Douglas M. Perham Papers

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2019
Descriptive Summary

Title: Douglas M. Perham Papers
Dates: 1888-1970
Collection Number: 2003-45
Creator/Collector: Perham, Douglas McDonald (1885-1967)
Perham, Constance Broner Kambish (1908-2001)
Perham Foundation
Extent: 2 linear feet
Online items available https://historysanjose.pastperfectonline.com/
Repository: History San Jose Research Library
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Abstract: Biographical materials, correspondence, photographs, certificates and other ephemera relating to Douglas
Language of Material: English

Access
The papers are open to the public for research by appointment with the Curator of Library & Archives.

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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
The papers were originally donated to the Perham Foundation and housed at the Foothill Electronics Museum in Los Altos
Hills, California. They were transferred to History San Jose in 2003 as part of the Perham Collection of Early Electronics.

Biography/Administrative History
Douglas M. Perham was born in Duarte, California, on May 22, 1985. He began his career in electronics in 1902 when he set
up a machine shop in Palo Alto, California at age 17. In 1909, Perham became Federal Telegraph Company's first American
tech and its installation engineer on early arc radio installations throughout the West. His cottage at 913 Emerson in
Palo Alto became Federal's first Palo Alto laboratory. After marrying his second wife, Pearl, they relocated to her home town
of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where they operated radio WJAM, one of the first licensed broadcasting stations in Iowa. In 1928
they returned to California, and Perham rejoined Federal Telegraph Company only to be laid off in 1931. During the
Depression, he pieced together a business doing general machine work and die cutting, then joined Varian Associated in
1948. His extensive collection of electronics apparatus mirrors his own career and includes donations from Lee de
Forest, Ralph Heinz, the Varian brothers, Charles "Doc" Herrold, and Leonard Fuller. With his third wife, Constance, he
operated the New Almaden Museum, that was later transferred to the new Foothill Electronics Museum at Foothill College.
Constance Perham took an active role after Doug's death in 1967, to make sure the collection was transferred, and later,
after the disengagement of the college from the Perham Foundation and its collections in the 1980s, for the transfer of the
Perham Collection of Early Electronics to History San Jose in 2003.

Scope and Content of Collection
Box 1 comprises correspondence, chronologies and other biographical information, ephemera regarding radio station
WJAM, and news clippings regarding Perham and his family. Box 2 contains photographs of Doug and Connie Perham, their
New Almaden Museum (1950s-1960s), and his electronics collection in preparation for its move to Los Altos Hills in
September 1963. A box inventory is attached.

Indexing Terms
Electronics--History
Collectors and collecting
New Almaden (Calif.)
Cedar Rapids (Iowa)
Los Altos Hills (Calif.)

Douglas Perham Papers Container List