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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Manuscripts and Archives
Yale University Library
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
mssa.assist@yale.edu
http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/

CALL NUMBER: MS 1238

CREATOR: Somers, Herman Miles, 1911-1991

TITLE: Herman Miles Somers papers

DATES: 1936–1979

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 16 linear feet (41 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Correspondence, teaching papers, organization and subject files and writings reflecting various aspects of Somers’ career as a teacher of political science at Harvard, Haverford and Princeton (1947-1979), as a member of task forces developing the Medicare program, and as a prolific writer in the field of American health policy. His five books on health care were all written in collaboration with his wife, Anne Ramsay Somers. Correspondence with friends and colleagues is concentrated on the subject of medical care and health policy. Important writers are Eveline M. Burns, Wilbur J. Cohen, Phillip L. Garman, John M. Gaus, and William Haber. Other correspondents include Walter A. Heller, Jacob Javits, Hubert Humphrey, Henry A. Kissinger, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Max Lerner, Richard Titmuss, and Edwin Witte. Somers’ organization and subject files, which make up nearly half the papers, contain material on health insurance, medical economics, malpractice and health care policy and health insurance legislation in New Jersey. A series of letters from Somers written from Germany immediately after World War II describe the period of reconstruction there. Also in the papers are speeches, essays, reviews and drafts for his books. These papers form part of the Contemporary Medical Care and Health Policy Collection.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1238

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1238.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html. The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Conditions Governing Access
The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
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Preferred Citation
Herman Miles Somers Papers (MS 1238). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Associated Materials
Contemporary Medical Care and Health Policy Collection. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Biographical / Historical
Herman Miles Somers, educator, author, and consultant, has combined a career of scholarship in medical economics and health policy with active involvement in public affairs. With his wife, Anne Ramsay Somers, he has published a number of influential studies on the organization and financing of medical care in the United States and has served in a variety of administrative and policy making positions in both the public and private sectors.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1911, Somers was educated at the University of Wisconsin (B.S., 1933; Ph.M., 1934) and Harvard University (M.A., 1944; Ph.D., 1947). Although he entered Harvard as the first Littauer Fellow in 1939, he left immediately after the outbreak of World War II to serve with the National Resources Planning Board and the War Production Board. In 1942 he was commissioned into the army and served in the Civilian and the Industrial Personnel Divisions. In 1946 he accepted an appointment as senior economist with the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, the office which became the subject of his doctoral dissertation. He taught at Harvard from 1947 until 1948, when he left to become professor and chairman of the Department of Political Science at Haverford College. He remained at Haverford until 1963, when he accepted an appointment as professor of politics and public affairs, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University. Somers continued to teach at Princeton until 1979.

Initially interested in social security and economics, Somers first approached the subject of health benefits in *Workmen’s Compensation* (1954), which he co-authored with his wife. After 1954, he and Anne Somers became gradually more involved in the area of health studies. Their second collaborative work, *Doctors,*
Patients, and Health Insurance (1961), was the first modern full-scale exposition of the organization and financing of health care in the United States, and it brought them wide recognition in the field. The book led to a variety of consulting positions, as well as appointment to state and federal task forces and commissions on health policy.

Somers played an active role in the development of the Medicare program in the 1960s; he served on a succession of federal task forces and councils which helped to structure the program. In 1967 he and his wife published Medicare and the Hospitals, the first book-length analysis of the new program. After the book's publication, he was appointed to the Health Insurance Benefits Advisory Council (1968), which advised the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare on the implementation of Medicare.

In the 1970s Somers and his wife published two major studies synthesizing the development and operation of American health policy, Health Care in Transition (1971), by Anne, and Health and Health Care: Policies in Perspective (1977), by both of them.

Herman Somers suffered a cerebral hemorrhage in August 1979 and has since been incapacitated.

Scope and Contents

The Herman Miles Somers Papers, part of the Contemporary Medical Care and Health Policy Collection, consist of sixteen feet of correspondence, teaching papers, organization and subject files, and writings. The papers are fragmented and incomplete, but they extend from 1936 to 1979 and provide at least some information for each aspect of his career.

