

Alvena V. Seckar, Author and Artist, Manuscripts and Drafts of Novels, ca. 1950 A&M 0556

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Title Statement

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Abstract

Final manuscripts, drafts, and revisions of young adult novels written and illustrated by Alvena Seckar, including "Zuska of the Burning Hills" and "Trapped in the Old Mine".

Creator

Seckar, Alvena, 1916-2012

Extent

0.7 Linear Feet Summary: 8 in. (1 document case, 5 in.); (1 small flat storage box, 3 in.)

Physical Location

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Biographical / Historical

Alvena Seckar was born in McMechen, West Virginia to first-generation immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia in 1915. Her father was a coal miner and the family moved frequently around the coal fields of West Virginia and Pennsylvania during her childhood.

Seckar's artistic talents were recognized while she was in school and she was able to attend college, first studying at the University of Pennsylvania. She then transferred to the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She earned her Bachelor's Degree there in 1939 and her Master's Degree in the History of Fine Arts in 1949.

Seckar's artwork drew inspiration from her coal field childhood, depicting working class people and landscapes with sympathy by without any attempt to "prettify" her subjects. She was also inspired by her travels in post-World War II Europe, where she visited the Eastern Europe of her parent's heritage. Seckar considered herself a politically conscious artist and took part in the Civil Rights Movement, anti-nuclear movement, and other causes.

Seckar came to her second career as a writer almost by accident. She was initially interested in illustrating children's books, but after receiving several rejections, decided to write a book of her own. Like her artwork, her books drew from her childhood experiences living in the coal fields. "Zuska of the Burning Hills" and "Mischko" tell stories of children living in coal towns from Eastern European immigrant families, while "Trapped in the Old Mine" is a science-fiction story for young readers.

Seckar continued to write, paint, and exhibit her artwork throughout her life. Even when, later in life, she developed multiple sclerosis, which crippled her right hand, Seckar continued to paint and write, even teaching herself to paint with her left hand. Seckar had been working on a novel regarding the lives of her grandmother, mother, and herself -- tentatively titled "Jewels of Memory" -- which was not published before her death. Seckar passed away on 7 March 2012 in her long-time home of Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

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Keywords

Art and artists

Authors -- Letters and papers
Women's history -- 1929-1950
Women's history -- 1951-present
Women's history -- Education and arts
Seckar, Alvena, 1916-2012