

PROVOSTY ARTHUR DAYRIES PAPERS
Part of the Michael D. Wynne Collection
Mss. 3320
Inventory

Compiled by
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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SUMMARY

Size 2.45 linear feet

Geographic Locations New Orleans, Louisiana

Inclusive Dates 1938-1961

Bulk Dates 1954-1961

Languages English

Summary The Provosty Arthur Dayries Papers consist of correspondence, legal documents, statement transcriptions, internal memoranda, published materials, newspapers and clippings created and accumulated by Provosty Arthur Dayries primarily during his leadership role between 1954 and 1961. They concern New Orleans Police Department personnel changes, internal investigations and trials.

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Stack Location(s) 32:136-137

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Provosty Arthur Dayries was born on April 10, 1895, in Pointe Coupee, Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, north of Baton Rouge along the Mississippi River. Dayries was the grandson of Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Oliver Otis Provosty. He was a graduate of Loyola University in New Orleans and enlisted in the United States Army in 1917 to serve in the First World War, where he gained a field commission to second lieutenant in 1919. He joined the Army Reserves after the end of the war, but also served in the Pacific, stationed out of New Zealand, during the Second World War, ultimately retiring as a colonel. He married Alice Filleul of New Orleans on June 2, 1920.

In 1951, Dayries, who was working for the VA at the time, became assistant superintendent of police—a political appointment by New Orleans Mayor deLesseps “Chep” Morrison—after the retirement of Milton Durel, specifically to bring internal crime within the police department to a stop. At the time, many police captains were part of an underground lottery, gambling, prostitution, and drinking network within the city, which was designated as a “vice” or “graft” investigation (the terms are used interchangeably throughout the materials). He was promoted to superintendent in 1954, following an investigation into the former superintendent of police, Joseph Scheuring, and his lack of leadership in working to end the police network.

Prior to the hiring of Dayries as assistant superintendent, Mayor Morrison hired a former FBI agent from Chicago (though originally from Louisiana) named Guy Banister to handle the internal affairs investigation from within the mayor’s office (though there is speculation that Banister may have simply been working undercover with the FBI, keeping tabs on the Civil Rights Movement, Communism, and labor unions operating in New Orleans, rather than having left). When Dayries was promoted to superintendent, he hired Banister to serve as assistant superintendent. The two repeatedly came into conflict. Banister would often speak to the media before statements had been cleared by Dayries or Mayor Morrison. Additionally, Banister would routinely overstep his bounds within the police department regarding his leadership, and at one point, attempted to take over Dayries’s job while he was in Florida speaking at a conference, before being reprimanded by the mayor.

Ultimately, Banister was dismissed from the police after threatening to kill a bar patron with his police-issue sidearm at the Old Absinthe House on Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras, and his subsequent (very public) arrest and for his history of insubordination. After a leave of absence, he was reinstated to the department to a lesser role in the communications office but left the position two days later and began working in conjunction with the city’s private Metropolitan Crime Commission (MCC). This committee was made up of private citizens concerned with the moralistic state of New Orleans and focused on police accountability and crime enforcement, among other issues like increasing church attendance and encouraging participation in both civic leagues and local government. In 1960, Banister asserted to the media that Dayries was corrupt and used his pull with the MCC and city officials to launch a grand jury investigation. Rather than go through a trial the way his predecessor had been subjected to, Dayries retired from public service. Banister hoped to succeed Dayries as superintendent based on his connection to Mayor Morrison, but he was not chosen to fill the role.

Banister lived out the rest of his life as a newspaper publisher and private detective and died of a heart attack on June 6, 1964. Along with his son, Mayor Morrison was killed in a plane crash in Mexico on May 24, 1964. Dayries died on May 5, 1964.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The materials held within the Provosty Arthur Dayries Papers consist of mainly newspaper articles, internal memos, and correspondence regarding the police investigation of crime in the city and vice investigations from within the New Orleans Police Department. More specifically, the materials contain internal police documents; news articles clipped by Dayries regarding investigations and his career with the police force; and correspondence with newspaper publishers and reporters, Mayor Morrison, city council members, and civic organizations like the Metropolitan Crime Commission and the Young Men's Business Council (YMBC). The latter organization was an all-male civic group focused on presenting suggestions regarding business, development, leadership, and handling crime to New Orleans's elected officials and law enforcement. The materials are mostly from 1954 to 1961—the years in which Dayries was tenured with the New Orleans Police Department and shortly after his retirement from the police force—with some documents dating back to 1940 and one photograph to 1938.

