

# Benjamin Appel:

## A Preliminary Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

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### Descriptive Summary

<b>Creator</b>	Appel, Benjamin, 1907-1977
<b>Title:</b>	Benjamin Appel Papers
<b>Dates:</b>	1920-1977
<b>Extent:</b>	34 document boxes and 1 oversize box (15.53 linear feet); uncatalogued accessions: 4 document boxes (1.68 linear feet)(u)
<b>Abstract:</b>	The papers include holograph and typescript drafts, correspondence, diaries, notebooks, clippings, reviews, contracts, and royalty statements spanning the career of this American novelist, playwright, and short story writer.
<b>Call Number:</b>	Manuscript Collection MS-00110
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Access</b>	Open for research. Researchers must create an online Research Account and agree to the Materials Use Policy before using archival materials. <b>Part or all of this collection is housed off-site and may require up to three business days' notice for access in the Ransom Center's Reading and Viewing Room. Please contact the Center before requesting this material: <a href="mailto:reference@hrc.utexas.edu">reference@hrc.utexas.edu</a></b>

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### Administrative Information

<b>Acquisition</b>	Gift (G10627)
<b>Processed by</b>	Liz Murray, 1996
<b>Repository:</b>	<a href="#">Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin</a>

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of American novelist Benjamin Appel include holograph and typescript drafts, correspondence, diaries, notebooks, clippings, reviews, contracts, and royalty statements from 1920 to 1977. The collection is arranged in four series: I. Works, II. Correspondence, III. Career and Personal Papers, and IV. Works of Others. Appel maintained his manuscripts and other papers in labeled stationery boxes. The order of this inventory has been derived from Appel's own arrangement. Descriptive information from the boxes has been transferred to the foldered material.

The works in the first series are organized in four Subseries: Novels, Plays, Short Stories, and Other Writings. Pertinent correspondence is scattered throughout the works found in this Series. Arranged alphabetically by title, the novels in Subseries A include a draft of Appel's first successful book *Brain Guy* published by Knopf in 1934. Like *Brain Guy*, a number of Appel's novels are drawn from his youthful recollections of life in Manhattan's West Side, including his last work *Hell's Kitchen*, published in 1977. In all, his works have been translated into Spanish, Italian, German, French, Dutch, Czech, Polish, Rumanian, and Russian. Unpublished novels are also present, as well as numerous drafts of the "big family novel" or "Big Book," which Appel considered his most important work. Envisioned as a series of novels, Appel hoped to capture the story of "man-in-society" by tracing the lives of two families across sixty years of American history. The first of these novels *A Time of Fortune*, published in 1963, covers the years from 1890 to the beginning of World War I. Numerous drafts intended for this series are present, covering subsequent decades, political climates, and historical events. While he preferred to focus on his novels, especially the "Big Book" series, much of Appel's revenue came from another literary source, juvenile books. His last work of this kind, *Heart of Ice*, adapted from an old French fairy tale, was published in 1977. Title changes are sometimes found in Appel's works in both the draft and reprint stages. For example, the novel *Autobiography of a Tastemaker* evolved from *The Signature of Love* by Brenda Appleton. *Dancing in a Dream* and *Sweet Money Girl* are similarly related, while *Brain Guy* reappeared in paperback as *The Enforcer*.

In addition to gangsters, con-men, politics, and the mean streets of New York City, Appel also wrote non-fiction, including *The People Talk*, his Depression-era oral history of ordinary people interviewed during an automobile tour of America. Appel's experiences in Manila during World War II (1945-46) are reflected in the detailed entries of his *Manila Diary* and the novel *Plunder*. Also the author of science fiction, Appel's last novel of this genre, *The Devil and W. Kaspar*, was published at the time of his death.

The three plays in Subseries B echo the American urban settings found in Appel's novels, as well as the theme of war. While known primarily as a novelist, Appel's plays were recognized by playwright Clifford Odets who wrote letters of encouragement to Appel in the 1950s.

