
Finding Aid for the Ester F. Bentley papers, circa 1880s-2000s LSC.1981

Finding aid prepared by Stacy Wood, 2014 and Jessica Tai, 2017.

UCLA Library Special Collections

Room A1713, Charles E. Young Research Library

Box 951575

Los Angeles, CA, 90095-1575

(310) 825-4988

spec-coll@library.ucla.edu

Online finding aid last updated 10 October 2017.

Title: Ester F. Bentley papers

Identifier/Call Number: LSC.1981

Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 8.2 linear feet(14 boxes, 1 record carton, 2 flat boxes and 1 media box)

Date (bulk): Bulk, 1960-1990

Date (inclusive): circa 1880s-2000s

Abstract: This collection contains photographs, correspondence, awards, clippings, ephemera and memorabilia from lesbian activist, community organizer and social worker, Ester F. Bentley.

Language of Materials: Materials are in English.

Physical Location: Stored off-site at SRLF. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Creator: Bentley, Ester F.

Conditions Governing Access

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Property rights to the physical object belong to the UCLA Library Special Collections. Literary rights, including copyright, are retained by the creators and their heirs. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine who holds the copyright and pursue the copyright owner or his or her heir for permission to publish where The UC Regents do not hold the copyright.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Ester F. Bentley Papers (Collection 1981). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

Acquisition Information

Provenance unknown, 2013. This collection is part of an outreach and collection-building partnership between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women (CSW) and the UCLA Library.

Processing History

Processed by Stacy Wood, 2013.

Description enhanced and further physical processing completed by Jessica Tai, 2017.

The [June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive](#) at UCLA is an outreach and collection-building partnership between the [June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives](#), the [UCLA Center for the Study of Women \(CSW\)](#) and the [UCLA Library](#). These collections expand the pool of primary source materials available to researchers and to the community at large. This partnership was initiated by CSW and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to inventory, organize, preserve, and digitize more than eighty Mazer collections pertaining to lesbian and feminist activism and writings.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

UCLA Catalog Record ID: [7400203](#)

Biography

Ester Bentley was a life long advocate of womens and lesbian and gay rights. Bentley was born in Louisville, Kentucky on October 24, 1915. She completed her Bachelor's of Science at Catherine Spalding College in 1941. During the war years, Bentley worked as the Director of U.S.O. in programs for war workers and their families. Bentley went on to complete her Master's in Social Work at the National Catholic School of Social Service at Catholic University of America in 1949. Following the completion of her degree, Bentley became the Director of the Kentucky Society for Crippled Children. Bentley moved to California in the 1960s and became the District Director for Community Planning and Development in San Bernardino, California. Bentley also served as the Executive Director of the Girl Scout Council in Santa Ana, California. In the 1960s, Bentley acquired her Real Estate License from the Scadron Business College in San Bernardino, California and continued her work in community organizing as a consultant. From 1966 to 1974, Bentley served as a field consultant and supervised students in the UCLA School of Social Welfare. After retiring, Bentley became very involved in both Catholic ministries and gay and lesbian organizations. Bentley was also a founding member of the Coalition of Older Lesbians (COOL). Ester Bentley died on January 20, 2004, at the age of 88 in Los Angeles, California.

Scope and Content

This collection contains photographs, correspondence, awards, clippings, ephemera and memorabilia from lesbian activist, community organizer and social worker, Ester F. Bentley. The collection documents Bentley's professional career in community organizing in California, and includes research and reports that Bentley wrote and/or contributed to. The collection also includes material related to Bentley's advocacy work, in which she was specifically focused on issues affecting LGBTQ Catholic communities. Also included are material from organizations such as Women Against Violence Against Women, Coalition of Older Lesbians and Old Lesbians Organizing for Change. The collection also includes personal material such as photographs, correspondence and Bentley's writing and poetry.

Organization and Arrangement

The collection is arranged into five series.

Series 1: Photographs, circa 1880s-2000s

Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1940s-2000s

Series 3: Personal Material and Memorabilia, 1931-circa 2000s

Series 4: Professional Material, 1930-1986

Series 5: Community Engagement Material, 1956-circa 2000s

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Bentley, Ester F. -- Archives.

June L. Mazer Lesbian Archive at UCLA.

June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives.

Catholic gays--Religious life.

Lesbian activists--United States--Archives.

Series 1: Photographs circa 1880s-2000s

Scope and Contents note

Photographs span from the 1880s-2000s and include images of Bentley, her friends, family, home and pets. Many of the images appear to be taken in Los Angeles, at Bentley's home, as well as other locations in Los Angeles. Photographs represent a wide variety of commercial photographic processes, primarily from the 20th century. Included are black and white and color photographic prints, in addition to 35 mm slides and 35 mm, 110 mm, and large format negatives.

Organization and Arrangement

Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

Box 2, Folders 2-6,
Box 3, Box 1,
Box 4, Box 5,
Folders 1-4
Box 2, Folder 1

Photographic prints circa 1880s-2000s

Negatives circa 1940s-2000s

Series 2: Correspondence circa 1940s-2000s

Scope and Content

Correspondence includes greeting cards, holiday cards, postcards and letters written to Bentley. Also included is correspondence between Bentley and her partner, Gayle Scott, as well as letters that appear to be written to Scott.

Organization and Arrangement

Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

Box 5, Folders 5-6,
Box 6, Box 7

Personal Correspondence circa 1940s-circa 2000s

Box 8, Folders 1-2

Envelopes circa 1990s-circa 2000s
Series 3: Personal Material and Memorabilia 1931-circa 2000s

Scope and Content

Personal material including loose notes and notebooks written by Bentley, holiday crafts, LPs, material from Bentley's memorial, poetry and writing by Bentley, material related to Bentley's participation in various sports, a transcript and audiocassettes of an interview with Bentley and her partner Gayle Scott and materials related to her former partner and friend, Martha Foster. Also included is memorabilia such as keychains, flags, paper weights, artwork, textiles and keepsake boxes. Some material appear to have belonged to or were created by Gayle Scott.

