

Broussais C. Beck papers, 1919-1961

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Beck, Broussais C
Title	Broussais C. Beck papers
Dates	1919-1961 (inclusive) 1919 1961
Quantity	2.93 cubic feet including microfilm (5 boxes)
Collection Number	0155
Summary	Seattle rowing enthusiast and businessman who played a role in infiltrating Seattle labor union activities in 1919-1920
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	Open to all users.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Broussais Coman Beck, Seattle businessman and rowing enthusiast, was born in Walla Walla, Wash., on Aug. 29, 1886. He attended the University of Washington and was active in both football and rowing, winning outstanding honors as an oarsman. He left the UW in 1910, and finished his education at Yale, graduating in electrical engineering in 1911. Despite this degree, he went into merchandising, taking department-store jobs in Boston and Portland before a position as the Bon Marche's store manager brought him back to Seattle. He remained a staunch supporter of rowing, and became chairman of the Board of Rowing Stewards at the UW shortly after its inception. He advocated the Washington style of rowing developed by his UW coach, Hiram Conibear, and played an important role in its adoption at Yale and at the University of California. His support for and interest in UW rowing culminated in his 1923 book, *Rowing at Washington*. In 1929, he turned his attention to the development of "day-light tube" lighting, establishing the Luminous Tube Corporation and serving as its first president. He had suffered from fragile health for much of his life, and after a prolonged illness, he died in Seattle on Aug. 7, 1936.

As the Bon Marche's store manager during the Seattle general strike of 1919, Beck had spies planted into the ranks of the labor movement. The use of agents to infiltrate the labor movement was a common practice at the time, employed not only by the Bon Marche but by police, the federal government, and other employers. The Bon Marche played a central role in galvanizing an uncompromising employer reaction to the labor crisis. In response to the strike, employers formed an alliance called

the Associated Industries, presided over by Frank Waterhouse, whose business interests included the department store. After the strike failed, labor leaders called for a boycott of the Bon Marche as part of the strategy against the Associated Industries. The Bon Marche's labor policy required accurate advance information, so in order to insure precise reports Beck tried to keep strict control over his agents, but wasn't always successful. One of Beck's agents gained enough access into the Industrial Workers of the World organization to audit the financial reports of its Northwest Committee for political prisoners.

Though the agents are often referred to by code numbers or initials in the papers, it appears that Agent 107 was probably Edward W. Graham (1890-1956). Broussais C. Beck Papers (Accession 0155-001). The minutes of the IWW's Northwest District Defense Committee for September 28, 1919 (Acc# 0155-001 Box 2, Folder 12) state that "E.W. Graham" was elected committee chairman at that meeting. Agent No. 17's report for the same day in (Acc# 0155-001 Box 1, Folder 28) states that Agent 17 was elected to the same position.

Content Description

The papers encompass three accessions, the first one very different from the other two. Accession no. 0155-001, measuring 1.73 cubic feet, contains material Beck collected during his monitoring of labor activity, including, most notably, spy reports, but also newspaper articles, broadsides and other material. These documents, dating from 1919 to 1920, include ephemera relating to the Industrial Workers of the World and local labor union and cooperative movement activities.

The other two accessions, nos. 0155-002 and 0155-003, each measuring 0.21 cubic feet, document Beck's interest in rowing; neither has an inventory. No. 0155-002 contains the manuscript to *Rowing at Washington*, and correspondence from 1922 to 1934 regarding rowing. Major correspondents include Frederic W. Allen, Andrew J. Balliet, Carroll (Ky) M. Ebright, Darwin Meisnest and Dean Witter. Accession no. 0155-003 contains additional documents on UW rowing (bulk 1923), with some materials touching upon the early history of UW sports in general. Included are correspondence (1922-1924, with one telegram of condolence from Eleanor Beck to Mrs. Russell S. Calloway, 1961), notes (one by Broussais Beck from 1928), newspaper clippings (*Seattle Times* articles from 1960 about the Lake Washington Rowing Club), and memoirs. Major correspondents in this accession include Grace Conibear, Dean Witter, and Andrew J. Balliet.

None of the three accessions deal in any significant degree with the internal functioning of the Bon Marche, the Luminous Tube Corporation, or Beck's personal life unrelated to athletics.

Use of the Collection

Alternative Forms Available

Restrictions on Use

Consult the restrictions governing publication for each of the accessions listed below.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Eleanor Nordhoff Beck, the widow of Broussais Beck, originally donated the papers in Accession no. 0155-001 to the Bureau of Economic Research, ca. 1940; they were transferred to the University of Washington Libraries in Mar. 1960. The materials in Accession no. 0155-002, originally part of the Eleanor Nordhoff Beck Papers (Accession no. 0629), were received on July 25, 1966, as a bequest of her estate; they were separated from Accession no. 0629 on May 21, 1981. Broussais C. Beck, Jr. donated Accession no. 0155-3 on Feb. 24, 1993.

Processing Note

Some of the enclosures which originally accompanied the spy reports of Accession no. 0155-001 are now distributed throughout the other series in the accession, but some enclosures remain with their respective reports. The dates used for chronological filing of the reports are those identified as the dates the activities described took place. Most reports also include a second date on which the report was made. Noticeable inconsistencies in the dating occur; for example, three reports bear the same date associated with three different days of the week.

The arrangement of Accession no. 0155-001 was refined and a new index created in May 1998.

Bibliography

While Beck does not figure prominently in either of the following books, the Beck papers were used in these studies of the early twentieth-century labor situation:

Dana Frank, *Purchasing Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: UW Press, 1964). (Friedheim cites the Broussais C. Beck Papers as "Papers on Industrial Espionage").