Appel's published and unpublished short stories in Subseries C are organized according to the author's chronological arrangement of selected stories written in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as a number of published stories he compiled. These arrangements may reflect the order Appel devised for various short story anthologies published in the 1930s. The remaining short stories were arranged in alphabetical order by the accessioner.

The other writings in Subseries D reflect the diversity of Appel's literary work. These include wide-ranging formats such as a radio script and speeches for war service agencies. Also present is material for a proposed anthology of Mexican short stories edited by Appel, including his article "Hecho en Mexico "which recounts the political repercussions of honoring Frida Kahlo at her death (1954), by fulfilling her request to have the Mexican Communist Party flag drape her coffin. Related newspaper clippings are also present.

Many of the literary and popular magazines in which Appel's stories and articles appear are included with this collection. These have been transferred to the Ransom Center Library.

The bulk of Appel's correspondence from 1920-1977 is found in Series II. Included are holograph and typewritten carbons of his letters, as well as letters written to him. Appel maintained his correspondence in chronological order. Correspondents include friends, family, agents, editors, publishers, writers, and playwrights, including Louis Adamic, Nelson Algren, Nathan Ausubel, Millen Brand, Erskine Caldwell, Bennett Cerf, Stoyan Christowe, Morton Cooper, Malcolm Cowley, J. Frank Dobie, Albert Halper, Hiram Haydn, Conrad Knickerbocker, Paul Leslie, Yvonne MacManus, William F. Meckfessel, Edward J. O'Brien, Max Pfeffer, Elmer Rice, Bill Saroyan, and Upton Sinclair. While Appel did employ a series of agents during his writing career, much of his correspondence involves self-promotion of his novels, both new material and reprints of existing titles, as well as foreign translations. The correspondence also reveals Appel's fierce opposition to censorship. At considerable financial loss, Appel refused to sign a Texas Education Agency "Non-Subversive Oath for Authors "which was required as a prerequisite for a 1963 textbook contract. Subsequently, *Publishers' Weekly* invited Appel to write an article describing his experience with Texas and the Oath which was published in the September 7, 1964 issue. The following month, The Authors League of America adopted a resolution opposing such oaths and pledged "the support of the League for the position of any author who stands upon his constitutional and professional rights and refuses to take such an oath."

The Career and Personal Papers found in Series III range from a diary begun on his 12th birthday in 1919, through his college and war years to his 1977 obituaries. The dates of the diaries are somewhat problematic in that the years represented on the covers may not coincide with the dates the entries were written. Appel's ink drawings are frequently scattered throughout. Also included are numerous notebooks which, like the diaries, contain story ideas and outlines. Business papers such as contracts, royalty statements, and Appel's Washington, D.C. employment file from the mid-1940s are also present. Reviews of Appel's works from newspapers and magazines are contained in scrapbooks as well as folders. Problems surrounding the financial outcome of the 1963 film *Cry of Battle* are also detailed.

The last series, Works of Others, contains two works by Percy Greg and Paul Leslie which were abridged by or adapted from Appel. Also included are engravings and poems for artist and poet Helen West Heller "printed in honor of her memory" by Rose Kleidman. A photograph of Kleidman's pastel "Coal Miner's Life "is also present.

Because of age and paper quality, many items in the collection are extremely fragile and brittle. Cautionary flags have been placed in folders where photocopying is not possible due to deterioration. Protective paper sleeves bear a "Fragile!" note when delicate handling is required. Users of the collection are asked to be aware of these circumstances and ask staff for assistance when needed.

