

Finding Aid to the Parker Family Papers, 1856-1949

Summary Information

Title: Parker family papers

Creator: George S. Parker, Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker, Richard P. Parker (primary)

ID: 120.1000

Date: 1856-1949 (inclusive)

Extent: 2 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: The Parker family papers contain diaries, notes, and letters written by members of the Parker family (notably, George S. Parker, founder of Parker Brothers). These materials are dated between 1856 and 1949.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
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Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) have not been transferred, The Strong has permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes. As of 2021, materials dated 1925 or earlier are now in the public domain.

Custodial History: The Parker family papers were donated to The Strong in February 2020 as a gift of Philip E. Orbanes. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 120.1000 and were received from Orbanes in one box.

Preferred citation for publication: Parker family papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

Processed by: The archival collection was processed by Nicole Pease and Julia Novakovic in December 2020-January 2021. The diaries and letters were cleaned by Hillary Ellis, Kaitlin Keyes, and Nicole Pease in 2020.

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Barton, Sally Parker, 1907-2000
- Orbanes, Philip E.
- Parker, Bradstreet, 1897-1918
- Parker, Charles Hanford, 1860-1936
- Parker, Edward Hegeman, 1855-1915
- Parker, George Augustus, 1820-1877
- Parker, George Swinnerton, 1866-1952

- Parker, Grace Mann, 1874-1964
- Parker, Richard Perkins, 1900-1921
- Parker, Sarah Maria (Hegeman), 1832-1887

Corporate Names

- Hackley School, Tarrytown, N.Y.
- Parker Brothers, Inc.

Subjects

- American diaries
- Board game industry
- Board game industry -- United States
- Game design and development
- Parker Brothers, Inc.
- Salem (Mass.)

Biographical Note

George Swinnerton Parker (1866-1952) was born in Salem, Massachusetts, the youngest of the three sons of George Augustus and Sarah Maria (Hegeman) Parker. George always had an affinity for parlor games, and he would occasionally try his hand at improving existing games. His first commercial game, Banking, came out in 1883; encouraged by his initial success, George published new games and bought the rights to previously printed games from the W. & S.B. Ives Company of Salem. In 1887, he opened a toy store, selling his own game designs alongside amusements and sporting goods. As the business grew, George's brothers Edward and Charles became partners in the company, which he renamed to Parker Brothers.

In 1896, George married Grace Mann. They went on to have three children: Bradstreet, Richard, and Sally. Both Bradstreet and Richard attended the Hackley Preparatory School in Tarrytown, New York, with Bradstreet set to join the family business after college. Tragically, Bradstreet passed away from influenza in 1918, and just three years later Richard died in an aviation accident near Paris in 1921. Sally eventually married Robert B.M. Barton, who took over as President of Parker Brothers in 1933.

Parker Brothers operated out of Salem, Massachusetts for much of its existence. Their popular hit products of the 20th century included Tiddledy Winks, Rook, Ping-Pong, Mah-Jongg, Pastime Puzzles, Monopoly, Sorry!, Clue, Risk, and Nerf. Parker Brothers remained a family-owned company until 1968, when it was purchased by General Mills. By 1985, General Mills merged their Parker Brothers division with another subsidiary, Kenner, to create Kenner Parker Toys—which was acquired by Tonka Corp. in 1987 when General Mills decided it wanted out of the games industry. In 1991, Hasbro bought Tonka, and with that came Parker Brothers, Kenner, and Milton Bradley products. All game production was moved to the Milton Bradley plant in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1998, Parker Brothers and Milton Bradley were consolidated into Hasbro Games, and the brand effectively became defunct after more than 120 years of fun.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The Parker family papers contain diaries, notes, and letters written by members of the Parker family (notably, George S. Parker, founder of Parker Brothers). Other relatives whose writings are included here are George's mother, Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker; his son, Richard P. Parker; his son, Bradstreet Parker; his daughter, Sally Parker (later, Barton); and his wife, Grace Mann Parker. Sarah's diaries span from 1856-1862; George's diaries and pocket notebooks are from 1896 through 1949. The letters in this collection are dated between 1914-1918. Additional scope and content information can be found in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

The Parker family papers have been arranged into two series, one of which has been further divided into subseries. The materials are housed in seven small archival boxes and one archival document box.

