

# Elizabeth Severn Papers

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Washington, D.C.  
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<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms013142>

LC Online Catalog record:

<http://lcn.loc.gov/mm2008085409>

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## Collection Summary

**Title:** Elizabeth Severn Papers

**Span Dates:** 1880-1993

**Bulk Dates:** (bulk 1910-1955)

**ID No.:** MSS85409

**Creator:** Severn, Elizabeth

**Extent:** 1,050 items ; 3 containers ; 1.2 linear feet

**Language:** Collection material in English

**Location:** Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

**Summary:** Psychotherapist, author, and psychoanalytic patient of Sándor Ferenczi. Correspondence, writings, printed matter, and photographs concerning Severn's private life and her career as a psychotherapist.

## Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### People

Beebe, William, 1877-1962--Correspondence.

Federn, Paul.

Ferenczi, Gizella, 1866-1949.

Ferenczi, Sándor, 1873-1933.

Severn family.

Severn, Elizabeth.

Sparling, H. Halliday (Henry Halliday)--Correspondence.

Waelder, Robert.

### Organizations

American Field Service.

### Subjects

Psychoanalysis.

Psychotherapy.

World War, 1939-1945.

### Places

Germany--History--1945-1955.

### Occupations

Analysts.

Authors.

Psychotherapists.

## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The papers of Elizabeth Severn, psychotherapist and psychoanalytic patient of Sandór Ferenczi, were given to the Library of Congress by Arnold Rachman in 2008.

### Transfers

Some photographs have been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division where they are identified as part of the Elizabeth Severn Papers.

## Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Elizabeth Severn is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

## Access and Restrictions

The papers of Elizabeth Severn are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Elizabeth Severn Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

## Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1879, Nov. 17	Born Leota Brown, midwestern United States
circa 1900	Married
1901	Gave birth to daughter, Margaret
1905	Marriage ended
1906-1907	After history of mental and emotional illness, treated for nervous breakdown by a medical doctor using "power of positive thinking"
1907	Determined to become a mental healer, she obtained a divorce, changed her name to Elizabeth Severn, and with her daughter moved to Texas
circa 1908-1912	"Metaphysician and healer," traveled in the United States, including Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, and Washington, D.C., seeing patients
1912-1914	Moved to England, started a psychotherapy practice in London
1913	Published <i>Psycho-Therapy: Its Doctrine and Practice</i> . London: Rider
1914-1924	Returned to the United States and established psychotherapy practice in New York City; was increasingly troubled herself and sought help from several psychiatrists, without cure
1917	Published <i>The Psychology of Behavior</i> . New York: Dodd, Mead
1924	Traveled to Budapest, Hungary, to undergo analysis with Sándor Ferenczi
1924-1933	Analysand of Sándor Ferenczi; traveled frequently between Europe and New York for analysis while continuing her own practices in New York City and London, England
1933	Death of Sándor Ferenczi; Severn resumed her psychotherapy practice in London, England
1933	Published <i>The Discovery of the Self</i> . London: Rider

1933-1939	Traveled between London, England, and New York City; gave lectures and taught courses on psychology while continuing to see patients
1939-1959	With the advent of World War II, moved permanently to New York City; continued to write, lecture, and see patients
1959, Feb.	Died, New York, N.Y.

[Biographical note based in part on Christopher Fortune, "The Case of 'RN': Sándor Ferenczi's Radical Experiment in Psychoanalysis," chapter 6 of *The Legacy of Sándor Ferenczi*, Lewis Aron and Adrienne Harris, editors. (New Jersey: Analytic Press, 1993)]

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Elizabeth Severn (1879-1959) span the years 1880-1993 with the bulk of the material dating from 1910 to 1955. The collection consists primarily of correspondence, writings, photographs, and printed matter including publicity material for Severn's activities as a psychotherapist.

The correspondence in the papers is almost entirely received letters, mostly from patients of Severn. There are also some carbon copy letters written by World War II American Field Service volunteers giving descriptions of wartime activities and postwar Germany. Other correspondents include William Beebe and H. Halliday Sparling. Also of interest are the notes made during lectures and seminars by Paul Federn and Robert Waelder. Although Elizabeth Severn and her daughter Margaret maintained a long correspondence, it is not represented here. Reportedly, Margaret, in accordance with her mother's wishes, burned her mother's letters in 1986.

The speeches and writings include drafts of three unpublished books by Severn as well as a set of typescript essays and speeches. The printed matter includes publicity material for Severn. The leaflets and cards advertise her lectures or her availability for therapy sessions and document her travels. Newspaper clippings concern Severn lecture appearances, news about psychoanalysis, and clippings of people who were close acquaintances or patients of Severn.

Reference copies of some photographs transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division, including those with substantial writing on the back, have been kept with the papers. Photographs include travel pictures, snapshots, and portraits of Severn, as well as photographs of friends, family, and patients, including a group of small photographs of Severn with Ferenczi and his wife, Gizella Ferenczi.

## Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by name of person or type of material and alphabetically or chronologically therein.

# Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Beebe, William, 1934
BOX 1	Correspondence
BOX 1	General
BOX 1	Received, 1913-1956, undated (6 folders)
BOX 1	Sent, 1943, undated
BOX 1	World War II American Field Service volunteers, received and sent, 1943-1945
BOX 1	Drawings of Elizabeth Severn by Margaret Severn (daughter), 1921, 1935-1938
BOX 1	Federn, Paul, lecture notes and writings, 1949-1950, undated
BOX 1	Miscellany, 1928-1959, undated
BOX 1	Photographs, circa 1880-circa 1955
BOX 1	Printed matter
BOX 1	Miscellany, 1911, 1936-1954
BOX 1	News clippings, 1937-1959, 1986-1989
BOX 1	Severn publicity material, circa 1910-1938
BOX 2	"Private library of Elizabeth Severn," 1949-1954, undated
BOX 2	Severn, Margaret, 1939-1942, 1960, 1978-1993, undated
BOX 2	Sparling, H. Halliday, 1918, 1924, undated
BOX 2	Speeches and writings
BOX 2	Book drafts
BOX 2	"'65 Degrees of Psychological and Mental Healing," undated (4 folders)
BOX 2	"An Analysis of Love and Sex," undated (4 folders)
BOX 2	"Crystals, a novel," undated (1 folder) (2 folders)
BOX 3	Books published
BOX 3	<i>The Discovery of the Self</i> , 1933
BOX 3	<i>Psycho-Therapy: Its Doctrine and Practice</i> , 1914
BOX 3	Essay drafts
BOX 3	"Difference between Mental and Spiritual Healing," undated
BOX 3	"For the Development of Wisdom," undated
BOX 3	"Magnetic Healing," undated
BOX 3	"Some Important Points in regard to Magnetism," undated
BOX 3	"Spiritual Healing," undated
BOX 3	"Worry: Its Cause and Cure," undated
BOX 3	Speeches to Practical Psychology Club
BOX 3	"Mental Catharsis: A Means of Cure," 23 Nov. 1937
BOX 3	"What is Psychic Injury?," 16 Nov. 1937
BOX 3	Thompson, Clara, "Ferenczi's Contribution to Psychoanalysis," 1944
BOX 3	Waelder, Robert, seminar notes, 1950-1951