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Guide to the Sinclair Lewis and Josephine Weil Meyer Correspondence 1921-1922



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Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Citation	3
Biographical Note	3
Scope Note	4
Related Resources	4
Subject Headings	4
INVENTORY	4

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.LEWISMEYER
Title	Lewis, Sinclair, and Josephine Weil Meyer. Correspondence
Date	1921-1922
Size	0.25 linear feet (1 box)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) first US writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. The collection comprises correspondence from Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, the wife of the president of a Chicago clothing manufacturer in the 1920s.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Lewis, Sinclair, and Josephine Weil Meyer. Correspondence, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

Sinclair Lewis was born in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, on February 7, 1885. Lewis' father was Edwin J. Lewis, a physician. His father had difficulty relating to his bookish, shy son. Lewis' mother, Emma Kermott Lewis, died in 1891, when Lewis was six years old. Lewis' father quickly remarried to Isabel Warner in the following year. Lewis' childhood was, by all accounts, quiet and lonely. At the age of 13, Lewis attempted to run away from home to become a drummer boy in the Spanish-American War. Lewis was accepted to Yale in 1903, and graduated in 1908, delayed due to his time-off to work and travel.

Lewis married Grace Livingston Hegger, an editor at Vogue magazine, in 1914. They had one son, Wells Lewis, who was killed in action while serving in World War II. Lewis and Hegger divorced in 1925. Lewis remarried in 1928 to Dorothy Thompson, a political newspaper columnist. Lewis and Thompson had one son, Michael Lewis, in 1930, and divorce in 1942.

Lewis' publishing began at Yale, mostly romantic poetry and short sketches, in the Yale Courant and the Yale Literary Magazine (which Lewis later edited). After graduation, Lewis occupied his time and earned money by writing shallow, popular stories for magazines and selling plots to American novelist Jack London. Lewis' first serious novel, published in 1914, was *Our Mr. Wrenn: The Romantic Adventures of a Gentle Man*, though he followed up this work with more "potboilers" or books written largely to pay for living expenses. In 1920, Lewis gained great commercial success with *Main Street*. From that point on, Lewis continued writing successful novels, including *Babbitt* and *Dodsworth*. Lewis' writing culminated with his receipt of the 1930 Nobel Prize in Literature. He was the first American writer to win the award, and his novel *Babbitt* was given special attention in earning him the Nobel Prize. Lewis continued writing after winning the prize. In his later life, Lewis continued writing though his struggles with alcoholism culminated at his admittance into the Austin Riggs Center, a psychiatric hospital in Massachusetts. Lewis eventually died from his advanced alcoholism at the age of 65 in 1951.

Josephine Weil Meyer was born in about 1893. She was married to Samuel R. Meyer, President of a Chicago clothing manufacturing company. The couple lived in Chicago's Kenwood neighborhood. According to her daughter, Anne M. Rothschild, Meyer met Lewis at a ball hosted by Chicago investment banker Melvin Lloyd Emerich, sparking a friendship that lasted until Meyer's death in the late 1920s.

Scope Note

The collection includes eight letters and cards sent by Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer in the early 1920s.

The collection was previously part of the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/scrc/findingaids/topics>

Subject Headings

- Lewis, Sinclair, 1885-1951
- Meyer, Josephine
-

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Correspondences, 1921

- Letter from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, March 26, 1921
- Letter from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, April 5, 1921
- Letter from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, April 22, 1921
- Letter from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, July 1, circa 1920s
- Letter from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, July 9, circa 1920s

Box 1

Folder 2

Correspondence, 1921-1922

- Postcard from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, August 30, 1921
- Postcard from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, October 18, 1921
- Telegram from Sinclair Lewis to Josephine Weil Meyer, June 23, 1922