Related Materials

The Philip E. Orbanes papers hold a subseries of materials created or owned by George S. Parker, including two scrapbooks, several partial scrapbook pages, poetry, news clippings, and books dedicated to Richard Perkins Parker. Oral history interviews (audio and transcripts) with former Parker Brothers staff members are available in the Collection of John J. Fox Parker Brothers oral histories.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Diaries and pocket notebooks, 1856-1949

Subseries A: George S. Parker, 1896-1949

Subseries B: Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker, 1856-1862

Series II: Letters, 1914-1918 and n.d.

Contents List

Series I: Diaries and pocket notebooks, 1856-1949 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series contains diaries maintained by George S. Parker from 1896-1949 as well as those of his mother, Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker from 1856-1862. Also included in Subseries A are pocket notebooks kept by George, separate from his daily diary entries.

Subseries A: George S. Parker, 1896-1949 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This subseries houses pocket-sized diaries and notebooks which belonged to George S. Parker. Notes on pages indicate weather, travel, sales figures, social gatherings, business meetings, and other events of the day.

Box 1

- Folder 1 George S. Parker diary and notebook, 1896
- Folder 2 George S. Parker diary, 1897

Box 2

- Folder 1 George S. Parker diary, 1899
- Folder 2 George S. Parker notebook, 1899-1900
- Folder 3 George S. Parker diary, 1900

Box 3

- Folder 1 George S. Parker diary, 1901
- Folder 2 George S. Parker diary, 1903
- Folder 3 George S. Parker diary, 1904

Box 4

- Folder 1 George S. Parker diary, 1907
- Folder 2 George S. Parker diary and account notebook, 1920-1921
- Folder 3 George S. Parker diary, 1928
- Folder 4 George S. Parker diary, 1933

Box 5

- Folder 1 George S. Parker diary, 1935
- Folder 2 George S. Parker diary, 1937
- Folder 3 George S. Parker diary, 1939
- Folder 4 George S. Parker diary, 1940
- Folder 5 George S. Parker diary, 1941

Box 6

- Folder 1 George S. Parker diary, 1942
- Folder 2 George S. Parker diary, 1943
- Folder 3 George S. Parker diary, 1949
- Folder 4 George S. Parker notebooks, n.d.

Subseries B: Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker, 1856-1862

Scope and Content Note: Within this subseries are diaries which belonged to Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker. Pages include mentions of weather, social visits, family updates, important dates, recipes, purchases, and more.

Box 7

- Folder 1 Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker diary, 1856
- Folder 2 Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker diary, 1857
- Folder 3 Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker diary, 1859
- Folder 4 Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker diary, 1861
- Folder 5 Sarah M. (Hegeman) Parker diary, 1862

Series II: Letters, 1914-1918 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series contains letters written by Richard (“Dick”) Parker to his parents while attending Hackley Preparatory School in Tarrytown, New York from 1914-1918, as well as a few letters written to the Parkers from Minnie Hollingsworth in 1914, some from Dick to his sister Sally, and one from Bradstreet to his mother. These letters were kept in a box labeled “Dick’s letters written from Hackley, G.M.P.” (While some letters are undated, they are likely from between 1914 and 1918, aligning with Dick’s attendance at Hackley.)

Box 8

- Folder 1 Letters from Richard (“Dick”) Parker to Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Parker, 1914
- Folder 2 Letters from Richard (“Dick”) Parker to Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Parker, 1915
- Folder 3 Letters from Richard (“Dick”) Parker to Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Parker, 1916
- Folder 4 Letters from Richard (“Dick”) Parker to Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Parker, 1918
- Folder 5 Letters from Richard (“Dick”) Parker to Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Parker, n.d. [c. 1914-1918]
- Folder 6 Letters from Richard (“Dick”) Parker to Sally Parker, 1915
- Folder 7 Letter from Bradstreet Parker to Mrs. George S. Parker, n.d.
- Folder 8 Letters from unidentified author(s) to Richard (“Dick”) Parker, n.d.
- Folder 9 Letters from Minnie Hollingsworth (Hackley School) to Mr. and Mrs. G.S. Parker, 1914
- Folder 10 Box label, Grace Mann Parker, n.d.