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**Series I. Works**

## Subseries A. Novels

*Autobiography of a Tastemaker*

Pre-final draft, nd. Title page reads " <i>The Signature of Love</i> by Brenda Appleton"	<b>box 1 folder 1</b>
Revised typescript, photocopy. Title page reads " <i>A Successful Woman</i> by Benjamin Appel"	<b>folder 2</b>
Final draft 1, Feb. 22, 1969	<b>folder 3-4</b>
Final draft 2, March 22, 1969	<b>folder 5</b>
Final draft 3, April 22, 1969	<b>folder 6</b>
Final draft 3, April 22, 1969 (continued)	<b>box 2 folder 1</b>
Final draft, Oct. 17, 1972. Title page reads " <i>Taste-Maker: The "Autobiography" of a Successful Woman</i> by Benjamin Appel"	<b>folder 2</b>
Revised typescript, nd	<b>folder 3</b>
<i>Beyond the Anchored Skeleton</i> , bound typescript	<b>folder 4</b>
<i>Brain Guy</i> , revised typescript	<b>box 3 folder 1-3</b>
<i>Commencement Program</i> , bound typescript,	<b>folder 4</b>
<i>Dancing in a Dream</i> [see <i>Sweet Money Girl</i> ], typescript with holograph corrections	<b>folder 5</b>
<i>Dear Carla</i> , uncorrected carbon typescript	<b>box 4 folder 1</b>
The Devil and W. Kaspar	
Final drafts, Oct. 5, 1974	<b>box 4 folder 2-4</b>

Revised typescript	<b>folder 5</b>
Original rewrite	<b>folder 6-7</b>
Final draft, June 20, 1975	
Carbon copy	<b>box 4 folder 8</b>
Photocopy, with minor corrections, informally bound	<b>box 5 folder 1</b>
Miscellaneous typescript pages	<b>folder 2</b>
<i>[Football Novel]</i> , Lafayette College, holograph and typescript drafts	<b>folder 3-7</b>
<i>Heart of Ice</i> , revised typescript and master proofs, Jan. 13, 1976 and March 15, 1977	<b>folder 8</b>
<i>Hell's Kitchen</i> , original typescript with editor's corrections, 1977	<b>box 6 folder 1-2</b>
<i>Life and Death of a New Dealer</i> , typescript draft	<b>folder 3-5</b>
<i>Louie's America</i> , corrected typescript	<b>folder 6-7</b>
Manila Diary	
Original typescript	<b>box 7 folder 1-2</b>
Revised typescript	<b>folder 3</b>
Partial typescript transcription and photocopy of original typescript	<b>folder 4-5</b>
Description of "Manila Journal" project	<b>folder 6</b>
<i>Marquis College</i> , first novel at Lafayette College, original typescript	<b>folder 7</b>
<i>Marquis College</i> (continued)	<b>box 8 folder 1</b>

## Negro-Saxon Solution

Typescript with subtitle "or <i>The Frank T-Manuscript</i> "with minor corrections	<b>box 8 folder 2</b>
Typescript, informally bound with two photocopies	<b>folder 3-5</b>
<i>The People Talk</i> , revised typescript	<b>folder 6-8</b>
<i>The People Talk</i> (continued)	<b>box 9 folder 1-3</b>
<i>Plunder</i> , carbon typescript	<b>folder 4-5</b>
Prophet With a Brush: Ben Shahn	
Next to final draft	<b>box 9 folder 6</b>
Typescript, Dec. 5, 1973	<b>folder 7</b>
Typescript rejected by Arbor House, 4/25/77	<b>box 10 folder 1</b>
Information on Ben Shahn	<b>folder 2</b>
<i>Runaround</i> , revised typescript draft	<b>folder 3-4</b>
Sweet Money Girl	
Original typescript draft	<b>box 10 folder 5-6</b>
Revised typescript draft, also titled "Three-Way Street"	<b>folder 7-8</b>
<i>A Time of War</i> [part of the "Big Novel" project], typescript drafts and notes	<b>box 11 folder 1-5</b>
<i>A Time to Kill</i> [part of the "Big Novel" project], microfilm of typescript, ca. 1965	<b>folder 6</b>
Ideas and drafts for the "Big Novel"	
Miscellaneous ideas	<b>box 12 folder 1</b>
Notes and material; drafts	<b>folder 2</b>