The organization of Series I, CORRESPONDENCE, reflects the original order of the papers. Somers filed the bulk of his general correspondence chronologically, but he filed some letters, including most of his post 1974 correspondence, alphabetically by personal or corporate name. This filing system has been retained and refined. All correspondence of individuals or organizations for whom there was an existing alphabetical folder has been removed from the chronological files and added to the alphabetical folder. In addition, all exchanges for a few individuals of special significance have been filed in alphabetical folders. The CORRESPONDENCE series is now organized in two sections, Select and Chronological.

The Select correspondence is arranged alphabetically and extends from 1938 to 1979. The section contains exchanges with friends and colleagues in health studies and other fields, public officials, professional organizations, and others interested in medical care and health policy. Although the section is fragmented and incomplete, it contains lengthy runs of correspondence with several colleagues --- Eveline M. Burns, Wilbur J. Cohen, Phillip L. Garman, John M. Gaus, and William Haber --- whom he had first met while a student at Wisconsin or Harvard. Their exchanges cover both personal and professional topics, and the correspondence with Wilbur J. Cohen is of special value. The occasional letters with Brian Abel-Smith, John T. Dunlop, William Elliot, Walter A. Heller, Henry A. Kissinger, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Richard Titmuss, Edwin Witte, and other academic acquaintances and colleagues are also of interest. In addition, the Max Lerner file contains a lengthy critique by Somers of Lerner's America As a Civilization, and two 1977 letters to Rashi Fein present Somers' views on current national health insurance proposals.

Most of the material regarding Somers' appointments on federal task forces and councils is found in Series III, but the files for Robert Ball and Robert Myers in Select correspondence contain discussions concerning the appointments. The section includes a fair amount of routine correspondence with elected officials and their staffs. However, there are exchanges with a few officials, including Jay Constantine, Joseph S. Clark, and Frank Thompson, Jr., which contain somewhat more substantive discussions of issues. In addition, Somers' correspondence with Jacob Javits (1946-1978), contains personal correspondence, and letters and notes on Javits's health bill of 1978. The two 1968 letters from Hubert Humphrey are interesting because they campaign for support in the upcoming presidential election.

The Chronological correspondence is much more voluminous and extends from 1936 to 1979. In addition to routine inquiries and announcements, the section includes exchanges with friends, colleagues and public officials regarding health issues. Because of its greater volume and chronological arrangement the section provides a clearer reflection of Somers' developing interest and gradual concentration in health studies during the 1950s.
Series II, ACADEMIC PAPERS, covers Somers’ appointments at Haverford College and Princeton University, and it includes a few items from each of his visiting and term appointments as well as from his student days. The series, which spans the years 1936 to 1979, includes correspondence, memoranda, lecture notes, syllabi, and other material. It is organized in nine sections: University of California, Columbia University, New York School of Social Work, Cornell University, Hospital Administrators Development Program, Fulbright Scholarship, Harvard University, Haverford College, Princeton University, United States Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and University of Wisconsin.

The Haverford College section is the only section of the papers in which it was possible to retain Somers’ original filing system, subsection titles and folder entries. The section is organized in two subsections, Board of Managers and Lecture Material. The first subsection contains two folders of correspondence and related material from Somers’ service on the board of managers from 1969 to 1979; the second subsection spans his tenure at the college and makes up the bulk of the section. Lecture Material is arranged chronologically and consists of lecture notes, syllabi, and exams for Somers’ courses. Single folders in Lecture Material often contain material from two or more courses which were similar in nature, which had been combined or which were sequential.

Princeton University is the largest section in the series and is arranged in General Papers and Course Material. The General Papers contain memoranda and material from a number of committees and other groups on which Somers served. The Course Material subsection contains lecture notes, syllabi and exams for some of the courses which Somers taught as well as miscellaneous background material, notes and other related teaching material. Unlike the Lecture Material subsection in Haverford College, single folders in Course Material do not contain material relating to more than one course.

Series III, ORGANIZATION & SUBJECT FILES, spans the years 1940 to 1979. It is arranged alphabetically and documents Somers’ activities outside the academic sphere. Although the papers are primarily routine and fragmentary, there are files documenting Somers’ participation in law suits as an expert witness, and many which illustrate the extent of his work as a consultant to state and federal governments as well as to private and public organizations. Somers’ prominence as an expert in the fields of health insurance, medical economics, and malpractice is particularly well documented in the numerous files concerned with health care policy and health insurance legislation in New Jersey, and in the files from his appointments on United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Task Forces and Commissions. The papers from his activities at organizations such as the Milbank Memorial Fund, the National Academy of Sciences - Institute of Medicine, the Leonard Davis Institute, and the American Arbitration Association are of similar interest. The file on the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (1945), although unrelated to medical economics or health insurance, contains a series of descriptive letters by Somers from various places in Europe, primarily Germany, during the period of reconstruction immediately following World War II.

