



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Walter P. Reuther Library

Guide to the Ben Legere Papers LP000709

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Walter P. Reuther Library

5401 Cass Avenue

Detroit, MI 48202

URL: <https://reuther.wayne.edu>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Walter P. Reuther Library
Creator:	Legere, Ben
Title:	Ben Legere Papers
ID:	LP000709
Date [inclusive]:	1906-1970
Physical Description:	5 Linear Feet (9 MB, 1 OS portfolio)
Language of the Material:	English
Language of the Material:	Material entirely in English.
Abstract:	Union activist Benjamin Legere (1887-1972) worked in the theater as an actor, playwright, and director. He participated in both the American and Canadian labor movements as a member of the General Executive Board of the Canadian One Big Union and an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Legere's papers reflect his activities in the American and Canadian labor movements, California politics and the theater.

Citation Style

"Ben Legere Papers, Box [#], Folder [#], Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University"

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History

Benjamin J. (Ben) Legere was born in Tauton, Massachusetts, on May 30, 1887. An actor by profession, Legere was active in both the American and Canadian Labor movements as an I.W.W. organizer and as a member of the General Executive Board of the Canadian One Big Union. In 1912 he helped lead the Little Falls, New York, textile strike. During 1919 Legere was a participant in the New York actors' strike, and in 1922 he was one of the leaders of the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike.

Moving to the West Coast in the mid-1920s, Legere was active in San Francisco Bay Area theater and radio as a playwright, actor, director and critic. Several of his plays, which dealt with labor movement themes, were financial successes.

In addition to his work in the theater and labor movement, Legere held positions in a number of reformist political organizations and causes: First Secretary of the San Francisco Council of the Democratic Party, Chairman of the California Production for Use Congress, Chairman of the Joint Bay Area Strike Committee of the W.P.A., and the San Francisco Bay Area Sobell Committee.

Ben Legere died on January 29, 1972.

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Scope and Content

Legere's papers reflect his activities in the American and Canadian labor movements, California politics, and West Coast theater. They are arranged in four series.

Series Description: Series 1: Biographical materials including two chapters of an incomplete autobiography manuscript, portions of two diaries, fragments of several incomplete literary manuscripts and appointment books.

Series 2: Materials relating to Legere's activities in the American and Canadian labor movements and California politics covering the period between 1910 and 1970. Included are materials relating to the I.W.W., the Canadian One Big Union, the Little Falls textile strike of 1912, the Lawrence textile strike of 1922, and the California United Labor Campaign of 1935.

Series 3: Legere's correspondence covering the period 1900 to 1965. The correspondence reflects Legere's social, political and theatrical activities and is arranged chronologically within subject and correspondent groupings.

Series 4: Materials reflecting Legere's theater activities during the period 1910 to 1950. The materials include clippings of reviews of Legere's performances, a series of theater columns written by Legere during the 1930s and a collection of theater memorabilia.

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Arrangement

Material is arranged chronologically within subject and correspondent groupings in 4 series. Series 1 (Boxes 1-2), Series 2 (Boxes 2-5), Series 3 (Boxes 5-8), Series 4 (Boxes 8-9).

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Finding aid revised by Deborah Rice. Finding aid proofread and updated by Aimee Ergas. 2014-06-05
2020-07-31

Acquisition

The papers of Benjamin J. Legere were placed in the Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs in June 1975 by Sheila Whitaker Hutchings. Additional material was added by Legere's granddaughter, Robbin Legere Henderson, in 2013.

Processing History

Processed and finding aid written by Walter P. Reuther Library.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Use

Refer to the Walter P. Reuther Library "Rules for Use of Archival Materials."

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Matilda Robbins Papers, John and Phyllis Collier Papers, and the IWW Collections at the Reuther Library.

Transfers

Twelve unidentified photographs, a painting and two negatives have been placed in the Reuther Archives Audio Visual Collection. A tape of reminiscences made by Ben Legere in the early 1960s was donated to the Archives Oral History Collection in 1970 by Barbara Dane.

One folder of photographs of Legere's parents was transferred to the Audiovisual Department.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Labor unions
- Workers' theater
- Textile Workers' Strike, Lawrence, Mass., 1912.
- Industrial Workers of the World
- Robbins, Matilda

Collection Inventory

Series 1

Scope and Contents

Series 1 is composed of biographical materials including two chapters of an incomplete autobiography, portions of two diaries, fragments of several incomplete literary manuscripts, appointment and address books, lists of Legere's occupations, and miscellaneous memorabilia.