Notes, plans not needed or already used	<b>folder</b> 3-4
1920s material	<b>folder</b> 5-6
1920s material (continued)	<b>box 13 folder</b> 1
Collegiate material	<b>folder</b> 2-3
1930s material	<b>folder</b> 4-5
1960s-1970s material	<b>folder</b> 6
Philippines material	<b>box 14 folder</b> 1-3
"Skidrow," logging novel, old manuscript reference for Big Novel	<b>folder</b> 4
Carbon typescript drafts of Big Novel	<b>folder</b> 5-7
Typescript drafts of Big Novel (continued)	<b>box</b> 15-16
Drafts of "The Burning Wood" section of the Big Novel	<b>box 17</b> <b>folder</b> 1-5
[Whodunnit Novel]	<b>box 18 folder</b> 1
Subseries B. Plays	
<i>Catch the Nearest Way</i>	<b>box 18 folder</b> 2
<i>Fireball</i>	<b>folder</b> 3
<i>The Last to Live</i>	<b>folder</b> 4
Subseries C. Short Stories	
1920s-1930s, holograph and typescript drafts, arranged by BA	<b>box 18</b> <b>folder</b> 5-6
1920s-1930s, arranged by BA (continued)	<b>box 19</b> <b>folder</b> 1
1929-1938, arranged by BA	<b>folder</b> 2-3

1930s, arranged by BA	<b>folder 4-5</b>
Published stories, compiled by BA	<b>box 20 folder 1-3</b>
Unpublished stories, compiled by BA	<b>folder 4</b>
Stories, arranged alphabetically by accessioner	
A-L	<b>box 20 folder 5</b>
"Miss America and the Look-Back Boys"	<b>folder 6</b>
N-Wh (includes untitled works)	<b>box 21 folder 1</b>
"The World's First Atomic Amusement Park"	<b>folder 2</b>
Subseries D. Other Writings: Articles, Radio Scripts, Speeches, Story Ideas and Outlines	
Articles on Gaston Lachaise, Ben Leider, David Stone Martin, Ben Shahn, and Richard Wright	<b>box 21 folder 3</b>
<i>Ask Anybody in the Neighborhood</i> , radio script	<b>folder 4</b>
Book reviews	<b>folder 5</b>
[Mexican short story anthology] edited by BA, 1956-60, with related material	<b>folder 6-8</b>
Speeches written for Paul V. McNutt, War Manpower Commission, with numbered list, 1944-45	<b>folder 9</b>
Speeches written for Paul V. McNutt, War Manpower Commission (continued)	<b>box 22 folder 1-2</b>
Speeches written for Paul V. McNutt, duplicates	<b>folder 3-5</b>
Story ideas and outlines	<b>folder 6-8</b>

Writings in foreign language newspapers, 1950-1965

**folder 9**

**Series II. Correspondence**

1920s	<b>box 23 folder 1</b>
Mid-1930s to mid-1940s	<b>folder 2-3</b>
1944-1949	<b>folder 4</b>
1950-1952	<b>folder 5</b>
1953-1954	<b>box 24 folder 1</b>
1955-1956	<b>folder 2</b>
1957-1958	<b>folder 3-4</b>
1958-1960, with publishers and editors, comments on manuscripts	<b>folder 5</b>
1959-1961	<b>box 25 folder 1-3</b>
1962-1963	<b>folder 4-6</b>
1964-April 1965	<b>box 26 folder 1-3</b>
May 1965-1966	<b>folder 4-6</b>
1966-1967	<b>box 27 folder 1</b>
1968-1969	<b>folder 2-3</b>
1970-1971	<b>folder 4-5</b>
1970-1971 (continued)	<b>box 28 folder 1</b>
1972-1973	<b>folder 2-4</b>
1974	<b>folder 5-6</b>
1975	<b>box 29 folder 1-2</b>
1976	<b>folder 3-4</b>
1977	<b>folder 5</b>

