life, both the respectable press and the tabloids reported on his perceived eccentricities and his private life, which included five marriages and divorces. J. Paul Getty died in England on June 6, 1976 without ever returning to California. Although he never saw the museum, he is buried at the Getty Villa property, on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Much to everyone's surprise Getty left the bulk of his fortune to the museum with a mission to promote "the diffusion of artistic and general knowledge."

J. Paul Getty's publications include:

- Getty, J. Paul. *The history of the oil business of George F. and J. Paul Getty from 1903 to 1939.* Los Angeles (?), 1941.
- Getty, J. Paul. *Europe in the eighteenth century.* [Santa Monica, Calif.]: privately printed, 1949.
- Le Vane, Ethel, and J. Paul Getty. *Collector's choice: the chronicle of an artistic odyssey through Europe.* London: W.H. Allen, 1955.
- Getty, J. Paul. *My life and fortunes.* New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1963.
- Getty, J. Paul. *The joys of collecting.* New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965.
- Getty, J. Paul. *How to be rich.* Chicago: Playboy Press, 1965.
- Getty, J. Paul. *The golden age.* New York: Trident Press, 1968.
- Getty, J. Paul. *How to be a successful executive.* Chicago: Playboy Press, 1971.
- Getty, J. Paul. *As I see it: the autobiography of J. Paul Getty.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, 1976.

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Scope and Contents Note

The collection comprises the handwritten diaries (1938-1976) of billionaire J. Paul Getty. Although there are certainly references to family and friends throughout the diaries, the journal entries focus more on Mr. Getty's travels, business dealings, art collecting, and interests. They provide insights into the personality, priorities, politics, relationships, tastes, and values of the man as he built and maintained his empire. The diaries contain daily accounts of Mr. Getty's activities, briefly describing social events, business meetings, museum visits, historical and archaeological sites, art objects, and the various people with whom he interacted. They reveal his business practices and philosophies, his passion for history and art, and his cultivation of friendships with famous and influential people. Getty's diary entries also show his attentiveness to and concern regarding world affairs, such as his acute awareness of the threat of war while he was traveling through Germany in the late 1930s, and his respect for world leaders such as Winston Churchill and J. F. Kennedy.

Of particular interest to the study of art collectors and collecting are diary entries that assess art objects or illustrate Getty's relations with people in the art world. Journal entries include his contact with dealers, auction houses, collectors, curators, art experts, and other advisors, including Duveen. Within the diaries Getty comments on objects he considers acquiring in addition to objects he chooses not to acquire, disclosing how he developed his collections of decorative arts, antiquities, paintings, and sculpture. The diaries document acquisitions that became the foundational objects of the J. Paul Getty Museum, such as the ancient Roman *Lansdowne Herakles*, as well as acquisitions that Mr. Getty donated to other museums, such as Rembrandt's *Marten Looten*. The diaries also disclose Getty's rather competitive interest in what his contemporaries (individuals and institutions) were collecting at the time.

With age Mr. Getty's penmanship became shaky to the point of illegibility, yet he continued to make daily diary entries in his own hand until October 29, 1974 when he began dictating them to his secretary. The journal entries during the final few years of his life naturally focus on his declining health, but still contain many references to art collecting, business, and the new Villa museum facility he was building near Malibu, California. Mr. Getty made daily entries in his diaries with very few exceptions. The collection comprises 29 loose-leaf binders. Though the diaries are nearly comprehensive for the years 1938-1976, gaps exist in the chronology for the following date ranges:

- November 14, 1938 - March 23, 1938
- December 31, 1939 - August 7, 1940
- December 8, 1946 - July 1, 1948
- May 9, - August 27, 1956

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Arrangement

The diaries are arranged in chronological order.

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Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Original physical diaries described in accession 2010.IA.16 are fragile and are not available for public use. The diaries have been digitized in their entirety and are available online through the Getty's Primo system; links are provided in this finding aid.

The following types of records are permanently closed: records containing personal information, records that compromise security or operations, legal communications, legal work product, and records related to donors. The J. Paul Getty Trust reserves the right to restrict access to any records held by the Institutional Archives.

Publication Rights

Contact Rights and Reproductions at the Getty Research Institute for copyright information and permission to publish.

Acquisition Information

Accession 2010.IA.16 was purchased from Scott J. Winslow in April, 2010.

Processing History

Accession 2010.IA.16 was processed by Cyndi Shein in 2010.

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Related Materials

Related Archival Materials

The following materials are offered as possible sources of further information on the people and subjects covered by the records. The listing is not exhaustive.

Getty Institutional Archives

Art and Real Estate Holding Companies Records, 1939-1982, and undated, J. Paul Getty. Institutional Records and Archives, Getty Research Institute, Finding aid no. IA20011.

