

# **Guide to the Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson and Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl Photographs and Photograph Albums of California Life**

**WA Photos 1296**



Sarah Lerner

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** WA Photos 1296

**CREATOR:** Benson, Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt, 1893-1944

**TITLE:** Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson and Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl  
photographs and photograph albums of California life

**DATES:** circa 1908-2003

**BULK DATES:** 1914-1947

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 3 linear feet (11 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** Captions in English.

**SUMMARY:** Photographs and photograph albums compiled by Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson and Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl documenting the Benson family in California, circa 1908-1947. Images are primarily formal and informal group and individual portraits of mostly identified men, women, and children chiefly in Big Bear City, La Crescenta, Los Angeles, and San Diego, California, but also in Indiana and other identified locations. Multiple photographs show the Benson family in Guadalajara, Mexico. Photographs also document James Bernard Benson's military service in Savenay, France, during World War I and William John Nicholl's military service in the American South during World War II. Malcolm Daniel Benson and Phyllis Pearl Benson appear in the albums as well. Also present are a scrapbook and papers relating to the Benson's cottage at Big Bear Lake, 1929-2003.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bensonphotographs>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.bensonphotographs>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

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

b.      box

## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Book Shop, LLC on the Frederick W. and Carrie S. Beinecke Fund for Western Americana, 2017.

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### Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

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### Conditions Governing Use

The Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson and Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl Photographs and Photograph Albums of California Life is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

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### Preferred Citation

Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson and Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl, Photographs and Photograph Albums of California Life. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

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### Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards. For more information, please refer to the Beinecke Manuscript Unit Processing Manual.

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## James Bernard Benson and Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson

James Bernard Benson (1891-1979) and Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson (1893-1944) met in 1911 at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. The couple married in California in 1917 and subsequently enrolled at the Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut to study for missionary service. During World War I, James Benson served with the United States Army in France; following the war, he returned to Los Angeles, California, soon finding work teaching in Guadalajara, Mexico. In 1927, the Bensons and their three children (Malcolm Daniel Benson, Eloise Benson, and Phyllis Pearl Benson) moved back to Los Angeles, where both James Benson and Ruth Benson were teachers. In 1930, the Benson family began construction on a cottage in Big Bear City, a development promoted by the Peter Pan Woodland Club.

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## Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl

Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl (1921-2016) married William John Nicholl (1914-2005) in 1942. William Nicholl worked in San Diego, California, as a sales representative for Breakfast Club Coffee following his service with the United States Army during World War II.

## Scope and Contents

Photographs and photograph albums compiled by Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt Benson and Eloise Jeanette Benson Nicholl documenting the Benson family in California, circa 1908-1947. Images are primarily formal and informal group and individual portraits of mostly identified men, women, and children chiefly in Big Bear City, La Crescenta, Los Angeles, and San Diego, California, but also in Indiana and other identified locations. Multiple photographs show the Benson family in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Photographs also document James Bernard Benson's military service in Savenay, France, during World War I and William John Nicholl's military service in the American South during World War II. Malcolm Daniel Benson and Phyllis Pearl Benson appear in the albums as well.

Also present are a scrapbook and papers relating to the Benson's cottage at Big Bear Lake, 1929-2003.

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## Collection Contents

b. 1	Photograph album	circa 1908-1916
b. 2	Photograph album	circa 1914-1941
b. 3	Photograph album	circa 1917-1919
b. 4	Photograph album	circa 1918-1922
b. 5	Photograph album	circa 1920-1928
b. 6	Photograph album	circa 1932-1939
b. 7	Photograph album	circa 1942-1945
b. 8	Photograph album	circa 1945-1946
b. 9	Photograph album	circa 1946-1947
b. 10	Photographs	circa 1908-1947
b. 11	Scrapbook	circa 1937-2003
b. 10	Papers	1929-1949

## 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

Soldiers -- United States -- Pictorial works  
Women -- West (U.S.) -- Pictorial works  
World War, 1914-1918 -- Pictorial works  
World War, 1939-1945 -- United States --  
Pictorial works

### Acquired From

Book Shop, LLC

### Geographic Names

Big Bear City (Calif.) -- Pictorial works  
Big Bear Lake (San Bernardino County, Calif. :  
Lake) -- Pictorial works  
California -- Pictorial works  
California -- Social life and customs -- 20th  
Century  
Guadalajara (Mexico) -- Pictorial works  
Indiana -- Pictorial works  
La Crescenta (Calif.) -- Pictorial works  
Los Angeles (Calif.) -- Pictorial works  
San Diego (Calif.) -- Pictorial works  
Savenay (France) -- Pictorial works

### Genres / Formats

Photograph albums  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks

### Names

Benson, James Bernard, 1891-1979 -- Portraits  
Benson, Malcom Daniel, 1920-2015 -- Portraits  
Benson, Phyllis Pearl, 1924-1996 -- Portraits  
Nicholl, William John, 1914-2005 -- Portraits

### Families

Benson family -- Portraits

### Contributors

Benson, Ruth Wilhelmina Kohlstedt, 1893-1944  
Nicholl, Eloise Jeanette Benson, 1921-2016