

Ben Legere Papers
5 linear feet (9 MB, 1 OS portfolio)
1906-1970

Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

Finding aid revised by Deborah Rice on June 5, 2014.

Accession Number: LP00709

Creator: Legere, Ben

Acquisition: The papers of Benjamin J. Legere were placed in the Walter Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs in June of 1975 by Mrs. Sheila Whitaker Hutchings. Additional material was added Legere's granddaughter, Robbin Legere Henderson in 2013.

Language: Material entirely in English.

Access: Collection is open for research.

Use: Refer to the Walter P. Reuther Library *Rules for Use of Archival Materials*.

Notes: Citation style: "Ben Legere Papers, Box [#], Folder [#], Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University"

Other Access Aids: An index to the location of these letters will be found in Appendix I.

Related Material: Matilda Robbins Papers, John & Phyllis Collier Papers, and the IWW Collections

Twelve unidentified photographs, a painting and two negatives have been placed in the Archives Audio Visual Collection. A tape of reminiscences made by Ben Legere in the early 1960's was donated to the Archives Oral History Collection in 1970 by Barbara Dane.

One folder of photographs of Legere's parents was transferred to the Audiovisual Department.

History

Benjamin J. Legere was born in Tauton, Massachusetts, on May 30, 1887. An actor by profession Mr. Legere was active in both the American and Canadian Labor movements as an I.W.W. organizer and as a member of the General Executive Board of the Canadian One Big Union. In 1912 he helped lead the Little Falls, New York, textile strike. During 1919 Mr. Legere was a participant in the New York actor's strike and in 1922 he was one of the leaders of the Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike.

Moving to the West Coast in the mid-1920's Mr. Legere was active in San Francisco Bay Area theater and radio as a playwright, actor, director and critic. Several of his plays, which dealt with labor movement themes, were financial successes.

In addition to his work in the theater and labor movement Mr. Legere held positions in a number of reformist political organizations and causes: First Secretary of the San Francisco Council of the Democratic Party, Chairman of the California Production for Use Congress, Chairman of the Joint Bay Area Strike Committee of the W.P.A. and the San Francisco Bay Area Sobell Committee.

Ben Legere died on January 29, 1972.

Scope and Content:

Mr. Legere's papers reflect his activities in the American and Canadian labor movements, California politics, and West Coast theater.

Important Subjects:

- The Canadian One Big Union
- The I.W.W.
- The Little Falls, N.Y. textile strike, 1912
- The Lawrence textile strike, 1922
- The Labor Unity Committee
- End Poverty in California Convention, 1935
- West Coast theater history, 1925-50
- West Coast cooperatives, 1930-50
- The Rosenberg Case
- The San Francisco Bay Area Sobell Committee

Important Names:

- Hanna Alex
- Phyllis Collier
- Takeo Hashimo
- Vita Henderson
- Adelard Lanovette
- Ben Legere Jr.
- Elaine Legere
- Lenore Legere
- Matilda Robbins

William Leslie
Alex A. McKay
Joseph C. McKennon
James W. Miller
Joe Pemberton
Fred Rivers
Siguard Russell
Richard Silvester
W. R. Stevenson
Roy Wilcox

Series 1:

Series I is composed of biographical materials including two chapters of an incomplete autobiography manuscript, portions of two diaries, fragments of several incomplete literary manuscripts and appointment books.

Series 2:

Series II contains materials relating to Mr. Legere's activities in the American and Canadian labor movements and California politics covering the period between 1910 and 1970. Included are materials relating to the I.W.W., the Canadian One Big Union, the Little Falls textile strike of 1912, the Lawrence textile strike of 1922, and the California United Labor Campaign of 1935.

Series 3:

Series III is composed of Mr. Legere's correspondence covering the period 1900-1965. The correspondence reflects Mr. Legere's social, political and theatrical activities and is arranged chronologically within subject and correspondent groupings.

Series 4:

Series IV contains materials reflecting Mr. Legere's theater activities during the period 1910-1950. The materials include clippings of reviews of Mr. Legere's performances, a series of theater columns written by Mr. Legere during the 1930's and a collection of theater memorabilia.

Arrangement

Arranged in 4 series – Series 1 (Box 1-2), Series 2 (Box 2-5) and Series 3 (Box 5-8) and Series 4 (Box 8-9).

Series 1

Series I is composed of biographical materials including two chapters of an incomplete autobiography, portions of two diaries, fragments of several incomplete, literary manuscripts, appointment and address books, lists of Mr. Legere's occupations, and miscellaneous memorabilia.

Box 1

1. Autobiography Manuscript Chapters
2. Diary Fragments, Occupation Lists
3. Biographical Newspaper Clippings
- 4-5. Notebooks, Undated
6. Appointment Books, 1935
7. Address Books
8. Literary Manuscript Fragments
9. MemorabiliaóMiscellaneous

Box 2

- 1-3. Notes-Miscellaneous, Undated
4. Income Tax Data, 1952-1953
5. Army Services Forces Cargo Plans
6. Fairhope School

Series 2

Series II contains materials relating to Mr. Legere's activities in the American and Canadian labor movements and California politics covering the period 1910-1970. Included are materials relating to the I.W.W., the Canadian One Big Union, the Little Falls textile strike of 1912, the Lawrence textile strike of 1922, and End Poverty in California. The series also contains radio scripts from the United Labor Radio Campaign of 1935, a manuscript copy of Irwin Edelman's *The Suppressed Facts in the Rosenberg Case*, and a collection of West Coast cooperative pamphlets and newsletters.

Note: Original copies of asterisked materials are located in the Archives oversized materials portfolios.