**Series III. Career and Personal Papers**

Application for Fellowship, New Jersey State Council of the Arts, 1977-78	<b>box 29 folder 6</b>
Congress of American Writers, 1939 and 1971	<b>folder 7</b>
Contracts and royalty statements	
1940s	<b>box 30 folder 1</b>
1953-1977	<b>folder 2-5</b>
Criminal Investigation Reports, Office of the Provost Marshall, Manila and Manila Police Department reports, 1945-1946	<b>folder 6-7</b>
<i>Cry of Battle</i> (film version of <i>Fortress in the Rice</i> )	
Contract and litigation correspondence; movie synopsis, newspaper clippings, poster, and production photographs	<b>box 31 folder 1</b>
Producer's report	<b>folder 2</b>
Diaries, arranged by year	
[year not given] with story ideas	<b>box 31 folder 3</b>
Begun on 12th birthday, Sept. 13, 1919	<b>folder 4</b>
1921	<b>folder 5</b>
1925	<b>folder 6</b>
1944	<b>folder 7</b>
1949-1950	<b>folder 8</b>
1954-1955	<b>folder 9</b>
1958	<b>folder 10</b>

1966 with Last Will and Testament, 1953	<b>box 32 folder 1</b>
Lafayette College papers and related items	<b>folder 2</b>
Notebooks, chronological order	
Holograph notebook, n.d.	<b>box 32 folder 3</b>
Secondary school composition books, class work	<b>folder 4-5</b>
"Scetch [sic] Book of Notes on Travel, Nature, etc.... Starting June 29, 1922"	<b>folder 6</b>
Notes on nature, starting August 1, 1923	<b>folder 7</b>
Clippings, high school and college, 1924-1930 [oversize drawings removed to Box 35]	<b>folder 8</b>
Ideas for <i>The Dreamers</i> , ca. 1960?	<b>box 33 folder 1</b>
Maps of the Philippines	<b>folder 2</b>
Miscellaneous personal papers; two copies of the DeWitt Clinton High School <i>Red Book</i> ; clipping on Roosevelt, New York	<b>folder 3</b>
Obits, BA and death records	<b>folder 4</b>
Reviews	
BA's novels (excerpts), and biographical information from 1930s-1940s	<b>box 33 folder 5</b>
Brain Guy, 1934	<b>folder 6</b>
BA's works, 1934-1977 [oversize scrapbook removed to Box 35]	<b>folder 7-9</b>
Washington, D.C. employment file, 1944-1947	<b>folder 10</b>

## Series IV. Works of Others

Greg, Percy. *Across the Zodiac*, abridged by BA

**box 34**  
**folder 1-2**

Leslie, Paul. *The Good Family*, adapted from BA's *Hell's Kitchen*

**folder 3**

Kleidman, Rose. Engravings and poems in memory of Helen West Heller, 1956;  
photograph of Kleidman's "Coal Miner's Wife" (pastel drawing)

**folder 4**

Oversize material

**box 35**

**Benjamin Appel Collection, Uncatalogued Accessions (Acquisition numbers: G10783, G11308, G11974, 12-03-004-G, 16-03-003-G, 18-03-008-G)**

Typescripts: "Call it Love," "Claudius R. Dachshund and His Soldier", "Infernal Paradise," "Interludes", "The Lazy Dachshund Who Was Sent to Dog School," typescripts	<b>Container</b> 36
Typescripts: "1-4-All," "The Wise Little Fish Who Could Read Books," "Young In a Time of Fire," letters to Bill Methfessel	<b>Container</b> 37
Correspondence, "Dear Carla," US High Commissioner to Phillipines organizational chart, clippings, "The Good Family" contracts and correspondence, foreign contracts, Grosset & Dunlop correspondence	<b>Container</b> 38
Louie's America typescript, "Prophet with a Brush: Ben Shahn," Summer of 1925: Book Two, typescript story about bullfighting	<b>Container</b> 39

**Barcode Index**

- 1--059188000146792
- 2--059188000146873
- 3--059188000146881
- 4--059188000146890
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