Finding Aid to the Bertha Metro Papers, 1936-1973MS 3422

Finding aid prepared by California Historical Society staff, revised by Tanya Hollis.
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Collection Summary
Title: Bertha Metro papers
Date (inclusive): 1936-1973
Collection Number: MS 3422
Creator: Metro, Bertha, 1899-1976
Extent: 3 boxes (1.25 Linear feet)
Repository: California Historical Society
678 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA, 94105
415-357-1848
reference@calhist.org
URL: http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/
Physical Location: Collection is stored onsite.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
Abstract: Correspondence, negotiations for contracts, copies of contracts, organizing documents, strike leaflets, and other
union documents, together with transcripts of oral history interviews of Metro and her daughter, Phyllis Foley, also a union
official; ephemera; and some personal correspondence. Includes material relating to the hotel strikes of 1937 and
1941-1942. Correspondents include Hugo Ernst, labor official who represented culinary workers.
Access Restrictions
Collection open for research; researchers must sign an agreement of use form. Photocopying is prohibited.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Bertha Metro Papers, MS 3422, California Historical Society.
Separated Materials
Photographs of Bertha Metro and Phyllis Foley have been transferred to the Portraits section of the CHS Photograph
Collection.
Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union Records, MS 458A
Louis Goldblatt Oral History, MS 3538
Phyllis Foley Oral History, MS 3537
Rene Battaglini Oral History, MS 3539
Sam Kagel Oral History, MS 2465
National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections Number
NUCMC 82-438
Acquisition Information
Collection donated by Phyllis Foley, 1979.
Accruals
No additions are expected.
Processing Information
Processed by California Historical Society staff.
Biography
Bertha Metro was born in England. Her father, a socialist, imbued her with some of his ideals and principles. While still a
young girl, the family emmigrated to Canada where her father was killed in a tragic mining accident. In her early teens she
went to work to help support the family, eventually obtaining employment at the Empress Hotel in Victoria, British
Columbia, Canada.
After her marriage and the birth of a daughter on September 18, 1922 she and her family moved to Idaho where her husband (a U.S. citizen) had relatives. From there they moved to San Francisco in the early 1930’s. Her husband obtained employment on the waterfront and she went to work in a large hotel as a maid.

In 1936 Ms. Metro began organizing the hotel maids on a voluntary basis. At this time she made contact with Hugo Ernst, a labor official who represented the culinary workers. With his approval and some moral assistance she embarked on a career which eventually led her to a full time paid career as a labor organizer and union official. The union she represented changed its name many times and was last called the Hotel, Motel and Club Service Workers Union, Local #283, affiliated with the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union.

Early in 1939 an oral history was narrated by Ms. Metro for California Historical Society. However, due to her poor health and advanced age, the interview was not concluded.

Shortly after the interview Ms. Metro died and her daughter, Phyllis Foley (also a union official), agreed to be interviewed to help complete her mother’s story and, moreover, trace her own activities as a union official, (Oral History interviews for both women are available at CHS).

A key period in the life of Ms. Metro was the hotel strike of 1937 and the hotel strike of 1941-1942. This led to another oral history project (in process, 1979-1980) in which interviews are being conducted with one representative of each of the six culinary unions involved as well as with union counsel, a member of the CIO (which had formed a dual union) and perhaps, in the future, one of the hotel owners or representatives.

**Scope and Contents**

Includes material from Bertha Metro’s life as a union official, and includes correspondence, negotiations for contracts, copies of contracts, organizing documents, strike leaflets, and other union documents, together with transcripts of oral history interviews of Metro and her daughter, Phyllis Foley, also a union official; ephemera; and some personal correspondence. Includes material relating to the hotel strikes of 1937 and 1941-1942. Correspondents include Hugo Ernst, labor official who represented culinary workers. The only personal letters contained in the collection relate to Ms. Metro’s endorsement of various politicians running for office, or thank you letters for such endorsements. The collection contains miscellaneous ephemera her husband acquired in Canada; union picket cards as well as some pay vouchers from Canadian mines. One interesting exchange of letters between Ms. Metro and Hugo Ernst expresses her apologies when Ernst felt she had slighted his authority.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Ernst, Hugo, 1876-1954
Foley, Phyllis, 1922-
Hotel & Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union. Local 283 (San Francisco, Calif.).
Collective bargaining--Hotels.
Hotel cleaning personnel--California.
Hotels--Employees.
Labor contract--California.
Labor unions--California.
Labor unions--Officials and employees.
Strikes and lockouts--California.
Women labor leaders.
Women labor union members--California.
Women--Employment--California.
Oral histories.

| Box 1, Folder 1 | Chronology of Hotel Strikes, San Francisco 1937, 1941-1942 |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Oral history transcript of Bertha Metro 1979 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Correspondence 1939-1973 |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Correspondence (as a union official; reports as business agent; picket duty cards, membership cards), 1939-1973 |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Photographs and awards of Ms. Metro’s |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Inner-union correspondence and leaflets, work rules 1939-1973 |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Union Minutes, Local #283 circa 1930-1940 |
Box 1, Folder 8  Union election material circa 1930-1949
Box 1, Folder 9  Official Local #283 publications, leaflets, etc. circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 10 CIO union leaflets circa 1930-1949
Box 1, Folder 11 Unofficial union leaflets and Rank & File publications
Box 1, Folder 12 Arbitration and negotiations, hotel service unions circa 1930-1949
Box 1, Folder 12A Membership Lists
Box 2, Folder 13 Union contracts 1938-1962
Box 2, Folder 14 Contracts and arbitrations awards 1937-1960
Box 2, Folder 15 Contracts, Fred G. Athearn Award 1937 December 22
Box 2, Folder 16 Contracts, Ansley E. Salz Award 1942 January
Box 2, Folder 17 Contracts 1950 September 25
Box 2, Folder 18 Contracts, Arthur Miller Award 1950 August
Box 2, Folder 19 Contracts, Adjustment Board decisions 1939 September, 1950 November
Box 2, Folder 20 Contracts (other Unions), miscellaneous dates
Box 2, Folder 21 Legal documents regarding union jurisdiction, miscellaneous dates
Box 2, Folder 22 Strike leaflets, hotel strike 1941-1942
Box 2, Folder 23 Official Labor publications, miscellaneous
Box 2, Folder 24 Newspaper clippings, miscellaneous
Box 2, Folder 25 Miscellaneous material