

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞
for Special Collections
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ **Mary Ruth Wotherspoon Papers, 1983-1992** ◀

MSS-141

Size: .2 linear feet

Provenance: Received from Mary Ruth Wotherspoon

Access: open

Collection Summary: This collection consists of the notes taken by Mary Ruth Wotherspoon while she was researching her family history, a process that would become the basis for her book *So Here I Am! But Where Did I Come From?* These notes include correspondence as well as conversations with her newly discovered family members.

Subjects: [Literature](#), [Women](#)

Related Collections: The Ward M. Canaday Center has in its collection (MSS-140) the papers of Margot Sanger, the mother of Mary Ruth Wotherspoon, and the notes that Mary Ruth Wotherspoon compiled while editing her mother's book, *Poems and Prose* c1979. Other books also included in the Ward M. Canaday Center by Mary Ruth Wotherspoon are *So Here I Am! But Where Did I Come From?* c1994 and *Johnny Bushytail* c1957 which Mary Ruth Wotherspoon illustrated.

Processing Note: The materials in this collection have been kept in the original order as created by Mary Ruth Wotherspoon.

Copyright: The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the person(s) responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection, or with their heirs or assigns. Researchers bear full legal responsibility for the acquisition to publish from any part of said collection per *Title 17, United States Code*. The **Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections** may reserve the right to intervene as intermediary at its own discretion.

Completed by: Maria Halovanic, June, 1999; last updated: July 2014

**Mary Ruth Wotherspoon
Papers, 1983-1992**

Biographical Sketch

According to the first amended birth certificate given to her by her mother, Mary Ruth Wotherspoon was born Mary Ruth Sanger on February 3, 1924 to her parents Margot Heyn Sanger and Sigmond Sanger. Margot and Sigmond Sanger, however, did not keep from Mary Ruth the fact that she was their adopted daughter. In her book, *So Here I Am! But Where Did I Come From?*, Mary Ruth remembers that her adoptive mother would tell her "I chose you from among all the babies I saw. You had big brown eyes and such a winsome smile. I knew you were just the little girl I wanted! You were chosen. You were special. You were adopted."

Although Mary Ruth grew up in on Glenwood Avenue in Toledo surrounded by much love and attention from her parents, she thought of her adoption from time to time. As she grew older, becoming taller than her adoptive parents and resembling them less and less, Mary Ruth felt her adoption more keenly. Even when she married her first husband Eugene Thomas Swigart, Jr. in 1944 and had her first three children Thomas John, Stephen Herrick, and Margaret Elizabeth who all had the Swigart blond-hair and blue-eyes, Mary Ruth, the only brown-haired, brown-eyed family member, wondered what her own side of the family looked like. When her fourth daughter, Mary Catherine was born, Mary Ruth was excited to finally have a family member who shared her physical features.

It was not until January, 1974 that Mary Ruth began her search for her biological family and those who would look like her. She began her search with her given name, Julia Pate and the amended birth certificate given to her by Margot Sanger and employed the services of Pinkerton investigators to obtain a copy of her original birth certificate. Mary Ruth had a number of hurdles to overcome before finding her birth parents. Many of her medical and hospital records were destroyed and other records were sealed permanently to protect the adopted child as well as her biological family. With the help of her husband, her daughter, a genealogist, a psychic, and myriad of caring people, however, Mary Ruth finally found the name of her birth mother, Addie Pate. Armed with this new information, she was able to continue her search and found two half-sisters, two-half-brothers, and town called Pateville filled with her biological relatives.

After a ten-year search which yielded fruitful results, and at the reoccurring suggestion from her family and friends to record her own history, Mary Ruth wrote *So Here I Am! But Where Did I Come From?*, which was published in 1994. It is not only an autobiography, but also a guide for other adoptees who are searching for their lost heritage.

Mary Ruth Wotherspoon currently resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**Mary Ruth Wotherspoon
Papers, 1983-1992**

Scope and Content Note

This collection is a compilation of the notes taken by Mary Ruth Wotherspoon while she was searching for her family history which became the basis of her book, *So Here I Am! But Where Did I Come From?* The notes include letters that Mary Ruth sent and received while searching for her lost heritage, as well as conversations she had with her new found family. Although some of the notebooks and papers that were included in them overlap in chronological order, they have been kept in original order as given to the Ward M. Canaday Center by Mary Ruth Wotherspoon.

Folder List

Box	Folder	Folder Title
1	1	Notebook # 1, Search
	2	Notebook #2, Pate
	3	Notebook #3
	4	Notes on <i>So Here I Am! But Where Did I Come From?</i>
	5	Notes from Pate-Sasser Reunion
	6	Notebook #4