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## **Guide to the Reverend Wendell L. Miller Collection, 1928-1988**

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**Overview of the Collection**

**Collection Title:** Reverend Wendell L. Miller Collection

**Dates:** 1928-1988

**Bulk Dates:** 1935-1961

**Identification:** URB/WLM

**Creator:** Miller, Wendell L., 1902-1999

**Physical Description:** 1.06 linear feet

**Language of Materials:** English

**Repository:** Urban Archives

**Abstract:** Reverend Wendell L. Miller was pastor of the University Methodist Church, Los Angeles. He became involved in local politics when gambling and prostitution began edging toward the area surrounding the University of Southern California (USC) campus. Miller founded the Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee (C.I.V.I.C.), which also campaigned against crime and corruption in City Hall, ultimately resulting in the recall of Mayor Frank L. Shaw. The collection documents Miller's involvement with C.I.V.I.C., and includes announcements, bulletins, correspondence, newspaper clippings, news releases, pamphlets, radio addresses, speeches, statements, and related items. There is also a small amount of material documenting Rev. Miller's anti-war activities including letters from Japanese Americans sent to internment camps during World War II.

**Biographical Information:**

Reverend Wendell L. Miller, pastor of the University Methodist Church, Los Angeles, was born in Albion, Nebraska on April 16, 1902. After graduating from Albion High School, Miller attended Nebraska Wesleyan University, graduating in 1927, with an A.B. degree in Psychology. Miller and his wife, Thelma, moved to Los Angeles when Miller enrolled in an M.A. program at the University of Southern California. He graduated in 1932, and his first ministry was in Los Angeles Harbor where he worked to serve the needs of unemployed dock workers.

In 1937, Miller became involved in Los Angeles politics as gambling and prostitution began edging toward the USC campus community. At the behest of several parishioners, Miller began holding community-wide meetings, and founded the Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee (C.I.V.I.C.). Clifford Clinton, owner of Clifton's Cafeteria, became the financial backer and first chairman of the Committee.

Gaining major attention from the mayor's office, the police department, and organized crime, the organization stepped up its publicity campaign against crime and corruption in City Hall. When Mayor Frank L. Shaw denied publicly that houses of prostitution and gambling were a major problem in the city, the organization quickly began a recall campaign to oust the mayor and his friends. The recall was successful and several members of C.I.V.I.C., including Miller, convinced Judge Fletcher Bowron to run for mayor. Shortly after Bowron's successful mayoral campaign, C.I.V.I.C. ended its activities.

In 1954, Miller left University Church to begin a lecturing career in adult education, and a new ministry at Manhattan Beach Community Church which lasted twelve years. During his ministry at Community Church, Miller caught the attention of local members of the John Birch Society. In the early 1960s, the Birch Society published a pamphlet listing Miller as a communist along with such notable figures as Eleanor Roosevelt, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Margaret Mead.

Miller left Manhattan Beach in 1967, and settled in Palos Verdes. He became the Minister of Visitation of his local church until his retirement. Reverend Wendell L. Miller died at the age of 97 on November 9, 1999.

**Access Terms**

This collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

**Genre/Form of Material:**

Audio recordings

Paper records

Photographic material

Publications

Scrapbooks

**Processing Information:**

Robert. G. Marshall and Thomas L. Davis, 1996

**Conditions Governing Use:**

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For information about citing items in this collection consult the appropriate style manual, or see the [Citing Archival Materials](#) guide.

[Gilbert G. Benjamin, Jr. Subversive Activities Collection](#)

[Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, Community Relations Committee Collection, Part 1](#)

[Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, Community Relations Committee Collection, Part 2](#)

**Arrangement of Materials:**

Series I: Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee (C.I.V.I.C) Files, 1936-1967

Series II: Japanese Internment Files, 1942-1943

Series III: Political and Religious Activity Files, 1937-1961

Series IV: Non-Manuscript Material, 1928-1988

**Scope and Contents**

The *Reverend Wendell L. Miller Collection* documents Miller's career, including his early days as a minister in Harbor City, his time as minister of the University Methodist Church at the University of Southern California, and his work at the Manhattan Beach Community Church. The collection also documents Miller's involvement with the Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee (C.I.V.I.C.), founded in the late 1930s to prevent the spread of gambling and prostitution in Los Angeles. Miller's anti-war activities are also documented. The collection includes announcements, bulletins, correspondence, newspaper clippings, news releases, pamphlets, radio addresses, speeches, statements, and related items. It consists of four series: Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee Files (1936-1967), Japanese Internment Files (1942-1943), Political and Religious Activity Files (1937-1961), and Non-Manuscript Material (1928-1988).

