

## Finding Aid to the Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum Records

### Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum

Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum Records, 1936-1967

1.7 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 75

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### OVERVIEW

**Access:** The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

**Provenance:** Donated by Mrs. Joseph Cohen, Fargo, North Dakota, 1972 (Acc. 1900) and 1983 (Acc. 2091).

**Property rights:** The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

**Copyrights:** The Institute does not hold the copyrights.

**Citation:** [Identification of item]. Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum Records, MS 75. Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

### HISTORY

The Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum was begun in 1930 when a group of five persons formed a committee that was interested in providing adult education for the community and plans for holding public meetings were soon developed. Originally the Open Forum was part of the U.S. Dept. of Education's Program for Adult Study. For some years funding was received from the Carnegie Foundation, however, contributions from the community were the main source.

The Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum was patterned after the historical New England town meeting. As stated in one of its brochures "the Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum is actually Fargo's own 'town meeting' -

where folks from every walk of life may participate in discussions on a wide range of subjects." The primary reason why the Open Forum was started as a civic undertaking was to provide a medium for the community to become better informed through an exchange of information, ideas and opinions as well as a means of discussion.

The Open Forum held meetings when authoritative speakers of national and international stature could be obtained. The speaker was allowed 45 minutes to present his point of view; the remaining 45 minutes was devoted to questions from the audience with an open and free discussion. Most of the public meetings were held at Emerson Smith School auditorium in Fargo. When Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at the Open Forum in October, 1953, it was estimated that 6,000 people were in attendance and this was considered to be the largest audience ever to hear a speaker in Fargo-Moorhead in an indoor facility up to 1953.

The board of directors started with eight members in 1933, later totaling more than forty. The officers included the president, 1st vice-president, 2nd vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Perhaps the most notable president of the Open Forum was Joseph W. "Joe" Cohen who was president from 1949 to 1954 and served as a director for ten years.

When Cohen stepped down from active leadership in the Open Forum in 1954, the Fargo Forum praised him for "his uncanny ability in bringing diplomats and leaders to Fargo-Moorhead." Cohen was born in 1895 of immigrant Lithuanian parents in north-central Minnesota; he became president of the Wilcoh Company, a wholesale potato concern in Moorhead, in 1937, and was in that position until his death in 1961. An annual Cohen Memorial Lecture sponsored by the Open Forum was begun in 1962 in memory of Joe Cohen.

The speakers to the Open Forums included political leaders, ambassadors, senators, and educators. Some of the more prominent speakers included the following: Dr. Ralph Bunche, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Sir Oliver Franks, British Ambassador to the U.S., Senator Milton R. Young, Eleanor Roosevelt, journalist Carl Rowan, Dr. Charles Mayo, Ezra Taft Benson, Justice William O. Douglas, M.A.H. Ispahani, Pakistan's ambassador to the U.S., and anthropologist Dr. Margaret Mead.

The Open Forum continued to serve the community into the early 1960's, however, with the popularity of television, speakers sponsored by the three colleges and other resources, the Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum was no longer active after 1967, Carl T. Rowan, a staff writer for the Minneapolis Tribune, spoke highly of the Open Forum, stating that the Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum was an Upper Midwest institution.

(For a complete history of the Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum consult the following thesis: *A Record of the Activities Conducted by the Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum, in Fargo and Moorhead from 1930 through 1959* by Paul Thomas Crary, Master of Science Thesis, 1959, LC6553 F2 C7.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The Fargo-Moorhead Open Forum Collection consists of historical material, the articles of incorporation and by-laws, meeting minutes, membership lists, board of directors and officers lists, financial records, correspondence, biographies, photographs and lists of speakers.

The [Meeting Minutes Series](#) contains the first meeting of the Board of Directors named in the Articles of Incorporation in 1965. The folder includes only minutes of one meeting in 1940 and one in 1950; therefore this series is not complete.

The [Financial Records Series](#) includes some financial correspondence, treasure's report, income tax forms and contributions lists arranged chronologically.

The [Correspondence Series](#) is arranged chronologically and includes, both incoming and outgoing letters. The period covered is 1936 to 1967 with 1950 to 1954 as the most complete. The correspondence covers, primarily letters to and from speakers who appeared at the Open Forum.

The [Speakers Series](#) includes the lists of names, biographies and photographs of speakers. The Newspaper Clipping Series includes a file of the speakers and a file about Joseph Cohen.

