



SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Octavus Roy Cohen Papers, 1877-1943 (bulk 1921-1942) SCHS # 0695.00

Description: 0.25 linear ft. (1 box)

Biographical/Historical Note: Octavus Roy Cohen, born in Charleston in 1891, was the son of Octavus Cohen (1860-1927) and Rebecca Ottolengui Cohen (1856-1938). He graduated from Clemson College in 1911 and later worked as a journalist and lawyer. He married Inez Lopez Bessemer in 1914, and they lived in Birmingham, Alabama, until 1935, until moving to New York and then Los Angeles. Cohen wrote and published many short stories focusing on African American life in Birmingham, and later became well known for his detective stories and novels. One reviewer criticized Cohen's Birmingham stories as "a travesty and a caricature." Cohen was a prolific author of stories, novels, plays, and film scripts. He died in Los Angeles in 1959.

Scope and content: Papers consist of letters, autographs, clippings, photographs, and a few miscellaneous items collected by Billy S. Arant. All the letters are signed by Octavus Roy Cohen, and some were written in response to requests for his autograph. Miscellaneous items include a postcard, 1918, advertising Octavus Cohen as a candidate for South Carolina lieutenant governor; three miniature booklets, 1914, originally packaged with cigarettes, containing a short story by Cohen about boxing; and a program, 1943, for a symposium of the Authors Guild. Photographs, which are mainly images of Octavus Roy Cohen and his family, have been removed to the SCHS Visual Material Collection (0695 VM). Also included is an oversize original illustration, 1940, for one of Cohen's serialized novels depicting an African American couple dancing.

Preferred citation: Octavus Roy Cohen papers, 1877-1943 (bulk 1921-1942). (0695.00) South Carolina Historical Society.

Search terms:

Cohen, Inez Lopez.
Cohen, Octavus, 1860-1927.
Cohen, Octavus Roy, 1891-1959.
Cohen, Octavus Roy, 1891-1959 -- Autographs
Authors, American -- 20th century
Miniature books
Screenwriters -- United States

Container listing:

BOX 1

- 1 Itemized list of letters, 1921-1942, arranged chronologically with original numbers. Also, some certificates of authenticity for various items.
- 2 Letter, 6 Dec. 1921, from Cohen to W. E. Ambler. (14) Typescript, signed.
- 3 Letter, 19 June 1925, to Miss Marion Deane. (15)
- 4 Letter, 2 Feb. 1931, to Frank Tricker. (16)
- 5 Letter, 25 March 1931, to H. Tracy Davis, Jr. (17)
- 6 Letter, 31 March 1932, to Louise May. (18)
- 7 Letter, 6 July 1933, to W. W. Paddon. (19)
- 8 Letter, 27 Jan. 1936, to W. Colston Leigh. (20)
- 9 Letter, 20 Feb. 1940, to Mildred Fraser Davis. (21)
- 10 Letter, 14 Feb. 1942, to Mrs. S. L. Portofee. (22)
- 11 Letter, 21 Feb. 1942, to Walter Winchell. (23)
- 12 Letter, 10 March 1942, to Anita Simpson. (24)
- 13 Letter, 10 August 1942, to Philip Dunning (25)
- 14 Letter, 9 April 1930, to Harry G. Crouse.
- 15 List of items, mostly autographs, arranged with original numbers.
- 16 Postcard, [1918], advertising Octavus Cohen (1860-1927) as a candidate for lieutenant governor of South Carolina. Includes a photograph of the candidate. (37)
- 17 Autograph of Octavus Roy Cohen, with letter of authenticity. (38)
- 18 Autograph on paper postmarked 1935, with a clipping about Cohen's book *With Benefit of Clergy*. (39)
- 19 Cancelled check, 1877, of the Southern Bank of the State of Georgia, paid to Octavus Cohen & Company. (40)
- 20 Clipping, 1925, from a magazine featuring a photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Octavus Roy Cohen. (45)
- 21 Three autographs on cards. (57)
- 22 Two autographs on cards, and a clipping of a biographical sketch about Cohen. (58)

- 23 Photocopies of a newspaper clipping about the “Writing Cohens,” and six photographs of Mrs. Cohen’s family members. (61)
- 24 Autograph, 1927, mounted on black paper. (65)
- 25 Three miniature books or pamphlets, 1914, originally packaged with cigarettes. They are copies of “The Heart of the Shadow,” a short story about boxing by Octavus Roy Cohen.
- 26 Program, 1943, for a symposium of the Second Authors’ Guild Craftsman Series in New York, autographed by participants, including Octavus Roy Cohen, Hugh Pentecost, Fannie Hurst, and Henry Pringle.