Series I, Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee (C.I.V.I.C.) Files, documents C.I.V.I.C.'s campaign to end political corruption, gambling, and prostitution in Los Angeles in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and includes documentation of charges of communism leveled against Clifford Clinton, C.I.V.I.C. Chairman and an outspoken reformist with whom Miller worked closely. The series also documents the 1938 recall campaign against Mayor Frank L. Shaw, and the campaign of Mayor Fletcher Bowron. It consists of advertisements, correspondence, editorials, flyers, lists of prostitution houses, newspaper clippings, news releases, pamphlets, radio addresses, and statements, and is arranged alphabetically.

Series II, Japanese Internment Files, contains correspondence and newspaper clippings documenting Miller's involvement with relocated Japanese Americans during World War II. It includes letters condemning Miller and other members of his church for assisting Japanese Americans en route to various internment camps, as well as letters from Japanese Americans thanking Miller for his support and camp visits. The series is arranged chronologically.

Series III, Political and Religious Activity Files, documents Miller's political work, labor reform efforts, anti-war interests, and church activities. It includes a pamphlet from 1950 in which Miller and five other religious leaders wrote about the hydrogen bomb's implications, and a 1961 document titled "A Report on the Manhattan Beach Community Church" that accuses Miller and others of being radical communists. The series includes bulletins, correspondence, pamphlets, reports, and propositions, and is arranged alphabetically.

Series IV, Non-Manuscript Material, includes Miller's scrapbook of news articles, correspondence, pamphlets, portraits, advertisements, and religious work from throughout his life and career. The series also contains several photos from anti-war campaigns during World War II, and some oversized posters and news articles.

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**Series I: Citizens Independent Vice Investigating Committee (C.I.V.I.C) Files, 1936-1967**

