Finding aid of the Erl H. Ellis Papers

Harold Christianson, Sharon Johnson, Tracy Brown
Autry Library
Autry National Center of the American West
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles, CA 90027
Phone: (323) 667-2000 ext. 383
Email: cmiller@autrynationalcenter.org
URL: http://www.autrynationalcenter.org/institute.php/
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Finding aid of the Erl H. Ellis Papers

Collection number: 90.253.4124

Autry Library
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Processed by:
Harold Christianson, Sharon Johnson, Tracy Brown
Date Completed:
January 2002
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Erl H. Ellis Papers
Dates: 1944-1982
Bulk Dates: 1953-1980
Collection number: 90.253.4124
Creator: Ellis, Erl H.
Collection Size: .8 linear feet
Repository: Autry National Center. Institute for the Study of the American West
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Abstract: The Erl H. Ellis papers represent his work with the Westerners International from the late 1950s through the early 1980s.

Physical location: Autry Library, Autry National Center

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://www.autrynationalcenter.org/research_application.php or contact library staff at (323) 667-2000.

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Preferred Citation
[Item identification] Erl H. Ellis Papers, 90.253.4124. Autry Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles, CA

Acquisition Information
Rosenstock collection

Processing Information
Processed by Harold Christianson, Sharon Johnson, Tracy Brown; January 9, 2002

Biography / Administrative History

Erl H. Ellis was born on April 10, 1888 in Garden City, Kansas. His family moved to Denver soon after his birth, where his father, Daniel B. Ellis, went into law practice. Erl Ellis’s grandfather, Lyman A. Ellis, was also a lawyer. Erl Ellis attended Denver public schools as a young child and adolescent. He received a B.A. from the University of Colorado in 1910 and a law degree in 1912. He practiced law in Denver until his retirement, except for a brief period when he was a naval aviator in World War I. He and his wife Scotty had one son, Robert, who also earned a law degree. He became a banker in Pueblo, Colorado.
Erl Ellis was active in The Westerners and The Westerners International from the early 1950s through the early 1980s. He was an early and active member of the Denver Posse. In 1952, he became a corresponding member of the group. In 1953, he was elected as a member. From 1954 through 1962, he served various posts in the Posse including editor of the monthly Roundup magazine (1954), editor of the 1954 Brand Book, secretary (1956), secretary-treasurer (1957-1961) and finally sheriff (1962). By 1974, he was a reserve member of the Denver Posse. He was president of Westerners International from mid-1974 through January 1, 1976.

The Westerners was an organization that formed to stimulate and promote interest in the history of the Western frontier. The first chapter, or "Corral," was organized by Leland Case and Elmo Scott Watson in Chicago on February 25, 1944. The second Corral, the Denver Posse (the terms Corral and Posse are used interchangeably), was organized on January 26, 1945. In 1958, The Westerners Foundation was organized with a home base located in Stockton, California. Its purpose was to help would-be Westerners launch their own Corrals. In 1969, the name of the organization was changed to The Westerners International, and headquarters were moved to Tucson, Arizona. The purpose of The Westerners International continues to be the aiding of fledging Corrals. It also acts as a clearinghouse for information about the organization and the Corrals that comprise it; awards yearly prizes for best books and articles published by Westerners; and publishes the Buckskin Bulletin for its membership. The Westerners also had a central role in the creation of the Western History Association. Today, there are 146 Corrals, with 39 located outside the United States in thirteen countries.

At the inception of the organization only men could be active members of any given Corral, although both men and women could be corresponding members (corresponding members simply applied for membership; active membership was confirmed upon those corresponding members who had demonstrated a willingness to participate in the organization’s activities over an extended period of time). Today, most Corrals are coed. Most Corrals also have active publishing programs. Papers given at monthly meetings are published in Brand Books issued by individual Corrals. Corrals also publish newsletters at their own discretion, and, as noted above, Westerners International publishes a bulletin that is distributed to all Corral members.

Scope and Content of Collection
The Erl H. Ellis papers represent his work with the Westerners International from the late 1950s through the early 1980s. In this collection, researchers will find documentation of The Westerners and The Westerners International filtered through Erl Ellis’ experiences with those organizations. Since he was an elected member of the Denver Posse, there is much documentation on the origins and functioning of that Posse through approximately 1980 in the Denver Posse file. There is extensive documentation on the founding of the first official Corral in Chicago (see Chicago Corral, Denver Corral, Westerners International files) as well as the decision to change the name of the organization to The Westerners International and relocate it to Tucson (see Westerners International files).

Ellis was also a corresponding member of numerous Corrals and sought to collect all material published by those Corrals. He encouraged acquaintances or friends interested in Western history living in other states to start Corrals. Thus, the collection reflects these involvements: a great majority of the documentation concerns Ellis's attempt to acquire publications from the different Corrals, or to encourage friends in other states to start Corrals. It is arranged alphabetically by Corral name. Material on some Corrals is rather limited (in the case of San Francisco, for example, where an N. C. Nathan tells Ellis there is no interest in San Francisco in forming a Posse), while on others it is extensive (in the case of San Diego, where Ellis was a corresponding member from 1968-1983 and received all publications and meeting announcements).

Arrangement
Alphabetically by Corral name.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects
Ellis, Erl H.
Westerners.
Westerners. Chicago Corral.
Westerners. Denver Corral.
Westerners. San Diego Corral.
West (U.S.)--Societies, etc.
West (U.S.)--History--Societies, etc.