Organization and Arrangement

Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Box 8, Folder 3

Sports Related Correspondence and Photographs (photocopies) 1931-1995

General Physical Description note: newsprint, printed paper, handwritten notes

Scope and Contents note

Clippings, certificates, rosters and other materials from Ester Bentley's lifelong involvement in softball and various sports.

Box 8, Folder 4
Box 8, Folder 5
Box 8, Folder 6
Box 8, Folder 7
Box 9, Folders 1-5
Box 10, Folder 2
Box 10, Folder 1
Box 10, Folder 3
Box 10, Folder 4
Box 15

Songbooks circa 1930s-1940s
Holiday Crafts circa 1940s
Ester Bentley Memorial 1945-2004
Family Material 1957-circa 2000s
Notes circa 1960s-2000s
Notebooks circa 1960s-1990s
Funeral and Memorial Material circa 1960s-1990s
Martha Foster Material 1963-1991
The Shape of Things by Gayle Scott and Louise Baldwin 1969
Vinyl Records 1970-1990

Scope and Content

Sixteen records. All records are by women musicians, predominantly lesbian artists.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Box 10, Folder 5
Box 10,
Folders 6-7
Box 10, Folder 8
Box 10, Folder 9
Box 10, Folder 10
Box 11, Folder 1

Laguna Beach Property Documents 1975-1979
Publications 1977-2000
Poetry by Various Authors circa 1970s-1980s
Clippings circa 1980s-2000s
The Azusa Project by Gayle Scott 1980
The Diary of Ester Bentley circa 1990s-2000s

Box 11,
Folders 2-3

Ester Bentley and Gayle Scott Interview 1997

Scope and Content

Includes transcript and recorded interview on two audiocassettes.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

COLLECTION CONTAINS AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS: Audiovisual materials in this collection will require assessment and possible digitization for safe access. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Box 11, Folder 4
Box 11, Folder 5
Box 17, Folder 1,
Box 11, Folder 6

Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center Writing Course 1997

Poetry by Ester Bentley circa 2000s

Artwork undated

Scope and Content

Bentley's collection of drawings by unknown artists.

Box 18, Box 16

Memorabilia circa 1940s-2000s

Scope and Content

Memorabilia includes keepsake boxes, paperweights, keychains, textiles and flags.

Series 4: Professional Material 1930-1986

Scope and Content

Professional material includes resumes, job applications, school records and awards from OCCRD and Spalding University, where Bentley received her Bachelor of Science. Included are reports that Bentley wrote and/or contributed to during her time serving in various positions such as a specialist in the Regional Center of Orange County, a member on the steering committee of the Health and Welfare Council at the Kent School of Social Work, the District Director of Community Planning and Development in the San Bernardino County Council of Community Services and as a field representative for the United Catholic Community Defense Services. Also included are blank surveys from Bentley's time as Executive Director of the Santiago Girl Scout Council, as well as from her position in the United Catholic Community Defense Services.

Organization and Arrangement

Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

Box 11, Folder 7
Box 11, Folder 8
Box 11, Folder 9
Box 12,
Folders 1-4
Box 12, Folder 5
Box 12, Folder 6
Box 12, Folder 7
Box 16

Education Documents 1930-1964

Summer Camp Activity Guide circa 1930s-1940s

Resumes and Application Material circa 1940s-1970s

Reports 1948-1979

Business Cards and Conference Badge 1950-circa 1960s

Surveys circa 1950s-1960s

Newsletters circa 1970s

Plaques and Awards 1980-1986

Series 5: Community Engagement Material 1956-circa 2000s

Scope and Content

This series includes material from Bentley's life long engagement with community issues and advocacy of womens, lesbian and gay rights. Also included is material from Bentley's engagement with the Catholic community and advocacy for lesbian and gay rights in the Catholic Church. Material includes newsletters, fliers, correspondence, clippings and plaques and medals from Bentley's involvement with organizations such as the Glassell Park Improvement Association and the Team of Advocates for Special Kids. Also included are material from organizations that Bentley was engaged with, such as Women Against Violence Against Women, Coalition of Older Lesbians and Old Lesbians Organizing for Change.

Organization and Arrangement

Materials in this series are arranged chronologically.

Box 12, Folder 8
Box 13, Folder 1
Box 13, Folder 2
Box 18, Box 14,
Folder 1
Box 13, Folder 3

Box 13, Folder 4
Box 13,
Folders 5-6
Box 13, Folder 7
Box 14, Folder 2
Box 14, Folder 3
Box 14, Folder 4
Boxes 16
Box 14, Folder 5
Box 14, Folder 6
Box 14, Folder 7

Religious Material 1956-circa 2000s

Women Against Violence Against Women circa 1970s-1980s

Highland Park Ebell Club 1973

Coalition of Older Lesbians, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change and Material Related to Senior Lesbian and Gay Communities 1987-2000s

Reformation of the Heart: Seasonal Meditations by a Gay Christian by Chris Glaser 1989

Catholic Lesbian and Gay Fliers and Ephemera circa 1990s-2000s

Clippings on Catholicism and Lesbian and Gay Issues circa 1990s-2000s

Correspondence 1990-2001

Fliers circa 1990s

Lesbian and Gay Organizations Material circa 1990s-2000s

Newsletters and Publications circa 1990s-2000s

Plaques circa 1990s

Dignity LA 1994-2000

Awards 1994-2003

Lesbian Visibility Week 1997