LIST OF SERIES

Series I. Correspondence, 1940-1960, undated

Series II. Reports and investigations, 1955-1958, undated

Series III. Newspaper clippings and articles, 1954-1961, undated

Series IV. Evidence bag, printed materials and photographs

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I. Correspondence, 1940-1960, undated

Series I contains general correspondence and correspondence between Provosty Dayries and other parties concerning his promotion to both assistant superintendent and superintendent, individuals investigated in the probe, reports from the state crime center, the Young Men's Business Council, and the private investigative body, the New Orleans Metropolitan Crime Commission.

Series II. Reports and investigations, 1955-1958, undated

The materials in this series consist of internal paperwork and press releases regarding the investigation into officers who participated in the vice network like Dominick Lanza, Joseph DePauli, Edward Sbisà, George Chaplain, and Clifford Reuther; the Guy Banister reprimands, arrest, and suspension; dealings with the New Orleans district attorney; statements to council members, the media, MCC, and YMBC; reports; and news releases. This series additionally contains materials related to police matters outside of the vice investigation, including prostitution; changing of traffic laws in the city; administrative, job-related, and benefits materials; race relations; state crime information center reports; grand jury materials; and assorted administrative reports.

Series III. Newspaper clippings and articles, 1954-1961, undated

This series contains news articles written from February 1954 to March 1960 and other undated clippings related to the vice investigation, Dayries, and other police-related news. These news articles begin at the end of box 2 and run the entirety of box 3. Undated articles are circa 1954, at the time of Dayries' appointment as assistant superintendent, with others ranging from circa 1957 to possibly 1961.

Series IV. Evidence bag, printed materials and photographs

This series contains assorted photos of Dayries, Banister, Mayor Morrison, and other New Orleans Police Department members, including recent police academy graduates. It also includes an empty paper evidence bag marked as having once contained fired rounds, assorted police training manuals, including a copy of the Civil Code of the City of New Orleans, and assorted Civil War memorial publications saved by Dayries.

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found in the series indicated, as represented by their numbers.

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			3	To Supt. of Police, June 6, 1956 – June 27, 1957
			4	To Supt. of Police, July 1, 1957 – Aug. 4, 1960, undated
			5	N.O.P.D. Physician Correspondence, Oct. 12, 1950 – July 16, 1956
			6	Mayor Morrison Correspondence, July 5, 1961 – July 29, 1960, undated
			7	Dayries Official Correspondence, Jan. 10, 1951 – July 29, 1960, undated
			8	Dayries Official Correspondence, Jan. 3, 1957 – Sept. 8, 1960, undated
			9	Dayries Personal Correspondence, March 23, 1954 – Aug. 11, 1960
			10	Criticisms, Police Bureau of Investigations, April 30, 1956 – May 21, 1956
			11	Congratulatory Letters, 1954
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			13	Metropolitan Crime Commission Correspondence, May 6, 1955 – June 14, 1956, undated
			14	Assorted Correspondence, August 22, 1955 – July 16, 1956
			15	Young Men's Business Council Correspondence, May 21, 1957 – June 22, 1957
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		3	Lionel Dominguez Lottery Case, June 23, 1955 – July 4, 1957, undated
		4	Traffic Bureau Head Joseph Depauli Suspension, May 24, 1955 – Sept. 6, 1955
		5	Joseph Depauli Suspension, July 1, 1955 – Aug. 22, 1955
		6	Conferences, Travel, Expenses, Aug. 5, 1955 – Feb 23, 1957, undated
		7	Metropolitan Crime Commission Meeting Minutes, Police Academy, Nov. 22, 1955
		8	Internal Affairs Reports, Dec 22, 1955 – July 22, 1957
		9	Job Security, Jan 1, 1956 – July 5, 1956
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		14	Clifford Reuther Statement, April 12, 1956
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		16	Louis D'Angelo and Richard Rogers Police Brutality Case, June 16, 1956 – Oct. 24, 1957
		17	Information Requests, July 6, 1956 – July 10, 1956
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