

TITLE: Helene Thomas Bennett Collection

DATE RANGE: 1900-1988

CALL NUMBER: Y-MS 23

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2 boxes (1 linear feet)

PROVENANCE: Helen Anne Peil, grand-daughter of Helene Thomas Bennett

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CREDIT LINE: Helene Thomas Bennett Collection Y-MS 23, Yuma County Library District, Yuma, Arizona

PROCESSED BY: Laurie Boone

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Helene Alberta Thomas was born July 5, 1901 in Raton, New Mexico, and was the eldest child of Jonathan Bertie Thomas and Katherine Helen Wendel. Helene's father was the engineer on a passenger train on the Santa Fe railroad when it wrecked in Earl, Colorado in 1905, killing him instantly. Helene received a degree in chemistry in 1922 from the University of Kansas. Her first job was with the Kansas State Food Lab. She then obtained a Master of Arts degree in Bacteriology in 1924 and went to work for the Kansas State Public Health Lab.

Helene accepted an offer made by Yuma physicians to set up a laboratory and she opened the Yuma Clinical Laboratory in 1926. Unable to resist the knock of opportunity, Helene's mother financed another laboratory in El Centro, CA. and they formed a partnership called "Thomas Laboratories." They went on to open labs in the Yuma Medical Center, the Imperial Valley TB Sanatorium in Holtville, and in 1952, Thomas Agricultural Laboratories opened in Yuma.

Helene was influential in ending Yuma's typhoid epidemic and in the creation of an enforceable milk safety ordinance.

She married attorney and Arizona state legislator, Ray Crawford Bennett in 1927. Helene was the second woman in Yuma to fly a plane solo and was active in the Civil Air Patrol.

Helene passed away April 27, 1988.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The collection consists of biographical files, newspaper clippings, and correspondence, business papers from Thomas Laboratories and photographs, all with a date range of circa 1900-1986.

CONTAINER LIST:

BOX	FOLDER	TITLE	DATES
1	1	Biographical Files (1 of 4)	1901-1933
	2	Biographical Files (2 of 4)	1945-1978
	3	Biographical Files (3 of 4)	1984-1986
	4	Biographical Files: Ray Crawford Bennett	1930-1945
	5	Correspondence	1933-1945
	6	Thomas Laboratories	1944
	7	Newspaper clippings	1944-1984
2	1	Photographs: Helene Thomas Bennett & Family	1900-1980
	2	Photographs: Helene Thomas Bennett & Family	1900-1980
	3	Photographs: Helene Thomas Bennett & Family	1900-1980
	4	Photographs: Helene Thomas Bennett & Family	1900-1980
	5	Photographs: Helene Thomas Bennett & Family	1900-1980
	6	Photographs: K. Helen Wendel Thomas	1900-1964
	7	Photographs: Ray Crawford Bennett	n.d.