Guide to the Francis (Frank) Bacon Records 1997.349

Finding aid prepared by History San Jose
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Note
This finding aid was created using Archivists Toolkit, based on a print finding aid created in 2007.
**Title:** Francis (Frank) Bacon Records  
**Identifier/Call Number:** 1997.349  
**Contributing Institution:** History San Jose Research Library  
**Language of Material:** English  
**Physical Description:** 6.0 Linear feet  
**Date (inclusive):** circa 1890-1930  
**Abstract:** The Records contain photographs, and five scrapbooks.  
**Language of Materials note:** The records are in English.  

**Immediate Source of Acquisition note**  
The records were donated by Nancy Bean, Bessie Lombardi, and Clyde Arbuckle. The majority of the manuscript records for the Francis Bacon collection were donated by Clyde Arbuckle, city of San José Historian between 1950-1970. In 1981 Nancy Bean (Bacon relative) donated news articles, photographs and various newspaper and obituary notices for Francis Bacon. In 1988 Betty Lombardi, granddaughter of Frank, donated a playbill, uniform (maintained in the artifact collection) and family photographs (maintained in the photograph collection).  

**Conditions Governing Access note**  
The records are open to the public for research by appointment.  

**Processing Information note**  
Initial processing was conducted by staff and volunteers in December, 2001. The records were reorganized in 2007 to allow for new accruals.  

**Biographical/Historical note**  
Frank Bacon was born in Mountain View, California on January 16, 1864. His career took him down many avenues. In his short lifetime he worked as a photographer, travelling printer and ran a newspaper. His performances on stage across the United States included the play “Lightnin’” which ran for a record 1291 performances on Broadway.  

With the help of his wife Jennie (Weldman), Bacon wrote “Barnstorming” which was the history of his life. In 1930 this was made into the movie “Lightnin’” starring Will Rogers.  

Frank died in Chicago on November 19, 1922, while still performing his long running play. He left behind his wife Jennie, his children Lloyd and Bessie, and four grandchildren.  

**Separated Materials note**  
Some photographs have been removed to the History San Jose Photography Collection. In addition to these records, the museum also has in its artifact collection two wax cylinder recordings of Frank Bacon and a uniform. It is likely that History San José may have additional items about Frank Bacon in the artifact collection.  

**Preferred Citation note**  
Francis (Frank) Bacon Records 1997-349, History San Jose Research Library, San Jose, California 95112-2599.  

**Conditions Governing Use note**  
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**Scope and Contents note**  
The records of Frank Bacon cover the period from approximately 1890 to 1930. Records are divided into six categories and total 6 linear feet in four boxes. In a mission to support the Museum and preserve the history of the Santa Clara Valley, the San José Historical Museum Association published Barnstorming. This book is an autobiography of Frank Bacon and is a good reference to use to look at the life of a struggling actor at the turn of the century.  

The first series, photographs consist of original and reproduced pictures of Frank Bacon as a youth, a young man, and seasoned performer. Photos include his wife and other family members, friends, and cast members from “Lightnin’.” Posed photographs of Frank in character as well as casual scenes from his home in Bayside, Long Island round out the collection.  

The second series are the five scrapbooks. There are three major scrapbooks, two are large and consist of one kept by Mrs. Josephine Szynaka, a family friend. The other is a family scrapbook with articles arranged chronologically. There is a small scrapbook with assorted memorabilia. Loose pages from a family photo album, and a book with similar newspaper clippings complete the series.  

The third series are newspaper clippings. Three folders make up this series. The first contains miscellaneous news clippings and obituary notices. The second are assorted clippings related to the Bacon family. Finally, magazine and more newspaper clippings are in the third folder.
The fourth series are programs and playbills. This series contains assorted programs from Bacon’s Broadway hit “Lightnin’” and advertisements from various theaters. Also included is one souvenir program from “Lightnin’” owned and donated by Bacon’s granddaughter, Bessie.

The fifth series, ephemera, includes memorial cards signed by cast members, two miscellaneous paperback books, and two copies of the “Dramatic Mirror” dated March 16, 1918, and October 19, 1918.

The sixth series is manuscripts. This final series in the Frank Bacon collection includes an original, typed written manuscript for Bacon’s autobiography, “Barnstorming” written between 1918-1922. An outline for the manuscript is also included.

Many of the photos and publicity notices include signatures of many famous people. These signatures include people such as Enrico Carusso, Jason Robards, and William Granger.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Bacon family

Bacon, Frank, 1864-1922

Actors and Actresses--California

Blackstone Theatre (Organization : Chicago, Ill.)

clippings (information artifacts)

ephemera

photographs

playbills

scrapbooks