Finding Aid to the Robert F. Olwell Papers

Waverly Lowell
The Bancroft Library

2017
The Bancroft Library
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720-6000
bancref@library.berkeley.edu
URL: http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: The Bancroft Library
Title: Robert F. Olwell papers
Creator: Olwell, Robert F. (Architect)
Identifier/Call Number: BANC MSS 2017/157
Physical Description: 5 linear feet (1 carton, 3 tubes, 1 flat box, 41 oversize folders)
Date (inclusive): 1917-2016
Date (bulk): 1952-1984
Abstract: The Robert Frederick Olwell Collection is comprised of personal and professional papers documenting his life and work as an architect. The personal papers consist of photographs, files related to his education, and military service, and his personal art work. The professional papers contain manuscript material, drawings, prints, and photographs of design work done during his employment with the San Francisco architecture firm of Reid and Tarics. Also included are materials created or collected by his niece for a book about him that she had intended to write. These files contain correspondence and interviews with friends and coworkers.
Physical Location: Many of the Bancroft Library collections are stored offsite and advance notice may be required for use. For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library’s online catalog.
Conditions Governing Access: Collection is open for research.
Immediate Source of Acquisition: Carol Olwell donated the papers of her uncle Robert F. Olwell and material she had collected for a possible book on his life and work to The Bancroft Library in 2016.
Arrangement: Arranged to the folder level.
Biographical / Historical: Robert Frederick Olwell was born in 1917 in Everett, Washington to William W. Olwell a business manager at Weyerhauser Timber Co. and Helen Margaret Olwell. As a boy he played the organ for silent movies. He graduated from Everett High School with the desire to be a theater set designer, and attended the University of Washington (1935-1937) and upon the receipt of a scholarship, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1937-1940). Sadly for financial reasons, he was forced to leave school one class short. He loved small aircraft volunteering for the navy hoping to serve as a pilot, and served as a Lieutenant Commander on aircraft carriers in the Pacific during WWII.
Following the war, Olwell began his professional career in the Los Angeles architecture office of Harwell Hamilton Harris. Following five years of service as Lieutenant Commander for the U.S. Navy, he continued his career in the office of architect Joseph Esherick. He joined the firm of Reid & Tarics Associates in 1952. While an Associate with Reid & Tarics, he designed numerous schools and religious buildings as well as master planning, and the tunnels, portals, and systems for the Highway in Oahu HI. Olwell saw architecture as “an envelope for living, and felt that it should never dominate the scene or shout out its presence.” During this time he also designed residences for private clients. He served as a guest professor at the Bengal Engineering College, Howrah, West Bengal, India (1956-1957) and lectured part time at UC Berkeley (1957-1960). His design for the Robert Lewis Stevenson Chapel at Pebble Beach, CA won a National AIA First Honor Award in 1965. It was in this chapel in 1966 that he married Margaret (Maisie) Lilian Forell (1917-2009).
A resident of Sausalito, California, he passed away in 1988 and is buried in the San Francisco National Cemetery.
Preferred Citation: [Identification of item], Robert F. Olwell Papers, BANC MSS 2017/157c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
Related Materials: Burton Rockwell Collection, Environmental Design Archives, U.C. Berkeley
Scope and Contents
The Robert Frederick Olwell Papers primarily is comprised of personal and professional papers documenting his life and work as an architect. The personal papers consist of an early photograph album of his childhood years in Everett Washington and later photographs with his wife Maisie (Margarte Lillian Scholle) (1917-2009); files related to his education, military experience in the Navy, and personal art work such as sketches, watercolors, and etchings. The professional papers contain manuscript material, drawings, prints, and photographs of design work done during his employment with the San Francisco architecture firm of Reid & Tarics. Although a few residential designs are included the work is primarily for schools and religious institutions. Major projects included the chapel for the Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach, Oakland’s Greek Orthodox Church of the Ascension, the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in San Francisco, and Greenwich CT High School. Also included are materials created or collected by his niece for a biography of Robert F. Olwell that she had intended to write. These files contain correspondence and interviews with friends and coworkers.

