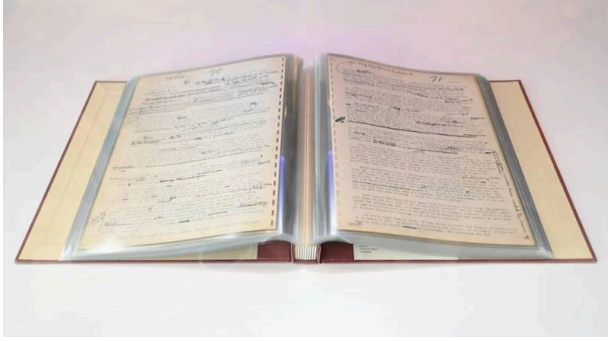


Basic Detail Report



Original Working Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous

Date

1939

Primary Maker

Bill Wilson

Medium

Paper

Description

The original working draft manuscript of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. An original multilith copy with an aggregation of annotations and revisions by several founders of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Some revisions are in the hand of "Bill W." (a.k.a. William Griffith Wilson), but most are in the hand of Henry Griffin "Hank" Parkhurst. The manuscript is 161 pages (three of which are written in pencil by several hands). Written in Newark, New Jersey, 1939. The annotations and revisions in lead, green, and red pencil, with a few in ink. The paper is slightly discolored and each leaf is encapsulated. Bound in a red cloth binder with a morocco lettering piece ("PRINTER'S COPY M[anu]S[cript]. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS"). Bound with presentation leaf inscribed by Lois Wilson (Bill's widow): "I joyfully give this multilith copy of the AA book, one of my most precious possessions, to you, dear Barry [Barry Leach, author of *Living Sober* and close personal friend and confidante of both Bill and Lois], as evidence of my deep gratitude for all you have done for AA, for Al-Anon, and particularly for me. Lois 1/1/78." This working manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous is the subject of the scholarly work, *The Book That Started It All: The Original Working Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Center City, Minnesota: Hazelden Publishing, 2010), in which AA historians discuss the multitude of annotations and edits and their impact on the evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous. A passage from the opening chapter: "This 'original working manuscript' is a historical document of singular importance, combining within its pages several different stages in the writing of Alcoholics Anonymous. These overlapping layers in the creation of the final text can be discovered by carefully reading and 'untangling' the different elements presented in the pages that follow. The original working manuscript ... is what historians call a primary document - one that comes from a specific time and place, capturing all the complexity and immediacy of that particular moment. The working manuscript encapsulates and preserves the thinking of the people who were 'founding' Alcoholics Anonymous during a very brief time period - six weeks or so - between the printing of the multilith copy in mid-February 1939, and the final editing of the first edition of the Big Book, which was done in late March or early April." The manuscript begins with a foreword discussing the Fellowship and the importance of remaining "anonymous". Page 1, entitled *The Doctor's Opinion*, includes a letter from a doctor endorsing AA and its practices, as well as his belief that "the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. It does not

satisfy [alcoholics] to be told that [they] cannot control [their] drinking just because [they] were maladjusted to life ... These things were true to some extent, in fact, to a considerable extent with some of [them]. But [they] are sure that [their] bodies were sickened as well..." Chapter One, Bill's Story, is Bill W.'s experience with active drinking and his recovery. "While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given to me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others ... We commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty ... We meet frequently at our different homes, so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek ... Most of us feel we need to look no further for Utopia, nor even Heaven. We have it right with us here and now..." The remaining chapters – There is a Solution, More About Alcoholism, We Agnostics, How it Works, Into Action, Working with Others, To Wives, The Family Afterward, To Employers, and A Vision for You – cover the following related topics: the theory of alcoholism as a fatal physical disease combined with mental obsession, how to combat the disease through complete abstinence in harmony with the practice of certain spiritual principles, finding a personal Higher Power that is greater than oneself, how the 12 steps are worked and applied to daily life (discussed in How it Works), how performing service with or for other recovering alcoholics helps keep one sober, and suggestions for how a newly sober recovering alcoholic can return to his family, friends, job, etc., and be productive while remaining sober. The final seventy-nine pages in this copy are devoted to "Personal Stories," actual experiences of alcoholics who found recovery by practicing the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. As stated in The Book That Started It All: The Original Working Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous, "... Since the first publication of the Big Book, sales of its four editions in hardback and softcover printings have exceeded 27 million copies in the United States and Canada alone. Copies have also been made available in a braille and large-print edition, in sign language, on audiotapes and CDs, and on the Internet. The text has been translated into at least fifty-two languages ... the Fellowship of AA, and the Big Book have saved millions of alcoholics from death and given them a new way of life. The book and the AA Fellowship are viewed as the gold standard among the worldwide community of Twelve Step groups ... A great number of other anonymous groups – including those for overeaters, codependents, people with dual recovery issues, marijuana addicts, sex addicts, and other people with depression – have used and adapted the Twelve Steps and counted AA's Big Book as their spiritual godfather ... Amid the wealth of literature on Alcoholics Anonymous, you have in your hands the greatest treasure of all, the beginning of it all, the charter of the Fellowship.

Dimensions

Overall: 12 x 11 3/4 x 1 1/2 in. (30.5 x 29.8 x 3.8 cm)