Detailed Description of the Collection

Accession No. 0155-001: Broussais C. Beck papers, circa 1919-1920

2.51 cubic feet (3 boxes originals)
2 microfilm reels : positive ; 35 mm.

Scope and Content: Reports, ephemera, minutes, newspaper articles, broadside. Microfilm of entire accession is included in this accession.

Concerns activities of labor organizers and Wobblies in Seattle, as reported by Beck's agents. Includes papers relating to industrial espionage, copies of newspapers such as "The Industrial Worker," the "Lumber Workers Bulletin," and material relating to Eugene Debs, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the Seattle Cooperative movement.

Digital Content/Other Formats: [View selections from this accession in digital format](#)

Restrictions on Access: Open to all users. This heavily used accession has been microfilmed for preservation purposes. Researchers are required to use the microfilm unless there is a very specific reason that the originals must be consulted. Originals may be used if the microfilm is out on loan.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Reports		
Box/ Folder		
1/1-23	0155-001 By Agent No. 106 [view]	1919-1920
1/24-30, 2/1-8	0155-001 By Agent No. 17 [Edward W. Graham (1890-1956)] [view]	1919-1920
2/9	0155-001 By E.W.G. [Edward W. Graham (1890-1956)] [view]	1919
2/10	0155-001 By [Wahke?] [view]	undated
2/11	0155-001 Unidentified	1919
Minutes		
Box/ Folder		
2/12	0155-001 Northwest District Defense Committee	1919
Bulletins		
Box/ Folder		
2/13	0155-001 Construction Workers Industrial Union No. 573, I.W.W. [view]	1919
Box- folder:Oversize		
3/1	0155-001 Metal Mine Workers Industrial Union No. 800, I.W.W.	1919
Box/ Folder		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
2/13	0155-001 Shipbuilders Industrial Union No. 325, I.W.W.	1919
2/13	0155-001 <i>Strike Bulletin</i> <u>General Notes</u> : Concerning lumberjacks.	1919
Clippings		
Box/ Folder		
2/14	0155-001 <i>Seattle Union Record</i>	1919-1920, undated
Newspapers		
Box- folder:Oversize		
3/4	0155-001 <i>Industrial Worker</i>	1919-1920
Ephemera		
Box/ Folder		
2/15	0155-001 Associated Industries of Seattle	1919, undated
2/16	0155-001 Central Labor Council of Seattle [view]	1919-1920, undated
2/16	0155-001 Construction Workers Industrial Union No. 573, I.W.W. [view]	1919, undated
2/16	0155-001 Co-operative Food Products Association [view]	1919, undated
2/17	0155-001 Eugene Debs [view]	1919, undated
2/18	0155-001 Hotel, Restaurant and Domestic Workers Industrial Union No. 1100, I.W.W. [view]	1919, undated
2/19	0155-001 Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) [view]	1919, undated

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box- folder:Oversize		
3/2-3	0155-001 Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.)	1919, undated
Box/ Folder		
2/20	0155-001 National Co-operative Association. Northwest Branch [view]	1919
2/20	0155-001 Northwest District Defense Committee	1919
Box- folder:Oversize		
3/2	0155-001 Northwest District Defense Committee	1919
Box/ Folder		
2/20	0155-001 Northwest Information Bureau	1919
2/21	0155-001 Shipbuilders Industrial Union, I.W.W. [view]	1919, undated
2/21	0155-001 Soldiers and Sailors Union [view]	1919, undated
2/22	0155-001 Triple Alliance of King County [view]	1919, undated
2/23	0155-001 Washington State Federation of Labor [view]	1919
2/23	0155-001 Miscellaneous	1919, undated
Box- folder:Oversize		
3/3	0155-001 Miscellaneous	
Box/ Folder		
2/24	0155-001 Miscellaneous labels [view]	1919, undated

Accession No. 0155-002: Broussais C. Beck papers, 1922-1934 (bulk 1922-1931)

.21 cubic feet (1 box)

Scope and Content: Correspondence, 1922-1934 (bulk 1922-1931), and manuscript "Rowing at Washington", ca. 1924.

Restrictions on Access: Open to all users.

Restrictions on Use: Creator's literary rights not transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Separated Material: Segregated from Eleanor N Beck (widow) papers in 1981.

Accession No. 0155-003: Broussais C. Beck papers, 1922-1924, 1928-1960 (bulk 1922-1924)

.21 cubic feet (1 box)

Scope and Content: Correspondence, notes, clippings, memoirs.

In 1923 Broussais Beck began to write a history of rowing at the University. This accession contains letters sent and received from individuals who played a role in the early development of rowing.

Restrictions on Access: Open to all users.

Restrictions on Use: Creator's literary rights transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Acquisition Info: Broussais C. Beck, Jr., Feb. 24, 1993.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Businessmen--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
General Strike, Seattle, Wash., 1919
Industrial relations--Washington (State)--Seattle
Labor unions--Washington (State)--Seattle
Rowers--Washington (State)--Seattle--Archives
Rowing--Washington (State)--Seattle
Strikes and lockouts--Washington (State)--Seattle

Personal Names :

Allen, Frederic W
Balliet, Andrew J
Beck, Broussais C.--Archives
Conibear, Grace
Ebright, Carroll M
Meisnest, Darwin
Witter, Dean

Corporate Names :

Bon Marché (Department store)
Industrial Workers of the World
University of Washington
Varsity Boat Club (University of Washington)

Other Creators :

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

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