**Conditions Governing Use**

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**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Olwell, Robert F. (Architect)
Olwell, Carol
United States. Bureau of Indian Affairs
United States. Bureau of Indian Affairs
Architects -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area
Architectural firms--California--San Francisco Bay Area--20th century
Architecture -- United States -- History
Architecture -- Pictorial works
Public buildings
San Francisco (Calif.)--Buildings, structures, etc.
Religious Architecture
School buildings

**Series 1: Personal Papers 1917-1993**

- **Physical Description:** 15 folders and 3 oversize folders
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged by subject content (loosely chronologically).
- **Scope and Contents**
  - Papers consist of files related to his education, military experience and personal art work.

- carton 1, Folder 1: Family Photographs approximately 1917-1934
- carton 1, Folder 2: Photographs 1941-1990
- carton 1, folder 3: University of Washington: School of Architecture Yearbook 1937
- carton 1, folder 4: Student Drawings, MIT approximately 1937
- carton 1, folder 5: Figure Studies approximately 1938
- carton 1, folder 6: Etchings 1938
- carton 1, folder 7: Military Service: Navy 1942-1949
- carton 1, folder 8: Military Service: Navy 1947-1988
- carton 1, folder 9: Aircraft watercolors (photocopies)
- carton 1, folder 10: Watercolor: Mt. Tam
- oversize-folder-folder 1A: Watercolors
- oversize-folder 2A: Aircraft watercolors
- oversize-folder 3A: Sketches
Series 1: Personal Papers 1917-1993

carton 1, folder 11  Teaching in India: Correspondence 1957-1958
carton 1, folder 12  James, Michael: Correspondence 1968-1993
carton 1, folder 13  Correspondence and Sketches (photocopies) 1945-1946
carton 1, folder 14  Misc notes undated
carton 1, folder 15  Post Mortem Materials 1988

Series 2: Professional and Project Records 1952-1984

Physical Description: 47 folders, 38 oversize folders, 1 flat box, 3 tubes
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically.
Scope and Contents
Professional papers contain manuscript material, drawings, prints, and photographs of
design work done during his employment with the San Francisco architecture firm of Reid
and Tarics.

carton 1, folder 16  Office Material approximately 1960-1988
carton 1, folder 17  Correspondence 1974-1982
carton 1, folder 18  Three Award Winning Churches undated
carton 1, folder 19  Job List
carton 1, folder 20  Alcatraz Proposal "The S.F. Light"

Scope and Contents
San Francisco, CA

oversize-folder 4A  Alcatraz Proposal "The S.F. Light"

Scope and Contents
San Francisco, CA

carton 1, folder 21  BART Civic Center Station

Scope and Contents
San Francisco, CA

oversize-folder 24C  Berry Residence

Scope and Contents
Los Altos, CA

oversize-folder 25C  Breck Residence 1983

Scope and Contents
Piedmont, CA; RHAA (landscape architects)

carton 1, folder 22  California State University, Sacramento Residence Halls 1964

Scope and Contents
Sacramento, CA

carton 1, folder 23  California State University Stanislaus 1961

Scope and Contents
Turlock, CA

oversize-folder 26C  California State University Stanislaus 1961

Scope and Contents
Turlock, CA

oversize-folder 27C  Canberra Master Plan

Scope and Contents
Canberra, Australia
oversize-folder 24C  CASPS Building
oversize-folder 15B  Chicago Tribune Better Rooms Competition (3rd 6th)
oversize-folder 28C  Church of the Redeemer 1978
  Scope and Contents
  Los Altos, CA

carton 1, folder 24  College of Notre Dame Library 1973
  Scope and Contents
  Belmont, CA

oversize-folder 29C  Del Valle/Alcalanes High School
  Scope and Contents
  Lafayette, CA

oversize-folder 29C  Denver High School
  Scope and Contents
  Denver, CO

oversize-folder 29C  Diamond Heights High School
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA

oversize-folder 29C  Duluth Central High School
  Scope and Contents
  Duluth, MN

carton 1, folder 25  Eagle Gate Apartments 1981
  Scope and Contents
  Salt Lake City, UT

carton 1, folder 26  Fisher residence
oversize-folder 30C  Golden Gate Bridge: Southern approach alterations 1969
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA

oversize-folder 5A  Goldman, Richard
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA

oversize-folder 6A  Gonzalez, Maurice
carton 1, folder 27  Gormerly, Dorothy
  Scope and Contents
  Los Altos, CA; Sturtevant, Roger (photographer)

carton 1, folder 28  Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension 1956
  Scope and Contents
  Oakland, CA; Andrews, Wayne (photographers)

oversize-folder 31C  Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Ascension 1956
  Scope and Contents
  Oakland, CA
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<th>Carton Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| carton 1, folder 29 | Greenwich High School 1964
  Scope and Contents
  Greenwich, CT; Sturtevant, Roger (photographer) |
| tube 1 | Greenwich High School 1964
  Scope and Contents
  Greenwich, CT |
| oversize-folder 16B | Hellenic Community of Oakland
  High School, unidentified |
| oversize-folder 17B | Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church 1960
  Scope and Contents
  Belmont, CA; Andrews, Wayne (photographers) |
| carton 1, folder 30 | Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church 1959
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA |
| oversize-folder 32C | Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church 1959
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA |
| oversize-folder 33C | Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Community Building 1980
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA |
| oversize-folder 34C | Koolau Tunnels Competition 1971
  Scope and Contents
  Oahu, HI |
| oversize-folder 17B | Lake Merced High School
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA |
| oversize-folder 26C | Leech, P.H.
  Leone High School 1964
  Scope and Contents
  Tutuila, American Samoa; Wenkam, R (photographer) |
| oversize-folder 17B | Los Gatos High School
  Scope and Contents
  Los Gatos, CA |
| oversize-folder 18B | Lutheran Church 1952
  Scope and Contents
  San Francisco, CA; Reid, John Lyon (architect) |
| carton 1, folder 33 | Manila Housing Competition 1976
  Scope and Contents
  Manila, Philippines |
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<th>Folder/Box</th>
<th>Project/Photographer/Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Manila Housing Competition 1976</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;Manila, Philippines</td>
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<td>Marin Day School</td>
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<td>McAteer High School Auditorium</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;San Francisco, CA; Hollingsworth, Bob (photographer)</td>
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<td>Melbourne Sports Arena</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;Melbourne, Australia</td>
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<td>Mendocino Community College Master Plan 1981</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;Ukiah, CA</td>
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<td>Mercy High School: Arts Complex addition 1968</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>Minnesota State Capital</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;St Paul, MN</td>
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<td>Mission College Master Plan</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;Santa Clara, CA</td>
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<td>Mormon Church 1962</td>
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<td>Nativity of Christ Greek Orthodox Church 1984</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;Novato, CA; Hollingsworth, Bob (photographer)</td>
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<td>Nativity of Christ Greek Orthodox Church 1984</td>
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<td>Olwell, Robert Margaret</td>
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<td>Olwell, Robert Margaret</td>
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<td>oversize-folder 22B</td>
<td>Our Savior's Lutheran Church 1967</td>
<td>Scope and Contents&lt;br&gt;Lafayette, CA</td>
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carton 1, folder 43  Palo Alto High School Master Plan 1965
  Scope and Contents
  Palo Alto, CA

carton 1, folder 44  Piedmont High School and Auditorium: alterations and additions 1973
  Scope and Contents
  Piedmont, CA

oversize-folder 7A  Piedmont High School and Auditorium: alterations and additions 1973
  Scope and Contents
  Piedmont, CA

oversize-folder 36C  Piedmont High School and Auditorium: alterations and additions 1973
  Scope and Contents
  Piedmont, CA

tube 2  Piedmont High School and Auditorium: alterations and additions 1973
  Scope and Contents
  Piedmont, CA

carton 1, folder 45  Porterville College: Performing Arts Center
  Scope and Contents
  Porterville, CA

carton 1, folder 46  Presidio of Monterey
  Scope and Contents
  Monterey, CA

carton 1, folder 47  Robert Louis Stevenson School Auditorium/Theatre 1963
  Scope and Contents
  Pebble Beach, CA; Bob Hollingsworth (photographer)

carton 1, folder 48  Robert Louis Stevenson School Chapel 1961
  Scope and Contents
  Pebble Beach, CA; Roger Sturtevant (photographer)

oversize-folder 8A  Robert Louis Stevenson School Chapel 1961
  Scope and Contents
  Pebble Beach, CA

