Thorn Mayes Sound Recordings

1965-1980
Descriptive Summary
Title: Thorn Mayes Sound Recordings
Dates: 1965-1980
Collection Number: 2003-38
Creator/Collector: Thorn Mayes
Extent: 99 recordings

Abstract: Sound recordings created by Thorn Mayes as part of his research on early wireless telegraph and radio in the Western United States. Includes one-on-one interviews conducted by Thorn Mayes and Warren Green, talks to the Antique Wireless Association both by Mayes and by other speakers, recordings of historic radio broadcasts, and re-creations of spark transmissions at West Coast wireless stations.

Language of Material: English

Access
The collection is available to researchers by appointment with the Curator of Library & Archives.

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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
Donated to the Perham Foundation by Thorn Mayes' son. Acquired by History San Jose in 2003 as part of the Perham Collection of Early Electronics.

Biography/Administrative History
Thorn Mayes, born April 19, 1903, graduated from the University of California in 1927 with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. He was an avid amateur radio operator, working W6AX, W9AX, 6BDQ, 6AX, K6BI, K2CE, and W1CX under the handle “Thorn.” His first 2-way wireless contact was in 1921, and he was member #229 of the Old Old Timers Club. After retiring from his managerial position at General Electric Company, Mayes became a serious collector of antique gear (prior to 1922), books and magazines, as well as an historian of early wireless in the United States. He was particularly interested in recreating the history of the three main, early, commercial wireless stations on the West Coast: KPH, KFS, and NPG.

Scope and Content of Collection
In conducting research on West Coast early radio, Mayes was able to draw on his many friends and contacts within the amateur radio and electronics community. As part of his work, he recorded a large number of interviews with names familiar to students of early electronics, particularly in the Western United States, including Ralph Heintz, Haraden Pratt, Richard Johnstone, and Robert Palmer. Mayes also recorded many of his talks at amateur radio associations. These recordings are part of the Perham Collection of Early Electronics, and the majority of these interviews and talks have been transcribed by History San Jose. They consist of one-on-one interviews conducted by Mayes and Warren Green, talks to the Antique Wireless Association both by Mayes and by other speakers, recordings of historic radio broadcasts, and re-creations of spark transmissions at West Coast wireless stations.