Box 2

7. Newspaper Clippings-Little Falls Strike, Legere Trial, 1913
8. One Big Union-Circular Letters, Handbills
9. I.W.W.-Handbills, Pamphlets
10. British Columbia Federationalist, October 3, 19 24 (photocopy) *
11. Maritime Herald, November 15, 1924 (photocopy) *
12. Lawrence Labor, August 31, December 7, 1923 (photocopies) *
13. End Poverty in California--Convention Minutes, May 17-19, 1935
- 14-16. Labor Unity Committee--Handbills, Circular Letters
- 17-22. Radio Scripts--United Radio Campaign, October 12-18, 19 35
23. "Hunger"; *Solidarity* editorial by Legere, May 16, 1914

Box 3

- 1-17. Radio Scripts--United Radio Campaign, October 19-November 4, 1935
18. Rosenberg Case--Pamphlets, Handbills
- 19-23. Irwin Edelman--The Suppressed Facts on the Rosenberg Case
24. Irwin Edelman--The American Left, A Diagnosis of Its Afflictions
25. Committee for Morton Sobell--Pamphlets, Newspaper Clippings

Box 4

- 1-5. Newspaper Clippings--Miscellaneous Political, 1912-1965
- 6-11. Handbills and BroadSides--Miscellaneous Political, 1910-1970
- 12-13. West Coast Cooperative Pamphlets and Newsletters, 1940-1950

Box 5

- 1-2. West Coast Cooperative Pamphlets and Newsletters, 19 50-19 70.
- 3-5. Political Pamphlets--Miscellaneous, 1920-1955

Series 3

Series III contains Mr. Legere's correspondence covering the period 1900-1965. The correspondence reflects Mr. Legere's social, political, and theatrical activities and is arranged chronologically within subject and correspondent groupings.

Box 5

- 6-7. Correspondence--One Big Union, August 1924-March 1925.
- 8-14. Correspondence--Lenore Legere, 19 27-19 49, Undated

Box 6

- 1-9. Correspondence--Elaine Legere, 1918-1953, Undated
- 10-14. Correspondence--Legere Family, 1928-1949, Undated

Box 7

1. Correspondence--Jane (Legere) Sawyer, 1944-1953
2. Correspondence--Benita (Legere) Coble, 1941-1946
3. Correspondence--Ben Legere Jr., 1947-1949
4. Correspondence--Vita (Legere) Henderson, 1934-1948
5. Correspondence--Matilda Robbins, 1939-1946
6. Correspondence--Alice Gillette, 1950-1952
7. Correspondence--Morris L., 1927-1929
8. Correspondence--Mary (Haley), 1942-1946
- 9-10. Correspondence--Friends, 1948-1964
- 11-17. Correspondence--General, 1900-1949

Box 8

- 1-7. Correspondence-General, 1950-1965, Undated

Series 4

Series IV contains materials reflecting Mr. Legere's theater activities during the period 1910-1965. Materials include clippings of reviews of Mr. Legere's performances, a series of theater columns written by Mr. Legere during the 1930's, a collection of actor's cue books, an outline of a Federal Theatre Project play Prologue to Glory by E. P. Conkle, and a collection of playbills covering the period 1930-1965.

Box 8

- 8. Newspaper Clippings--Reviews of Legere Performances
- 9-10. Telegraph Hill Players--Records, 1925
- 12-14. Wasp Theater Column Clippings, October 1929-December 1930
- 15-16. Play Script Rehearsal Lines—Miscellaneous

Box 9

- 1-3. Play Script Rehearsal Lines--Miscellaneous
- 4-6. Actor's Cue Books
 - 7. Capitaliad--Published play by J.G. White
 - 8. Prologue to Glory--Federal Theater Project Outline by E.P. Conkle
- 9-12. Playbills--Miscellaneous, 1930-1965
 - 13. Playbills, 1910s-1920s

APPENDIX I
Index of Correspondents

Note: The box number is followed by the folder number.

Alex, Hanna 7-13
Bailey, J.W. 7-11
Ballam, Sarah 8-3
Campbell, Emerson 5-7
Coble, Benita (Legere) 7-2
Collier, Phyllis 7-10, 7-15
Cote, E. 7-11
Edelman, Irwin 8-5
Friedrichsen, Peter 8-4
Gates, Frances 8-5
Gillette, Alice 7-6
Groulx, Meritt 8-1
Gurtz, Kate Crane 7-12
Henderson, Vita 7-4
Hohuas, Phoebe 7-11
Hoshimo, Takeo 7-11
Kuster, Gerhard 7-13
L., Morris 7-7
Lanovette, Adelard 7-12
Lawson, John Howard 7-12
Legere, Ben Jr., 7-3
Legere, Elaine 6-1, through 9
Legere, Lenore 5-8, through 14
Leslie, Wm 5-7
Lutz, Mrs. Robert M. 7-14
McKay, Alex A. 5-6
McKinnon, Joseph C. 5-7
McLean, Niel A. 5-7
McLennon, J. 5-7
Marzani, Carl 8-3
Miller, James W. 7-14, 7-15
Nesbitt, Norman Jr. 7-13
Pemberton, Joe 7-11, 7-12
Prout, Francis 7-11
Fivers, Fred 7-10, 7-11
Robbins, Matilda 7-5
Roberts, Charles A. 7-14
Ruge, Lucille 7-11
Ruis, Harry 7-13
Russell, Liguard 7-12, 7-13, 8-4
Sawyer, Jane (Legere) 7-1

Scott, Arthur 7-14
Silvester, Richard 7-11
Spies, Dick 7-13
Stevenson, W. R. 5-6
Strasbaugh, Howard 7-14
Thiele, Richard 7-16
Wilcox, Roy 7-12