carton 1, folder 49  Roosevelt Memorial Competition
  Scope and Contents
  Rockrise & Watson (architects); Royston, Hanamoto, & Mays (landscape architects)

oversize-folder 27C  Roosevelt Memorial Competition 1960
  Scope and Contents
  Rockrise & Watson (architects); Royston, Hanamoto, & Mays (landscape architects)

oversize-folder 24C  Sacramento Energy Project
  Scope and Contents
  Sacramento, CA

oversize-folder 37C  Sacramento High School
  Scope and Contents
  Sacramento, CA
carton 1, folder 50  | San Francisco Performing Arts Center 1976
oversize-folder 38C  | San Francisco Civic Center Performing Arts

box 1  | San Francisco Civic Center Performing Arts "A Good Idea"

oversize-folder 38C  | San Francisco Ferry Building

oversize-folder 22B  | San Francisco Unitarian Church

carton 1, folder 51  | St. Ambrose Episcopal Church : additions 1977
oversize-folder 9B  | St. Ambrose Episcopal Church : additions 1977

carton 1, folder 52  | St Agnes Catholic Church Dedication

carton 1, folder 53  | St. Stephens Indian School 1980
oversize-folder 9A  | Stamps residence

oversize-folder 29C  | Sunnyvale Elementary School

carton 1, folder 54  | Terry, Roland

carton 1, folder 55  | U. C., Berkeley's North Gate 1987-88

carton 1, folder 56  | U.C. Medical Center Long Range Development plan and clinic
oversize-folder 39C  **U.C. Medical Center Long Range Development plan and clinic**  
Scope and Contents  
San Francisco, CA

carton 1, folder 57  **U.S. Bureau of Indian affairs, Tuba City Indian Boarding School 1975**  
Scope and Contents  
Tuba City, AZ

tube 3  **U.S. Bureau of Indian affairs, Tuba City Indian Boarding School 1975**  
Scope and Contents  
Tuba City, AZ

oversize-folder 26C  **U.S. Navy Officers Housing, Yerba Buena Island**  
Scope and Contents  
San Francisco, CA

carton 1, folder 58  **University of Utah Master Plan 1970**  
Scope and Contents  
1963

oversize-folder 40C  **University of Utah Master Plan 1970 1975**  
Scope and Contents  
Salt Lake City, UT

carton 1, folder 59  **unidentified**  

oversize-folder 10A  **unidentified interiors**  

oversize-folder 11A  **unidentified residence**  
Scope and Contents  
Esherick, Joseph (architect)

oversize-folder 12A  **unidentified church renderings**  

oversize-folder 21B  **unidentified church sketches**  

oversize-folder 41C  **unidentified buildings**  

carton 1, folder 60  **West Valley College Physical Education Complex 1970**  
Scope and Contents  
Saratoga, CA; Brandeis, Robert (photographer)

oversize-folder 13A  **Wiper, Thomas apartment**  
Scope and Contents  
Sausalito, CA

oversize-folder 14A  **Wiper, Thomas apartment**  
Scope and Contents  
Sausalito, CA

carton 1, folder 61  **Wiper Apartment Building**  
Scope and Contents  
Sausalito, CA

oversize-folder 22B  **Wiper Apartment Building**  
Scope and Contents  
Sausalito, CA
**Series 2: Professional and Project Records 1952-1984**

**Finding Aid to the Robert F. Olwell Papers**

**BANC MSS 2017/157**

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<tr>
<th>Carton</th>
<th>Folder</th>
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<td>62</td>
<td>YMCA Marin County</td>
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- **Physical Description:** 9 folders.
- **Arrangement:** Arranged chronologically.
- **Scope and Contents:** Material created or collected by his niece for a biography of Robert F. Olwell that she had intended to write. These files contain correspondence and interviews with friends and coworkers.

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<td>1</td>
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<td>Correspondence 1988-1989</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>Correspondence with Bruce Young 1989</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>Interviews with Robert Olwell 1988</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>Notes from Robert Olwell 1988</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>Robert Olwell Interview for Regional History Office 1983</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>Interview with John Coyle 1989</td>
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<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Interview with Jim Fong undated</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>Book Research 1988-2016</td>
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<td>Tribute To R. Olwell re St. Stephens School 2013</td>
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