Series IV, WRITINGS, spans the years 1936 to 1978 and is organized in three sections: Biographical Material, Monographs, and Speeches and Shorter Writings. Biographical Material contains Somers’ curriculum vitae and bibliographies of his publications. Monographs is arranged chronologically by title and consists of drafts and copies of monographs and book chapters which Somers wrote or co-authored with his wife. Although the material in the section tends to be routine and incomplete, the files for Somers’ first book, *Presidential Agency: Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion* (1950), include research notes, interviews, and third-party correspondence between James Byrnes, Bernard Baruch, Kenneth Hechler, and Richard Neustadt concerning the book. Of the four books Somers wrote with Anne R. Somers, the section includes a working copy of *Workmen’s Compensation* (1954) and routine correspondence, contracts and reviews regarding *Doctors, Patients and Health Insurance* (1961) and *Medicare and the Hospitals* (1967). Folder 43 contains copies of the *California Law Review* articles out of which *Doctors, Patients and Health Insurance* grew. Although there is no copy of the final version of *Health and Health Care: Policies in Perspective* (1977), the section does contain copies of two early manuscripts which the Somers used in class-room teaching.

The Speeches and Shorter Writings, which spans the years 1936 to 1978, is arranged chronologically and includes reprints and drafts of journal articles, summaries and texts of speeches, reports, and other papers. The section also includes related correspondence. Although the reprints in the section do not represent all of Somers’ journal publications, they do cover a wide variety of topics, including American government, public administration, health insurance, malpractice, health maintenance and health care.
The Herman Miles Somers Papers were donated to Yale University Library by Anne Ramsay Somers in 1980. The papers are part of the Contemporary Medical Care and Health Policy Collection; the collection also includes the papers of Somers’ wife, Anne Ramsay Somers (Ms. Group no. 1237).

Arrangement

Arranged in four series: I. Correspondence. II. Academic Papers. III. Organization and Subject Files. IV. Writings.
## Collection Contents

### Series I. CORRESPONDENCE

2' (5 boxes)

CORRESPONDENCE is organized in two sections, Select and Chronological. The first section is arranged alphabetically, and the second section is arranged chronologically.

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<thead>
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<td>Description</td>
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<td>b. 35, f. 43</td>
<td>1958</td>
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<td>See also: box 32, folder 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. 39, f. 70</td>
<td>Undated speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 39, f. 71</td>
<td>Unidentified speeches</td>
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Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Economists
Educators
Health maintenance organizations
Malpractice
Medical care
Medicare
Public health

Geographic Names
Germany -- History -- 1945-1955
United States -- Politics and government -- 1945-1953
United States -- Politics and government -- 1945-1989

Preferred Titles
Contemporary Medical Care and Health Policy Collection

Names
Abel-Smith, Brian
Ball, R. M. (Robert M.)
Baruch, Bernard M. (Bernard Mannes), 1870-1965
Burns, Eveline M. (Eveline Mabel), 1900-1985
Byrnes, James F. (James Francis), 1882-1972
Clark, Joseph S.
Cohen, Wilbur J. (Wilbur Joseph), 1913-1987
Constantine, Jay.
Dunlop, John T. (John Thomas), 1914-2003
Elliot, William
Fein, Rashi
Garman, Phillip L.
Gaus, John M. (John Merriman), 1894-1969
Haber, William, 1899-1988
Hechler, Ken, 1914-2016
Heller, Walter Wolfgang, 1915-
Humphrey, Hubert H. (Hubert Horatio), 1911-1978
Javits, Jacob K. (Jacob Koppel), 1904-1986
Kissinger, Henry, 1923-
Lerner, Max, 1902-1992
Meyer, Robert James, 1904-
Neustadt, Richard E.
Somers, Anne Ramsay
Somers, Herman Miles, 1911-1991
Thompson, Frank, 1918-1989
Titmuss, Richard Morris, 1907-1973