Box 1, Folder 1

**American Legion, 17th District, Los Angeles: address, "Stalin and Clinton Over Los Angeles," 1940 July 19**

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Box 1, Folder 2	<b>Bowron, Fletcher (Mayor): correspondence, 1937-1967</b>
Box 1, Folder 3	<b>Bowron for Mayor Committee (Carl C. Hoskin, Chairman): correspondence, September 1935, November-December 1939</b>
Box 1, Folder 4	<b>Briegleb, Gustav A. ( <i>Seen' Things</i>, Radio Broadcast): correspondence, April-May 1939</b>
Box 1, Folder 5	<b>Briegleb, Gustav A. ( <i>Seen' Things</i>, Radio Broadcast): KGER radio address, 1937 May 1</b>
Box 1, Folder 6	<b>The Church Layman's Committee for Good Government: correspondence, 1937 April 29, September 1938</b>
Box 1, Folder 7	<b>C.I.V.I.V.: "Big Shots of C.I.V.I.C.," <i>Los Angeles Equalizer</i>, (reprint), September 1937</b>
Box 1, Folder 8	<b>C.I.V.I.C.: "Face the Facts," pamphlet</b>
Box 1, Folder 9	<b>C.I.V.I.C. - Clearing House Committee: Report #5 - Anti-vice Strategy!</b>
Box 1, Folder 10	<b>The CIVIC Committee: news release regarding Mayor Fletcher Bowron</b>
Box 1, Folder 11	<b>"The CIVIC Committee Looks Ahead: A New Five Year Program," pamphlet, April 1942</b>
Box 1, Folder 12	<b>The CIVIC Committee: news release regarding CIVIC Supports Clifford E. Clinton for Mayor of Los Angeles, 1945 March 20</b>
Box 1, Folder 13	<b>Clinton, Clifford E., (CIVIC Chairman): correspondence, 1938 December 15</b>
Box 1, Folder 14	<b>Clinton, Clifford E.: "Bombing the Lid Off Los Angeles!" Parts 1 and 2, <i>Official Detective Stories</i>, 1938 May 25</b>
Box 1, Folder 15	<b>Clinton, Clifford E.: "Clifton' Food Poison Probe Believed Recall Motive," <i>Los Angeles Progressive Digest</i>, 1938 April 4</b>
Box 1, Folder 16	<b>Clinton, Clifford E.: "Reasons for Recall of Mayor Frank L. Shaw," flyer; pamphlet, February 1938</b>
Box 1, Folder 17	<b>Clinton, Clifford E.: "The Truth Will Set You Free," flyer</b>
Box 1, Folder 18	<b>Clinton, Clifford E. - Organizing Committee of Workers in Clifton Cafeterias: "An Appeal From the Workers in Clifton's Cafeterias to the Liberals of Los Angeles," 1938 March 29</b>
Box 1, Folder 19	<b>Ferguson, Harry L. (CIVIC, Secretary/Treasurer.): correspondence, March-June 1942</b>
Box 1, Folder 20	<b>Fitts, Buron (District Attorney): campaign pamphlets, ca. 1938</b>
Box 1, Folder 21	<b>Fitts, Buron (District Attorney): correspondence, 1936 October 24</b>
Box 1, Folder 22	<b>The Friends of the Truth League: "Frank L. Shaw for Mayor of Los Angeles," editorial</b>
Box 1, Folder 23	<b>Gambling and Vice: newspaper clippings, 1938</b>
Box 1, Folder 24	<b>Grand Jury-County of Los Angeles: correspondence, January 1937-August 1940</b>
Box 1, Folder 25	<b>Grand Jury-County of Los Angeles: membership list; Minority Reports (summary)</b>
Box 1, Folder 26	<b>Grand Jury-County of Los Angeles: resolution</b>
Box 1, Folder 27	<b><i>Grand Juries Are Grand</i>: reprint, 1937</b>
Box 1, Folder 28	<b>Houses of Gambling and Prostitution: address lists</b>
Box 1, Folder 29	<b>Houses of Gambling and Prostitution: complaint letters, September 1935-January 1937</b>
Box 1, Folder 30	<b>Houses of Gambling and Prostitution: complaint letters, July 1937-August 1938</b>
Box 1, Folder 31	<b>Houses of Gambling and Prostitution: "Los Angeles Americas Wickedest City," <i>Look Magazine</i>, 1936 September 26</b>
Box 1, Folder 32	<b>Houses of Gambling and Prostitution: "Santa Anita Handicap Days," <i>Los Angeles Times</i> advertisement, 1938 February 7</b>
Box 1, Folder 33	<b>KFWB Radio: address, 1937 October 17</b>
Box 1, Folder 34	<b>KFVD Radio: address, 1937 December 8</b>
Box 1, Folder 35	<b>Miller, Rev. Wendell: correspondence (outgoing), November-December 1937</b>
Box 1, Folder 36	<b>Miller, Rev. Wendell: correspondence, 1938 December 8</b>
Box 1, Folder 37	<b>Miller, Rev. Wendell: notes</b>
Box 1, Folder 38	<b>SB 878 - dog Racing Measure: analysis, ca. 1939</b>
Box 1, Folder 39	<b>Shaw, Frank L. (Mayor): "Bowron's Backers Exposed," <i>Los Angeles Club Reporter</i>, 1938 September 15</b>
Box 1, Folder 40	<b>Shaw, Frank L. (Mayor): "Fundamentally," <i>Hollywood Citizen news</i> (reprint), 1937 July 10</b>
Box 1, Folder 41	<b>Shaw, Frank L. (Mayor): DFWB Radio address, 1938 September 7</b>
Box 1, Folder 42	<b>Shaw, Frank L., (Mayor): "Recall of Recovery," <i>Highland Park Post Dispatch</i>, 1938 December 8</b>
Box 1, Folder 43	<b>Vigilantes of America: correspondence, 1937 June 24</b>

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**Series II: Japanese Internment Files, 1942-1943**