The main [Speakers Series](#), in boxes 3 and 4, contain the correspondence, newspaper clippings, and photos of some of the speakers. The files are arranged in chronological order as to when they appeared at an Open Forum beginning with Christopher Pagent Mayhew, January, 1951, to Dr. Henry J. Kellermann, January, 1956. The most complete files are those of the Foreign Policy Institute and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Other items of note include newspaper articles about Joseph Cohen, his obituary, promotional pamphlets and speakers' programs.

**BOX AND FOLDER LIST**

<b>Box/Folder</b>	<b>Contents</b>
1/1	Historical Material and Register
1/2	Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, 1965
1/3	Meeting Minutes, 1940-1967
1/4	Board of Directors and Officers Lists, 1937-1962 Citizens' Advisory Board, 1938-1942
1/5	Membership Lists, 1952
	<b>Financial Records Series</b>
1/6	Correspondence, 1964
1/7	Treasurer's Report, 1952-1966
1/8	Income Tax Forms, 1965

1/9 Contributions Lists, 1947-1966

**Correspondence Series**

1/10 19 November 1936 - 18 December 1948  
1/11 15 July 1948 - 15 December 1949  
1/12 4 January 1950 - 26 September 1950  
1/13 3 October 1950 - 20 December 1950  
1/14 20 January 1951 - 10 August 1951  
1/15 23 January 1952 - 2 June 1952  
2/1 27 August 1952 - 24 December 1952  
2/2 14 January 1953 - 26 May 1953  
2/3 4 June 1953 - 30 September 1953  
2/4 1 October 1953 - 11 December 1953  
2/5 5 January 1954 - 30 July 1954  
2/6 19 August 1954 - 28 December 1954  
2/7 3 January 1955 - 8 December 1955  
2/8 21 February 1956 - 22 August 1961  
2/9 10 April 1962 - 25 May 1967

**Speakers Series**

2/10 Lists  
2/11 Biographies  
2/12 Photographs

**Newspaper Clippings Series**

2/13 Speaker  
2/14 Joseph Cohen

**Speakers Series**

3/1 Christopher Pagen Mayhew, 18 January 1951  
3/2 John Loftus, 20 March 1951  
3/3 Stringfellow Barr, 25 June 1951  
3/4 Dr. Laurence M. Gould, 25 September 1951  
3/5 Henry Toy, Jr., 29 October 1951  
3/6 F.S. Tomlinson, 26 November 1951  
3/7 Sir Oliver Franks, 6 December, 1951  
3/8 Charles I. Carpenter, 30 January 1952

Foreign Policy Institute-  
3/9 Correspondence, 1951-1952

- 3/10 Programs and Meetings
- 3/11 Newspapers Clippings and Photos
- 3/12 Senator Milton R. Young - Clarence  
J. McCormick Debate, 13 October 1952
- 3/13 Ryuti Takevchi, 15 June 1953
- 3/14 Dr. Martin J. Klotsche, 24 February 1953
- 3/15 Fernando Berckemeyer, 16 March 1953
- 3/16 Yehuda Harry Levin, 29 March 1953
- 3/17 Ambassador Gaganvihari Lallubhai Mehta, 27 April 1953
- 3/18 Andre Michalopoulos, 19 May 1953  
Eleanor Roosevelt, 23 October 1953-
- 4/1 Newspaper Clippings, Photos, Introduction
- 4/2 Correspondence, 1953-1954
- 4/3 Carl Rowan, 23 February 1954
- 4/4 Yehuda Harry Levin, 29 March 1954
- 4/5 Roger Seydoux, 21 April 1954
- 4/6 Foreign Students Panel, 2 February 1954
- 4/7 Ambassador Wilhelm M. Morgenstierne, 17 May 1954
- 4/8 Roger Baldwin, 25 October, 1954
- 4/9 Sir Robert Scott, 4 December 1954
- 4/10 Ambassador Eric Boheman, 8 December 1954
- 4/11 Dr. Charles Mayo, 13 December 1954
- 4/12 Malcolm S. Knowles, 22 March 1955
- 4/13 Stafford E. Barff, 3 May 1955
- 4/14 Ezra Taft Benson, 28 October 1955
- 4/15 Dr. Henry J. Kellermann, 17 January 1956
- 4/16 "Win the War to Win the Peace, Oct. 2-3, 1942
- 4/17 Leide-Tedisco, Monah, n.d.