The Finding Aid of the Charmlee Wilderness Park Records 0174

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December 2019
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URL: https://library.pepperdine.edu/collections/boone-special-collections-university-archives.htm
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Pepperdine University. Special Collections and University Archives.
Title: Charmlee Wilderness Park Records
Creator: Charmlee Nature Preserve Foundation
Identifier/Call Number: 0174
Physical Description: 2.6 Linear Feet (6 Hollinger boxes, 1 oversize folder)
Date (inclusive): 1958-2013
Abstract: The Charmlee Wilderness Park is a public 532-acre park in Malibu, California that contains over 8 miles of hiking trails, a nature center, native plant displays and picnic areas. The collection contains administrative records, photographs, maps, archaeological findings, park docent training materials and documents about the history of the park. Materials date from 1958-2013.

Conditions Governing Access
Advance notice required for access.

Immediate Source of Acquisition
The collection was given to Pepperdine University by Erwin Schulze in 2019.

Arrangement
The collection is organized into the following series: 1. Subject Files; 2. Chronological Files. The Subject Files series is listed in alphabetical order.

Historical
The Charmlee Wilderness Park was originally inhabited by the Chumash people some 10,000 to 13,000 years ago. Between 18,000 to 25,000 Chumash people inhabited what is now Southern California from Malibu Canyon to San Luis Obispo and then inland from the coast to the edges of the San Joaquin Valley. The Chumash people spent their time hunting, fishing and gathering various resources in the surrounding area.

In 1769 the Spanish took over the California coast until Mexican independence was attained in 1821. The local Chumash were uprooted and moved to Misión San Buenaventura and Misión San Fernando where many died due to the crowded and unsanitary environment. Spain kept hold of ownership of their lands in California but would grant land parcels to individuals who merited special consideration. In 1802, José Bartoleme Tapia was granted land for cattle that stretched from Topanga Canyon to Point Mugu and from the top of the Santa Monica Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

The Charmlee Wilderness Park lands then changed ownership several times from the 1820s to 1940 while it was part of Rancho Malibu. Clyde Brandenberger bought 295-acres of Rancho Malibu to run cattle when it was up for sale in 1940. A decade later, in 1950, Brandenberger sold the land to Leon and Charmian Schwartz. Charmian and Leon combined their first names and named the ranch "Charmlee." The couple lost their home to a fire in 1956 and sold Charmlee Ranch in 1961 to a real-estate development company, the SKY Company, which planned to build houses and a golf course. Their designs fell through due to problems of access and water.

In 1968, the SKY Company sold Charmlee Ranch to Los Angeles County, which resurrected the idea of building houses and a golf course. Los Angeles County's plan also failed when archaeological findings revealed the Charmlee meadow lay on an ancient landslide that could be reactivated by the grading and irrigation required for constructing a golf course. In 1981, Los Angeles County dedicated the ranch as Charmlee County Regional Park. The park was to be used exclusively during daylight hours for hiking, horseback riding, and nature-focussed activities. In 1991, Malibu became a city and was given Charmlee County Regional Park by Los Angeles County in 1998. The park was then re-named Charmlee Wilderness Park when it was officially transferred from Los Angeles County to the City of Malibu in 2003.

In 2013 the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) proposed a land swap with the City of Malibu. The SMMC would get the 532-acre Charmlee Wilderness Park and the City of Malibu would receive the remaining 82-acres of Malibu Bluffs Park in order to build playgrounds and baseball fields for recreational use. In November of 2013, the plan was approved and the SMMC and the City of Malibu entered into a 5-year lease agreement during which neither could develop their newly acquired land and either side could terminate the lease agreement. In 2018, the Woosley Fire badly scarred Charmlee Wilderness Park. On April 8, 2019 the City of Malibu terminated the lease agreement just before it was set to end. Prior to the lease being expired, pushback came from the residents of Malibu who grew increasingly concerned with the SMMC's desire to allow camping in Charmlee Wilderness Park which would increase the likelihood of wildfires.

The Charmlee Wilderness Park is run in conjunction with the Malibu County Parks and Recreation Department by the Charmlee Nature Preserve Foundation. The foundation has been in operation since the 1980s and works to promote the park. Each year the foundation gathers grant money in order to finance bus trips for children from underserved schools to
visit Charmlee Wilderness Park.

**Preferred Citation**

[Box/folder# or item name], Charmlee Wilderness Park Records, Collection no. 174, Malibu Historical Collection Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries, Pepperdine University.

**Conditions Governing Use**

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**Scope and Contents**

The Charmlee Wilderness Park Records document the history of Charmlee Wilderness Park. The collection contains administrative records from when the park was owned by Los Angeles County, photographs of the park, various maps, newspaper clippings and other materials that explain the history of the park. Charmlee Wilderness Park has been owned by various people and governmental organizations during the course of its history. The bulk of this collection contains dates from 1968-1991.

The collection is arranged in two series: Subject Files and Chronological Files. The Subject Files series contains correspondence, maps, photographs and other materials about the history of Charmlee. The Chronological Files series contains primarily administrative records about Charmlee when it was under the ownership of Los Angeles County from 1968-1991.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Articles
Clippings
Correspondence
Administrative records
Malibu (Calif.) -- History
Los Angeles (Calif.) -- History
Maps
Newspapers
Photographs
Los Angeles (Calif.) -- Politics and government -- 20th century
Malibu (Calif.) -- History -- 20th century
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Calif.)
Los Angeles County (Calif.). Department of Parks and Recreation
Los Angeles County (Calif.). Department of Parks and Recreation
SKY Company
California State University, Northridge

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**Series 1: Subject Files 1963-2013**

**Scope and Contents**

This series contains correspondence, maps, photographs and other materials about the history of Charmlee Wilderness Park.

**Box 1, Box 2, box 3, box 4**

**Archaeological Materials 1977-1992**

**Attorney Frank Angel Presentation Slides 2007 November 13**

**Scope and Contents**

Frank Angel is a lawyer who specializes in environmental, natural resources and land use litigation. This folder contains a presentation he put together when he represented the La Chusa Highlands Property Owners Association.

**Box 1, folder 1**

**Box 1, folder 2**

**California State University, Northridge Archaeological Dig Investigations 1984 November**

**Camping Issues 2007 January-September**

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Scope and Contents

Frank Havore worked in various roles for Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation in the 1980s and 1990s.

Scope and Contents

This series contains Los Angeles County's administrative records about Charmlee Wilderness Park when it was under the ownership of Los Angeles County from 1968-1991.