
Papers of Harold G. Ferguson

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Papers of Harold G. Ferguson

Dates: 1924 - 1931

Collection Number: 2018_07

Creator/Collector: Harold G. Ferguson

Extent: 3 document boxes; 1 linear foot, 5.5 inches

Repository: Sherman Library and Gardens
Corona del Mar, California 92625

Abstract: This collection contains papers pertaining to Harold G. Ferguson and the Harold G. Ferguson Corporation. The Harold G. Ferguson Corporation was involved with the subdivision and sale of land in Southern California.

Language of Material: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[identification of item], Folder [#], Box [#], Papers of Harold G. Ferguson. Sherman Library, Corona del Mar, California

Acquisition Information

This collection was donated to Sherman Library by Dorothy Gleason, Harold G. Ferguson's sister, in 1973

Biographical Note

Harold G. Ferguson was born in Vancouver, Canada on August 31, 1888. Later that same year he moved with his family to the United States. Ferguson attended Hollywood High School and later Stanford University, where he studied law. After college, Ferguson worked for the City of Los Angeles as Deputy City Prosecutor. Additionally, in 1911 he joined the National Guard, rising to the rank of 1st Lieutenant by 1918, when he when he was sent to France as the Adjutant of the 143rd Field Artillery. He eventually attained the rank of Major. After his return to Los Angeles, Ferguson founded, and was the first commander, of the Hollywood Post of the American Legion.

In 1921, Ferguson organized the Trust Department of the California Bank in Los Angeles. In 1923, Ferguson, along with Hugh Evans and G. C. Rhodes, formed the Evans-Ferguson Corp. Ferguson was the company's vice president. Evans-Ferguson purchased and subdivided the 285-acre Wilshire-Fairfax tract of Los Angeles.

In 1924, Ferguson founded his own firm, Harold G. Ferguson Corp. The Harold G. Ferguson Corp. developed a number of subdivisions, including Rancho Malibu, Lake Arrowhead, Palm Ranch, and Beverly Crest. The company created real estate investment trusts for subdivisions and other real estate, and then sold beneficial shares to investors, which allowed people to invest small sums of money in return for dividends. Ferguson became a prominent community figure as well. In 1928, he was named the head of the Executive Committee of the Better Business Bureau of Los Angeles, and in 1929 he was elected President of the Los Angeles Realty Board. He also served as the Chairman of the Veterans Welfare Bureau, President of the University Club, and was a director of the Pacific National Bank.

In 1931, the California Corporations Commission opened an investigation of the Harold G. Ferguson Corp. and a number of other Ferguson companies for taking excessive commissions, and for transferring funds in violation of trust agreements.

Ferguson was accused of purchasing beneficial shares in one trust with funds from another. The trust that sold the shares then used the proceeds to declare a substantial dividend, which in turn was used to promote the sale of additional beneficial shares. Ferguson was convicted of 9 counts of violating the Corporate Securities Act and 10 counts of grand theft. Ferguson served 3 years and 3 months of a 9-year sentence in San Quentin prison. After his release from prison, the Court of Appeals reversed Ferguson's conviction on the securities charges and one of the grand theft charges. In January, 1939 California Governor Frank F. Merriam pardoned Ferguson. Ferguson died in 1963.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of scrapbooks and files related to Harold G. Ferguson and the Harold G. Ferguson Corporation. The bulk of the scrapbooks' content consists of newspaper articles and advertisements, although the collections contain some magazine advertisements, party invitations, and brochures. The primary subject of the collection is the Harold G. Ferguson Corporation, the corporation's land developments, and real estate development in Southern California. The newspaper

clippings, which cover the years 1924 to 1931, include items from, but not limited to, The Los Angeles Herald Examiner, The Los Angeles Times, The Los Angeles Daily News, and Hollywood Citizen.

The scrapbooks are arranged by subject, as follows:

- Volume 1 General, 1924-1930
- Volume 2 General, 1929-1930
- Volume 3 Canoga, 1924-1928
- Volume 4 Lake Arrowhead, 1925-1926
- Volume 5 Rancho Malibu, 1926-1929
- Volume 6 Beverly Crest, 1928
- Volume 7 Palm Ranch, 1928-1930

The scrapbooks labeled "General" include articles about the Harold G. Ferguson Corp. and personnel changes at the company. Other items pertain to Harold G. Ferguson's personal activities and community involvement, including his military activity, educational programs, vacation plans, and political campaigns. Of particular note in the collection are the clippings referring to the investigation of Ferguson, for Corporate Securities Act violations and grand theft.

The remaining volumes relate to specific subdivisions, namely Canoga, Lake Arrowhead, Rancho Malibu, Beverly Crest, and Palm Ranch.

The Canoga development was a 1,000-acre residential subdivision established in 1924 near Ventura Boulevard west of the El Caballero Country Club, by modern-day Tarzana, CA. Ferguson advertised the subdivision as being in the "Country Club District," a forested area with a perfect climate. Harold G. Ferguson Corp. sold 135 acres of the development to the St. Andrew's Corporation to create a new golf course.

In 1925, the Ferguson Corporation took over sales of properties at Lake Arrowhead, in the San Bernardino Mountains. Lake Arrowhead was originally developed by a syndicate of Los Angeles investors who built a dam on Little Bear Lake and rechristened it Lake Arrowhead. Harold G. Ferguson Corp. offered potential investors two-day trips to the lake to visit and stay at resorts. Advertisements for the region highlighted winter events and activities, calling it a "winter playground."

In 1926, Ferguson struck a deal with May K. Ringe, President of the Marblehead Land Company to create a development along a ten-mile stretch of beach in Malibu, CA. Ferguson Corp. marketed 10-year leases, based on a requirement by Ringe, who was reluctant to have the beach permanently developed. When Rancho Malibu beach opened, it was the first time since 1905 that the public had access to the beach. Harold G. Ferguson Corp. advertised Rancho Malibu as wild and beautiful, romanticizing its Spanish heritage to draw in investors. Due to the seclusion from the public, the subdivision became popular with Hollywood celebrities.

In 1928, Harold G. Ferguson Corp. became the exclusive sales agent for the Beverly Crest subdivision, located in Beverly Hills, CA. The company billed the development as the "balcony of Beverly Hills." Advertisements suggested that homeowners would live among celebrities who had already purchased homes on the development.

The Palm Ranch development was located in Quartz Hill in the western Antelope Valley, north of Los Angeles. In 1928, the Harold G. Ferguson Company acquired the E.T. (Edwin Tobias) Earl Ranch, which included mature almond, apricot, and pear trees. The ranch was subdivided into five to ten acre lots, each containing fruit trees. Billed as an "immediate income" subdivision, purchasers were encouraged to harvest the fruit and to raise turkeys to supplement their income. To encourage investors to raise turkeys, the Ferguson Company established a demonstration turkey unit, which housed a thousand turkeys at one point.

Indexing Terms

- Real Estate Development - California - Los Angeles County
- Real Estate Development - California - San Bernardino County - Lake Arrowhead
- Land Subdivision - Canoga
- Land Subdivision - Rancho Malibu
- Land Subdivision - Palm Ranch
- Land Subdivision - Beverly Crest
- Land Subdivision - Hollywood
- Scrapbook
- Newspaper
- Ferguson, Harold G.
- Ringe, May K.

Harold G. Ferguson Corporation
Evans-Ferguson Corporation
Marblehead Land Company