Collected Papers for Biography of J. Paul Getty, 1957-1973, 1984 and undated, Ralph Hewins. Institutional Records and Archives, Getty Research Institute, Finding aid no. IA20012.

J. Paul Getty Family Papers, circa 1880s-1989 and undated. Institutional Records and Archives, Getty Research Institute, Finding aid no. IA20009.

J. Paul Getty and the Ashby Sisters Papers, 1926-1992, and undated. Institutional Records and Archives, Getty Research Institute, Finding aid no. IA20013.

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Controlled Access Headings

Subjects - People

- Getty, J. Paul (Jean Paul), 1892-1976

Bibliography

Information in the biographical note on J. Paul Getty was adapted from:

- Walsh, John and Deborah Gribbon. The J. Paul Getty Museum and its collections: a museum for the new century. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1997.

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Collection Inventory

J. Paul Getty diaries

J. Paul Getty Diaries online

Title/Description	Containers
August 27-November 13, 1938 *Black leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)* Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: August 27-November 13, 1938 *NOTE:* : Mr. Getty wrote in this volume starting from the back of the notebook, working toward the front. To view the diary entries in chronological order, please begin on the last page of the notebook or last image of the digital file.	
March 24-December 30, 1939 *Black leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)* Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: March 24-December 30, 1939 *NOTE:* : Mr. Getty wrote in this volume starting from the back of the notebook, working toward the front. To view the diary entries in chronological order, please begin on the last page of the notebook or last image of the digital file.	

August 8, 1940-December 26, 1941 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: August 8, 1940-December 26, 1941

December 26, 1941-December 26, 1942 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 26, 1941-December 26, 1942

December 26,1942-December 31, 1943 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 26,1942-December 31, 1943

December 31, 1943-December 29, 1944 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 31, 1943-December 29, 1944

December 30, 1944-March 17, 1946 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 30, 1944-March 17, 1946

March 18-December 7, 1946 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.7 x 9.2 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: March 18-December 7, 1946

July 2, 1948-July 29, 1949 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.5 x 10 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 2, 1948-July 29, 1949

July 29-December 31, 1949 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.5 x 10 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 29-December 31, 1949

December 31, 1949-July 1, 1950 Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.5 x 10 x 2 cm.)

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 31, 1949-July 1, 1950

July 1-December 5, 1950 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.5 x 10 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 1-December 5, 1950

December 6, 1950-December 11, 1951 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (13.5 x 10 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 6, 1950-December 11, 1951

December 12, 1951-April 24, 1952 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (16 x 10.5 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 12, 1951-April 24, 1952

April 24, 1952-June 4, 1953 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (18.5 x 14 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: April 24, 1952-June 4, 1953

June 5, 1953-July 23, 1954 *Brown simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (19 x 12.5 x 1.5 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: June 5, 1953-July 23, 1954

July 24, 1954-January 4, 1955 *Brown plastic simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (18 x 12 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 24, 1954-January 4, 1955

January 5, 1955-August 27, 1956 *Black simulated leather, six-ring, loose-leaf binder (21 x 15 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: January 5, 1955-August 27, 1956

NOTE: :
Although the cover of this volume reads "January 5th 1955-August 27th 1956" the diary entries date from January 5, 1955 to May 8, 1956.

August 28, 1956-July 15, 1959 *Black simulated leather, four-ring, loose-leaf binder (22 x 18 x 4 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: August 28, 1956-July 15, 1959

July 16, 1959-August 11, 1962 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (21 x 20 x 3.25 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 16, 1959-August 11, 1962

August 12, 1962-June 26, 1964 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (23.5 x 20.5 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: August 12, 1962-June 26, 1964

June 27, 1964-July 28, 1966 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (23.5 x 21 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: June 27, 1964-July 28, 1966

July 29, 1966-March 16, 1968 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (23.5 x 20.5 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 29, 1966-March 16, 1968

March 17, 1968-April 17, 1971 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (25.5 x 21 x 3 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: March 17, 1968-April 17, 1971

April 18, 1971-July 28, 1972 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (25.5 x 21 x 3 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: April 18, 1971-July 28, 1972

July 29, 1972-July 27, 1974 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (25.5 x 21.5 x 3 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 29, 1972-July 27, 1974

July 28-December 31, 1974 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (25.5 x 21.5 x 3 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: July 28-December 31, 1974

December 31, 1974-December 31, 1975 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (25.5 x 21.5 x 3 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 31, 1974-December 31, 1975

December 31, 1975-June 2, 1976 *Black simulated leather, three-ring, loose-leaf binder (23.5 x 20.5 x 2 cm.)*

Digital Object: J. Paul Getty Diaries online: December 31, 1975-June 2, 1976

NOTE: :
The first entry in this volume is a continuation of the December 31, 1975 entry from the previous volume, but is erroneously labeled (in Mr. Getty's secretary's hand) as "January 31, 1975."

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