
Ben Yellen Correspondence with Charles L. Smith

Finding aid prepared by Special Collections & Archives

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ben Yellen Correspondence with Charles L. Smith

Identifier/Call Number: MSS 0667

Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego

9500 Gilman Drive

La Jolla, California, 92093-0175

Languages: English

Physical Description: 0.25 Linear feet(1 archives box)

Date (inclusive): 1960 - 2006

Abstract: The Ben Yellen correspondence with Charles L. Smith files contain mainly correspondence in the form of prescription-pad notes (1960-1970s) from Yellen to Smith regarding water rights in Imperial County (Calif.), writings and lists (1970-1999) created by Smith about Yellen, and a small amount of miscellaneous materials such as notes and newspaper articles regarding the Imperial Valley.

Creator: Yellen, Ben, 1907-1994

Acquisition Information

Acquired 2007.

Preferred Citation

Ben Yellen Correspondence with Charles L. Smith, MSS 0667. Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego.

Publication Rights

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Biography

Charles L. Smith, of Berkeley, California, was a self-described "sympathetic fellow pamphleteer" and self-appointed bibliographer, who worked for the Planning Department at the Division of Highways (now Caltrans). In the 1960s, he first became acquainted with Yellen, an activist physician pamphleteer of the Imperial Valley, California, when Smith was working on a bibliography on rural water use and the 160 acre water limitation law. This law would later figure prominently in Yellen's lawsuits involving the Imperial Irrigation District. As part of Smith's work duties, he would read newspapers looking for local discussion of transportation projects, and during lunchtimes, would review these same newspapers for other items of interest to himself and to Yellen. He would send Yellen newspaper clippings or obtain and ship article reprints to Yellen via Greyhound Express and Yellen would reimburse him.

After Yellen's death in 1994, as a demonstration of Smith's admiration for Yellen's quest for justice, Smith attempted to get a statue dedicated to Yellen and worked to preserve his accomplishments. Smith collected correspondence that Yellen sent to him on small prescription-pad note paper that spanned two decades (1960-1970s), wrote essays critiquing Dr. Yellen's pamphleteering methods, prepared lists of articles about Yellen, and sent copies of Yellen's newsletters to various archives.

Related Materials

Ben Yellen Papers (MSS 193); Ben Yellen Correspondence with Arthur Brunwasser (MSS 305); Yellen Versus Imperial Irrigation District Collection (MSS 677).

Scope and Content of Collection

The files contain mainly correspondence in the form of prescription-pad notes from Yellen to Smith regarding articles and reprints that Smith would procure for Yellen and ship to Brawley, California, for Yellen's use. Also included are writings and lists by Smith about Yellen, and newspaper articles on subjects of interest to both men. The files are arranged in four series: 1) CORRESPONDENCE, 2) WRITINGS, 3) MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS, and 4) ORIGINALS OF PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPIES.

SERIES 1: CORRESPONDENCE

Letters from and to Dr. Ben Yellen, much of which consists of small prescription-pad notes (1960-1970s) to Smith from Yellen, often requesting reprints of newspaper articles that Smith had discovered. In addition, there are samples of typical Yellen correspondence; to then U.S. president-elect William Jefferson Clinton, a letter to the "Dear Abby" newspaper column, a "Voice of the People" letter to the editor, as well as some correspondence by Smith to others concerning Yellen. The files are arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

SERIES 2: WRITINGS

Includes a typescript of the flyer/mailer Smith sent out advocating for a statue of Yellen to be placed in either Brawley, El Centro, or at the University of California, San Diego; lists entitled, "Newsletters of Dr. Ben Yellen, 1971-1991" [missing page two]; "Ben Yellen Articles by Lynn Ludlow" (former editor and retired journalist with the SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER);

"Articles about Dr. Ben Yellen" (featuring a variety of newspapers); and typescript essays entitled, "The Saga of Dr. Ben Yellen, M.D. and Prof. Paul Taylor;" [Paul Taylor was an economics professor at UC Berkeley, and husband of photographer Dorothea Lange, who became absorbed in California water issues] and "A Critique of Dr. Ben Yellen's Pamphlets." The files are arranged alphabetically by title.

SERIES 3: MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

A small amount of handwritten and typescript notes and newspaper articles on subjects Smith and Yellen were interested in such as a documentary on the Salton Sea and unconventional journalists in Mexico.

SERIES 4: ORIGINALS OF PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPIES

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Desert Growers Association.
Imperial Irrigation District (Calif.).
Smith, Charles L. -- Correspondence
Yellen, Ben, 1907-1994 -- Archives
Brawley (Calif.)
Imperial County (Calif.)
Imperial Valley (Calif. and Mexico)
Irrigation water -- California, Southern
Water resources development -- California, Southern -- Finance
Water rights -- California, Southern -- History
Water transfer -- California, Southern
Water-supply -- California, Southern

CORRESPONDENCE

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | <p>Smith, Charles L. 1993 - 1995
General note
Contains correspondence to Ben Yellen, C.R. McCabe of the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, and Professor Merrill Goodall of the Claremont Graduate School.</p> |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | <p>Yellen, Benjamin
General note
ca. 1960-1970s. Prescription-pad notes. Includes typescript list by Smith of note contents, and receipts showing method by which Smith was reimbursed by Yellen for the expense of copying and mailing articles to him.</p> |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | <p>Yellen, Benjamin 1977
General note
Contains typescript note criticizing the press for not announcing a legal victory.</p> |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | <p>Yellen, Benjamin
General note
ca. 1992. Photocopy typescript of Yellen's "Voice of the People" letter responding to a local news article.</p> |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | <p>Yellen, Benjamin 1992 - 1993
General note
Contains handwritten correspondence to Smith and photocopies of correspondence to then president-elect William Jefferson Clinton and to the "Dear Abby" newspaper column.</p> |

WRITINGS

Box 1, Folder 6	Articles about Dr. Ben Yellen 1970 - 1991 General note Contains typescript lists of articles by newspaper, date, title, and author. Verso side contains handwritten list of Yellen newsletters Smith sent to the University of California, Berkeley.
Box 1, Folder 7	Ben Yellen Articles by Lynn Ludlow 1964 - 1977 General note Contains list of articles by retired editor and journalist with the SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER (now the SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE).
Box 1, Folder 8 Box 1, Folder 9	Critique of Dr. Ben Yellen's Pamphlets Doc Yellen - Alternate Possibilities General note Undated. Handwritten list and draft of notes regarding Yellen, his methods, and what alternatives he might have used.
Box 1, Folder 10 Box 1, Folder 11	Newsletters of Dr. Ben Yellen, 1971-1991 Saga of Dr. Ben Yellen and Prof. Paul Taylor 1999 General note Contains typescript essay about how Smith knew these two men who were deeply involved in California rural water issues.
Box 1, Folder 12	Statue of Dr. Ben Yellen 1995 General note Contains typescript of mailer Smith used to advocate the building of a statue to Dr. Yellen in either Brawley, El Centro, or at the University of California, San Diego.
MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS	
Box 1, Folder 13	Miscellaneous notes and lists General note Undated. Contains miscellaneous typed and handwritten notes and a cover page of one of Yellen's lawsuits.
Box 1, Folder 14	Newspaper clippings 1995 - 2006 General note Includes articles about a documentary film on the Salton Sea and unconventional journalists in Mexico.
ORIGINALS OF PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPIES	
Box 1, Folder 15	Originals of Preservation Photocopies