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## **Guide to the Ruth Comfort Mitchell collection Mss 84**

Finding aid prepared by Special Collections Staff, 2003.

**UC SANTA BARBARA**

**Library**

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2003

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**Title:** Ruth Comfort Mitchell collection

**Identifier/Call Number:** Mss 84

**Contributing Institution:** UC Santa Barbara Library, Department of Special Collections

**Language of Material:** English

**Physical Description:** 1.75 linear feet(2 document boxes and 1 oversize box)

**Date (bulk):** Bulk, 1930-1949

**Date (inclusive):** circa 1879-1961

**Physical Location:** Del Sur and Del Sur Oversize

**Language of Materials:** The collection is in English.

**Abstract:** The collection contains correspondence, typescripts of articles and speeches, research files, photographs, and ephemera of American author Ruth Comfort Mitchell.

**creator:** Mitchell, Ruth Comfort, 1882-1954

**Access Restrictions**

The collection is open for research.

**Use Restrictions**

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**Preferred Citation**

[identification of item], Ruth Comfort Mitchell collection. Mss 84. Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara.

**Acquisition Information**

Gift from William Wreden, 1966.

**Processing Information**

Processed by Special Collections staff, 2003.

**Biography**

Ruth Comfort Mitchell, perhaps best known for her novel *Of Human Kindness*, which she wrote as a counterpoint to John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, had a long and successful career as a writer, producing numerous novels, poems, short stories, and one-act plays.

Born on July 21, 1882 in San Francisco, Mitchell spent a good deal of time in Los Gatos, California, where her parents owned a summer home. It was here that her first poem was published in the local newspaper, when she was 14 years old. She pursued a literary career after her marriage to Sanborn Young in 1914, when the couple moved to New York City. Within two years, she had a play opening on Broadway and a published volume of poems, to be followed soon after by her first novel.

The Youngs soon returned to Los Gatos and began building their elaborate Chinese-styled home, which they dubbed Yung See San Fong, on a hilltop ranch. In 1925, Sanborn Young was elected to the California State Senate, where he would serve until 1938, becoming a close friend to President Herbert Hoover. Ruth proved to be a tireless campaigner and was active in a number of conservative organizations, even serving twice as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.

Sanborn Young returned to life as a cattle rancher after retiring from the Senate and, as such, he and his wife were upset by Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, which appeared soon after, in 1939. Ruth Comfort Mitchell determined to tell their side of the story, the result being her novel *Of Human Kindness*, in which a gentleman farmer's family must overcome the tribulations brought by migrant workers, union organizers, liberal academics, and Communists.

Ruth Comfort Mitchell continued to write throughout the 1940s and was an active member of the Christian Science Church of Los Gatos. She died at home on February 17, 1954 of heart failure.

**Scope and Content**

The collection contains correspondence, typescripts of articles and speeches, research files, photographs, and ephemera of American author Ruth Comfort Mitchell. Correspondents include William C. Morrow, Robert W. Service, and Wendell Wilkie. Much of the collection relates to Mitchell's research and writing on the migrant question of the late 1930s, after the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, as seen from the perspective of the area farmers and ranchers.

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The collection also contains a number of books, including some by Ruth Comfort Mitchell, which have been cataloged separately and which may be searched on Pegasus, the UCSB Libraries online catalog.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Mitchell, Ruth Comfort, 1882-1954

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**Correspondence Series 1.**

Box-folder 1: 1 - 15	<b>Incoming</b>
Box-folder 1: 1	<b>Anslinger, Harry J., 1961 (to Sanborn Young), n.d.</b>
Box-folder 1: 2	<b><i>Atlantic Monthly</i>, 1943</b>
Box-folder 1: 3	<b>Council for Social Action, 1939</b>
Box-folder 1: 4	<b>D. Appleton - Century Co., 1923</b>
Box-folder 1: 5	<b>Garrette, Eve, 1943</b>
Box-folder 1: 6	<b>Morrow, William C., 1900-1915</b>
Box-folder 1: 7	<b>Rooney, Alicia L., 1939-1940</b>
Box-folder 1: 8	<b>Shepard, Arthur C., 1939-1940</b>
Box-folder 1: 9	<b>U.S. Department of Labor, 1939</b>
Box-folder 1: 10	<b>Wilkie, Wendell, 1943</b>
Box-folder 1: 11 - 14	<b>Miscellany</b>
Box-folder 1: 11	<b>A-F, circa 1921-1955</b>
Box-folder 1: 12	<b>G-L, circa 1939-1943</b>
Box-folder 1: 13	<b>M-R, circa 1940-1943</b>
Box-folder 1: 14	<b>S-Z, 1921-1940</b>
Box-folder 1: 15	<b>Unidentified, circa 1908-1940</b>
Box-folder 1: 16	<b>Outgoing, 1935, 1945</b>

**Legal Documents Series 2.**

Box-folder 1: 17	<b>Legal Documents (includes writing contracts), 1908-1913</b>
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**Writings and Speeches Series 3.**

**Scope and Contents note**

Includes typescripts, publishers' notices, and related material.

Box-folder 1: 18	<b>Lists of Writings (stories, novels, plays), n.d.</b>
Box-folder 1: 19	<b>Analysis of <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>, circa 1939</b>
Box-folder 1: 20	<b>Novel - <i>Of Human Kindness</i>, 1940</b>
Box-folder 1: 20	<b>Plays (includes <i>Flags of California</i> and <i>Please Stand By</i>), n.d.</b>
Box-folder 1: 21 - 22	<b>Poetry (typescripts and printed copies), circa 1916-1937, n.d.</b>
Box-folder 1: 23	<b>Reviews, 1939, n.d.</b>
Box-folder 1: 24	<b>Screenplay - "Perjury", 1922</b>
Box-folder 1: 25	<b>Short Stories, n.d.</b>
Box-folder 1: 26	<b>Speeches, n.d.</b>
Box-folder 2: 1 - 3	<b>Stories and Articles (printed copies), 1917-1941</b>

**Research Files Series 4.**

Box-folder 2: 4 - 5	<b>Migrant Question</b>
Box-folder 2: 4	<b>Clippings, circa 1939-1940</b>
Box-folder 2: 5	<b>Reports and Speeches, circa 1939-1940</b>
Box-folder 2: 6	<b>Mitchell Family (clipping, theatre programs), circa 1879-1880s</b>

**Ephemera Series 5.**

Box-folder 2: 7	<b>Guest Book, circa 1922-1947</b>
Box-folder 2: 8	<b>Miscellany (includes biographical sketch), n.d.</b>

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Box 2, Folder 9	<b>Christmas greeting cards from Yung See San Fong and two clippings 1926-1954</b> <b>Photographs</b> Series 6.
Box-folder 2: 9	<b>Photographs - Robert W. Service (2 items, including postcard with note from Service), circa 1910s</b> <b>Oversize</b> Series 7.
Box-folder 3: 1	<b>Scrapbook - mainly clippings relating to migrant issues, 1939-1940</b>
Box-folder 3: 2	<b>Writings</b>
Box-folder 3: 2	<b>Copies of stories for newspapers and magazines such as <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>, 1928-1937</b>
Box-folder 3: 2	<b>List of Stories, n.d.</b>