Box 1, Folder 44 **Japanese Internment: correspondence; newspaper clippings, April-June 1942**  
Box 1, Folder 45 **Japanese Internment: newspaper clippings**  
Box 1, Folder 46 **Japanese Internment: correspondence (from Japanese friends), May-October 1942**  
Box 1, Folder 47 **Japanese - War: "When Japan Attacks," First Congregational Church program, 1943 June 20**

**Series III: Political and Religious Activity Files, 1937-1961**

Box 1, Folder 48 **American Committee for Peace Through Democracy: special bulletin**  
Box 1, Folder 49 **The Fellowship of Reconciliation: "Six Churchmen Speak on the H'Bomb" (reprint), 1950**  
Box 1, Folder 50 **Ford, John Anson (Candidate for Mayor of Los Angeles - 1937): "Reds' Back Anson Ford," *Police Patrol*, 1937 March 1**  
Box 1, Folder 51 **Manhattan Beach Community Church: report, January 1961**  
Box 1, Folder 52 **Methodist Episcopal Church - The Board of Home Missions (Philadelphia, Pa.): correspondence**  
Box 1, Folder 53 **Russian War Relief, Inc.: correspondence; proclamation, 1942 June 15, 17**  
Box 1, Folder 54 **Labor - Bricklayers and Stone Masons, Local Union No. 2: program, 1951**  
Box 1, Folder 55 **Labor - The Christian American Crusade: announcement; bulletin regarding Labor/Communism**  
Box 1, Folder 56 **Labor - Communist Party - Los Angeles County Committee: "Make Los Angeles a Union Town," pamphlet**  
Box 1, Folder 57 **Labor - Proposition No. 1: broadside regarding anti-Picketing measure, 1938 September 16**  
Box 1, Folder 58 **Labor - Proposition No. 1: "Hot Cargo, Secondary Boycotts," pamphlets, 1942**  
Box 1, Folder 59 **Labor - Proposition No. 9: "Let's Drive the Blues Away-Vote No," United California Industries; pamphlet**  
Box 1, Folder 60 **Labor - Southern Californians, Inc.: correspondence, 1940 January 8**

**Series IV: Non-Manuscript Material, 1928-1988**

Box 2, Folder 1 **Miller, Rev. Wendell: Scrapbook, 1928-1936**  
Box 2, Folder 2 **Miller, Rev. Wendell: Scrapbook, 1937**  
Box 2, Folder 3 **Miller- Rev. Wendell: Scrapbook, 1938**  
Box 2, Folder 4 **Miller, Rev. Wendell: Scrapbook, 1939-1941**  
Box 2, Folder 5 **Miller, Rev. Wendell: Scrapbook, 1942-1945**  
Box 2, Folder 6 **Miller, Rev. Wendell: Scrapbook, 1950-1988**  
Box 3, Item 1 **Gambling and Crime: Clover Gambling Joint-Keep Chicago Out of Hollywood, photograph**  
Box 3, Item 2 **Anti-War Campaign: Billions for Armaments - How Much for Peace? Peace Bench at Florence Avenue Methodist Church, photograph**  
Box 3, Item 3 **Anti-War Campaign: Truth is the First Casualty of War. 777 Class Kagawa League of Florence Avenue Methodist Church, photograph, 1933**  
Box 3, Item 4 **Anti-War Campaign: War is a Crime Against Humanity. Epworth League of Florence Avenue Methodist Church, photograph**  
Box 3, Item 5 **Anti-War Campaign: We Died in Vain-Unless You Fight to Abolish War? Truck Sign, Grave and Crosses, photograph**  
Flat File Cabinet 3, Folder 1  
Flat File Cabinet 3, Folder 1, Item 1 **"Los Angeles, America's Wickedest City," *Look*, 1939 September 26**  
Flat File Cabinet 3, Folder 1, Item 2 **"Bowron's Backers Exposed," *The Los Angeles Club Reporter*, Vol. 1 No. 8, 1938 September 15**  
Flat File Cabinet 3, Folder 1, Item 3 **"Recall or Recovery?" Advertisement, *The Highland Park Post Dispatch*, 1938 September 9**  
Flat File Cabinet 3, Folder 1, Item 4 **"Big Shots of The C.I.V.I.C." *The Equalizer*, September 1937**