

Norman and Mary-Louise Meyer Papers

1942-1984 (*Bulk:* 1960-1980)

3 boxes (4 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 778



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Opposition to fluoridation of public water supplies in Massachusetts swelled in the 1950s, culminating in passage of a law in 1958 mandating that towns that wished to fluoridate would first put the proposal to public referendum. The primary force advocating for this law was the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association, an organization founded and directed by Norman and Mary-Louise (Shadman) Meyer of Wellesley and which remained the leading anti-fluoridation group in the Boston area for twenty years. Having met and married while students at Harvard (1943) and Wellesley, respectively, the Meyers were tireless supporters of civic activities ranging from educational and environmental causes to public television (through the Citizens for Public Television in Boston), and disability (Norman served as director of the Protestant Guild for the Blind in Watertown), and they were stalwart members of the Wellesley town meeting. Norman Meyer died in Tortola in 1986, with Mary-Louise following in 1999.

The Meyer collection is a rich assemblage of letters and other materials documenting the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association and the struggle against fluoridation in Wellesley, Newton, and other communities in eastern Massachusetts. Central figures in the movement, the Meyers maintained a wide correspondence with other activists throughout the region and published and disseminated information on the dangers of fluorides in the water supply.

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Antifluoridation

Massachusetts (East)

Background on Meyer family

Opposition to fluoridation of public water supplies in Massachusetts swelled in the 1950s, culminating in passage of a law in 1958 mandating that towns wishing to fluoridate must first put the proposal to public referendum. The primary force advocating for this law was the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association, an organization founded and directed by Norman and Mary-Louise (Shadman) Meyer of Wellesley, and which remained the leading anti-fluoridation group in the Boston area for twenty years. Norman worked with the group until 1979 when he resigned. Having met and married while students at Harvard (1943) and Wellesley, respectively, the Meyers were tireless supporters of civic activities ranging from educational and environmental causes to public television (through the Citizens for Public Television in Boston), disability (Norman served as director of the Protestant Guild for the Blind in Watertown), and the arts (with many documented visits and purchases to the Alpha Gallery in Boston). Norman Myers was also the chairman for Massachusetts Citizens Rights Associations educational television. Furthermore, they were stalwart members of the Wellesley town meeting, and documented the ongoing protest against the fluoridation project there that began on October 15, 1969. The Meyers stood for liberty and individual rights, and wanted to prove that government subsidies often supported activities and business that were environmentally harmful. They worked tirelessly to publish and disseminate information on the dangers of fluorides in the water supply, spreading the idea that fluoridation is not just a public health measure, but it is an issue people should be able to decide for themselves. Norman Meyer died in Tortola in 1986, with Mary-Louise following in 1999.

Scope of collection

The Meyer Papers are a rich assemblage of letters, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, periodicals and other sources documenting the work of the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association. The collection has documents ranging from 1942-1983, a 40-year span of activism against fluoridation, showcasing the debate primarily in the United States, and in Massachusetts. Organization is mostly consistent with the way Norman Meyers arranged the collection for viewing. Documents center on activism against fluoridation in Eastern Massachusetts areas: Ayer, Brookline, Belmont, Cambridge, Fitchburg, Newton, and Wellesley.. The Meyer's also kept documents highlighting protest against fluoridation in foreign countries. The coverage of Wellesley activism is extensive, with documents spanning from 1960-1980, and showcasing the large opposition in the area.

The Meyer's additionally maintained a wide correspondence with other activists throughout the region such as Philip Zanfaga, the president of the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association; Eloise Dyer, their secretary; Dewy Bogart, former president; and George Walcott, a doctor who was against fluoridation. There is also general correspondence with local activists, where the Meyer's discussed a range of topics, such as informative articles, passed legislation, and the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association's public outreach. *The Tap*, a newspaper established by the Massachusetts Citizens Rights Association, covered ways to get involved with anti-fluoridation activism and recent legislation.

The Meyers additionally collected newspaper clippings and periodicals covering fluoridation and explaining legislation, spanning from 1954-1981. These articles cover enacted laws for specific regions in the United States, Congress's stance on fluoridation, and voting statistics for fluoridation, allowing a look at public opinion for specific areas. The collection also covers their opposition from 1955-1978, including propaganda and public endorsements of fluoridation. A rich assortment of Letters to the Editor, 1955-1984, document the diversity of opinions and reasons around public fluoridation support or opposition.

The Meyers additionally collected newspaper clippings and periodicals covering fluoridation and explaining legislation, spanning from 1954-1981. These articles cover enacted laws for specific regions in the United States, Congress's stance on fluoridation, and voting statistics for fluoridation, allowing a look at public opinion for specific areas. The collection also covers their opposition, and public endorsements of fluoridation, including propaganda. Articles span from 1955-1978. A rich assortment of Letters to the Editor, 1955-1984, showcase the diversity of opinions and reasons around public fluoridation support or opposition.

Balancing activist and public voices are a number of scientific publications kept by the Meyers, which showcase the negative health effects of fluoridation. The publications span from 1942-1984 and offer medical opinions and research on fluoridation. They discuss the toxicity of the substance and the dangers of putting it in public water. Authors such as Juanita Thompson, John J. Callahan, and Brian Hoel cover the fluoride debate and discuss the dangers of fluoridation.

Inventory

Correspondence

Bogart, Dewy

1962-1980

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1959-1981

Box 1: 2

Dyer, Eloise

1959-1981

Box 1: 3

Walbott, George and Edith

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Box 1: 4

Wood, Cornelius

1962-1967

Box 1: 5

Zanfaga, Philips

1962-1979

Box 1: 6

General Correspondence

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Box 1: 7

General Correspondence

1953-1965

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General Correspondence

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General Correspondence

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Meyer, Norman: General Notes

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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Bruce R. Meyer, 2013.

Processing Information

Processed by Kylee Christensen, March, 2019.

Related Material

For materials related to the Meyers Papers, see other [antifluoridation collections in Special Collections and University Archives](#).

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Antifluoridation movements--Massachusetts

Drinking water--Fluoridation--Law and legislation--Massachusetts

Water--Fluoridation--Law and legislation--Massachusetts

Genres and formats

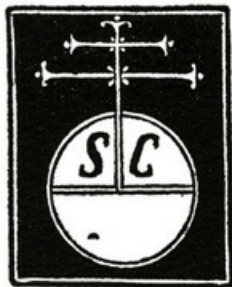
Clippings (information artifacts)

Serials (publications)

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