Historical Society of Southern California Collection

1870-1915
**Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Historical Society of Southern California Collection  
**Dates:** 1870-1915  
**Collection Number:** GC 1321  
**Creator/Collector:** Historical Society of Southern California  
**Extent:** (Boxes: 16 legal, 1 letter)  
**Repository:** Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

**Abstract:** The collection comprises of publications and ephemeral materials collected by the Historical Society of Southern California (HSSC) prior to the 1910s. The organization was formed in 1883 to collect and preserve manuscripts, periodicals, newspapers, and both written and oral historical accounts regarding the history of the Pacific Coast in general and of Southern California in particular.

**Language of Material:** English

**Access**  
Research is by appointment only

**Publication Rights**  
Permission to publish, quote or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder

**Preferred Citation**  
Historical Society of Southern California Collection. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

**Acquisition Information**  
HSSC provided one of the founding collections of the museum. HSSC along with the Fine Arts League, the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club, and the Southern California Academy of Sciences entered into an agreement with the County of Los Angeles on February 7, 1910 to build a historical museum and art gallery. The agreement required the four groups to furnish the new museum with exhibit materials. HSSC’s contributions in accordance with the agreement were each designated an accession number “A.30” denoting that they were received as museum property. Prior to the contribution, HSSC did not have a permanent home for their collection. An account was written by J.M. Guinn, Secretary of the Society, in a paper “Thirty Three Years of History Activities” published in Volume 10, 1915-17 of the Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California.

**Biography/Administrative History**  
The idea to form a historical society was conceived November 1, 1883. HSSC was incorporated February 13, 1891. HSSC’s first president Col. J. J. Warner delivered the inaugural address on January 7, 1884, and he spoke on the origin, aims and objects of the newly formed organization. The inaugural address was published in volume 1, 1884-91, of the Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California. There was a collective concern that at the conclusion of an 1881 centennial celebration of the founding of Los Angeles the city lacked a historical society. The founders lamented the “flood of immigrants” and the impending disappearance of old landmarks. Primary HSSC objectives were the collection and preservation of historical matters, and additionally, a focus on science and scientific methods. Another important objective was to publish materials that had permanent value. For additional reference, consult “Thirty Three Years of History Activities” by J.M. Guinn, published in Volume 10, 1915-17 of the Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California.

**Scope and Content of Collection**  
The collection comprises of publications and ephemeral materials collected by HSSC prior to the 1910s. The organization was formed to collect and preserve manuscripts, periodicals, newspapers, and both written and oral historical accounts regarding the history of the Pacific Coast in general and of Southern California in particular. The collection pertains to Los Angeles, Southern California, and state history as arranged in Series 1. Among the items are HSSC organizational papers such as their incorporation records. Series 2 consists of items pertaining to other American states as well as federal government publications and other papers that document the history of the country. HSSC has operated up to the present day. Consult the Custodial Background Note to understand about the early donations to the institution. Arrangement Note: In August 2008 a preliminary arrangement was created: Series 1: California Publications, Series 2: United States Publications. The files within each series are arranged by broad subject categories. Within each subject, no further arrangement has been made. In August 2009, description for a bound volume of California Supreme Court briefs (housed in LC) was added under Series 1 - California Publications. In October, 2010, California and federal government documents were removed from this collection and added to Government Publications Collection (GC 1037). Other items with the
accession number "A.30" have been arranged into other subject specific collections, including, but not limited to: Associations and Clubs Collection (GC 1233); Early Mexican Imprint Collection (GC 1147ov); Ephemera Collection (GC 1299); L.A. County Poll Lists 1886-89 and Index to 1880 Census (GC 1168ov); Map Collection (GC 1310); Political Materials (GC 1137) and the Portrait Collection (P-78). Items are also in the book collections of the Seaver Center and the Research Library. Newspapers are housed in both the Seaver Center repository and the Research Library.

Indexing Terms
Historical Society of Southern California--History.
Los Angeles (Calif.)
Los Angeles County (Calif.)