Title/Description	Instances
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Autobiography Manuscript Chapters	box 1	folder 1
Diary Fragments, Occupation Lists	box 1	folder 2
Biographical Newspaper Clippings	box 1	folder 3
Notebooks, Undated	box 1	folder 4-5
Appointment Books, 1935	box 1	folder 6
Address Books	box 1	folder 7
Literary Manuscript Fragments	box 1	folder 8
Memorabilia, various	box 1	folder 9
Notes, various, undated	box 2	folder 1-3
Income Tax Data, 1952-1953	box 2	folder 4
Army Services Forces Cargo Plans	box 2	folder 5
Fairhope School	box 2	folder 6

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Series 2

Scope and Contents

Series 2 contains materials relating to Legere's activities in the American and Canadian labor movements and California politics covering the period 1910 to 1970. Included are materials relating to the I.W.W., the Canadian One Big Union, the Little Falls textile strike of 1912, the Lawrence textile strike of 1922, and End Poverty in California. The series also contains radio scripts from the United Labor Radio Campaign of 1935, a manuscript copy of Irwin Edelman's *The Suppressed Facts in the Rosenberg Case*, and a collection of West Coast cooperative pamphlets and newsletters.

Title/Description	Instances	
Newspaper Clippings-Little Falls Strike, Legere Trial, 1913	box 2	folder 7
One Big Union-Circular Letters, Handbills	box 2	folder 8
I.W.W.-Handbills, Pamphlets	box 2	folder 9
British Columbia Federationalist, photocopy, 1924 October 3	box 2	folder 10
Maritime Herald, photocopy, 1924 November 15	box 2	folder 11
Lawrence Labor, photocopies, 1923 August 31, December 7	box 2	folder 12
End Poverty in California, Convention Minutes, 1935 May 17-19	box 2	folder 13
Labor Unity Committee--Handbills, Circular Letters	box 2	folder 14-16
Radio Scripts, United Radio Campaign, 1935 October 12-18	box 2	folder 17-22
"Hunger," Solidarity editorial by Legere, 1914 May 16	box 2	folder 23

Radio Scripts, United Radio Campaign, 1935 October 19-November 4	box 3	folder 1-17
Rosenberg Case--Pamphlets, Handbills	box 3	folder 18
Irwin Edelman--The Suppressed Facts on the Rosenberg Case	box 3	folder 19-23
Irwin Edelman--The American Left, A Diagnosis of Its Afflictions	box 3	folder 24
Committee for Morton Sobell--Pamphlets, Newspaper Clippings	box 3	folder 25
Newspaper Clippings--Miscellaneous Political, 1912-1965	box 4	folder 1-5
Handbills and Broadsides--Miscellaneous Political, 1910-1970	box 4	folder 6-11
West Coast Cooperative Pamphlets and Newsletters, 1940-1950	box 4	folder 12-13
West Coast Cooperative Pamphlets and Newsletters, 1950-1970	box 5	folder 1-2
Political Pamphlets--Miscellaneous, 1920-1955	box 5	folder 3-5

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Series 3

Scope and Contents

Series 3 contains Legere's correspondence covering the period 1900 to 1965. The correspondence reflects Legere's social, political and theater activities and is arranged chronologically within subject and correspondent groupings.

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence, One Big Union, 1924 August-1925 March	box 5	folder 6-7
Correspondence, Lenore Legere, undated and 1927-1949	box 5	folder 8-14
Correspondence, Elaine Legere, undated and 1918-1953	box 6	folder 1-9
Correspondence, Legere Family, undated and 1928-1949	box 6	folder 10-14
Correspondence--Jane (Legere) Sawyer, 1944-1953	box 7	folder 1
Correspondence--Benita (Legere) Coble, 1941-1946	box 7	folder 2
Correspondence--Ben Legere Jr., 1947-1949	box 7	folder 3
Correspondence--Vita (Legere) Henderson, 1934-1948	box 7	folder 4
Correspondence--Matilda Robbins, 1939-1946	box 7	folder 5
Correspondence--Alice Gillette, 1950-1952	box 7	folder 6
Correspondence--Morris L., 1927-1929	box 7	folder 7
Correspondence--Mary (Haley), 1942-1946	box 7	folder 8
Correspondence--Friends, 1948-1964	box 7	folder 9-10
Correspondence, General, 1900-1949	box 7	folder 11-17

Correspondence, General, undated and 1950-1965 box 8 folder 1-7

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Series 4

Scope and Contents

Series 4 contains materials reflecting Legere's theater activities during the period 1910 to 1965. Materials include clippings of reviews of Legere's performances, a series of theater columns written by Legere during the 1930s, a collection of actor's cue books, an outline of a Federal Theatre Project play "Prologue to Glory," by E. P. Conkle, and a collection of playbills covering the period 1930 to 1965.

Title/Description	Instances	
Newspaper Clippings--Reviews of Legere Performances	box 8	folder 8
Telegraph Hill Players--Records, 1925	box 8	folder 9-10
Wasp Theater Column Clippings, 1929 October-1930 December	box 8	folder 12-13
Play Script Rehearsal Lines, various	box 8	folder 15-16
Play Script Rehearsal Lines, various	box 9	folder 1-3
Actor's Cue Books	box 9	folder 4-6
Capitaliad, published play by J.G. White	box 9	folder 7
Prologue to Glory--Federal Theater Project Outline by E.P. Conkle	box 9	folder 8
Playbills--Miscellaneous, 1930-1965	box 9	folder 9-12
Playbills, 1910s-1920s	box 9	folder 13

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