
The Finding Aid of the Rindge and Adamson Family Papers 0034

Finding aid prepared by Katie Richardson and Catie Golitzin

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Title: Rindge and Adamson Family Papers

Identifier/Call Number: 0034

Contributing Institution: Pepperdine University. Special Collections and University Archives.

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.83 linear feet(3 boxes)

Date (inclusive): 1891-1967

Abstract: The Rindge and Adamson family have a long history in Malibu, California, dating back to 1892 when Frederick and May K. Rindge purchased the 13,300-acre Spanish land grant, Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit, also known as Malibu Rancho, from Matthew Keller. In 1915, their daughter, Rhoda Agatha, married Merritt Adamson, the superintendent of the ranch, and together, they helped manage the family business. The collection contains correspondence, business papers, financial records, photographs, newspaper clipping, and ephemera from the various family members and spans from 1891 to 1967.

Location note: Pepperdine University. Special Collections and University Archives.

creator: Adamson family

Creator: Rindge family

Conditions Governing Access

Advance notice required for access.

Conditions Governing Use

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Preferred Citation

[Box/folder# or item name], Rindge and Adamson family papers, Collection no. 34, Malibu Historical Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries, Pepperdine University.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The collection was given to Pepperdine University by Grant Adamson in several installments during 2010.

Biographical note

Frederick Hastings Rindge was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Samuel B. Rindge (1820-1883) and Clarissa Harrington (1822-1885) on December 21, 1857. Frederick was the fourth of six children and the only child to make it to adulthood. Frederick attended Harvard University and graduated in 1879. He spent the next few years traveling around Europe and America and working at a Boston Commission House. In 1883, his father died, and in 1885, his mother passed away, leaving Frederick his father's estate worth \$3 million.

On May 27, 1887, Frederick married Rhoda May Knight (more commonly referred to as May K. Rindge) of Trenton, Michigan. That same year, the couple moved to Los Angeles, California. Together, they had three children: Samuel Knight Rindge (1888-1968), Frederick Hastings Rindge, Jr. (1890-1952), and Rhoda Agatha Rindge (1893-1962).

In 1892, Frederick and May K. purchased the 13,300-acre Spanish land grant, Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit, also known as Malibu Rancho, from Matthew Keller. Frederick was very happy with his purchase and between 1889 and 1902 he wrote several books, including *Happy Days in Southern California*, which recounts his experience living on the Malibu Ranch.

The Rindges had many outsiders interested in using their land. In 1904, the Southern Pacific Railroad applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission to build tracks linking the Long Wharf in Santa Monica with their northern tracks in Santa Barbara. The proposed connection went right through the Rindges' Malibu ranch. When Frederick learned of Southern Pacific's intentions, he planned to build a private railroad on his property to keep the railroad company out. The Rindges were able to do so because of a law that prevented the duplication of an existing railroad line. However, before construction began, Frederick died, leaving his wife to carry out his plans. She did, and 15 miles of tracks were erected.

Following her husband's death in 1905, May K. incorporated and organized the Marblehead Land Company to manage her husband's holdings and the needs of Malibu. In 1907, May K. began her battle with the state and county to keep a highway off of her property. She became famous for her battle with the authorities. However, she eventually lost the battle and the county obtained a right-of-way through her property. In June 1929, the Roosevelt Highway (now the Pacific Coast Highway) opened.

On November 18, 1915, May K. and Frederick's daughter, Rhoda Agatha, married Merritt Huntley Adamson (1888-1949), who worked as the Superintendent on the Malibu Ranch. Merritt was a native Californian who graduated from USC Law School before he took the position on the Malibu Ranch. Following the marriage, the pair established the Adohr Stock Farms, which grew to be one of the largest producers of milk in the world.

As a source of water for irrigation of cultivated farm land on the Malibu Ranch, the Marblehead Land Company built the Malibu dam, completing the project in 1932. When completed, the impounding reservoir at the dam had a capacity of 575 acre feet.

In 1929, construction on what is today known as the Adamson house began. The family would spend summers in the house until 1937. At that time, it became the family's permanent residence.

During the Depression era, Marblehead Land Company fell on tough times. Although they had several projects in the works, the company signed a voluntary petition for bankruptcy in 1936. During this period of reorganization, Marblehead created Malibu Water Company in 1938 as a public utility water company to oversee water system operations in the area it had previously served. Merritt served as the president of Malibu Water Company for a number of years.

In 1941, May K. started construction on a 50-room house on the property. Unfortunately, she died in 1941 before it was completed, and the Franciscan Order purchased it in 1942, along with 26 acres of land. Today, the house and property are known as the Serra Retreat.

Just a few short years later, Merritt passed away in 1949 leaving Rhoda Agatha to manage the family business. Together they had three children: Merritt Jr., Sylvia, and Rhoda-May. Rhoda Agatha stayed active with both the Marblehead Land Company and Adohr farms until she passed away in April 1962. Merritt Jr. intended to enter the family business. He graduated from the University California, Davis with a degree in animal husbandry. However, in 1966, the Adamsons sold Adohr Farms to Southland Corp, due to the high cost of raising cattle.

Merritt Jr., Sylvia, and Rhoda-May decided to focus their interests on real estate development for the land. In 1967, they formed Adamson Cos. to oversee the family business. In 1968, Adamson Cos. gave 138 acres of Rancho Malibu land to Pepperdine University. The school, which was then based in Los Angeles, moved to Malibu in 1972. Other developments followed, including construction on a mobile home park, condominiums, and state parks.

In 1966, the State of California filed an eminent domain lawsuit seeking to turn the Adamson House into beach parking. The state won the lawsuit and purchased the property from the Adamson family for \$2.69 million, a valuation set forth by the court. However, after much encouragement by the community of Malibu, the house was deemed a California Historical Landmark in 1985 and was later opened to the public as a museum.

Scope and Content

The collection includes materials accumulated by the Rindge and Adamson families of Malibu, California. The collection contains correspondence, business papers, financial records, photographs, newspaper clippings, and ephemera from the various family members and spans from 1891 to 1967.

Arrangement

The collection was given to Pepperdine University by Grant Adamson over a period of time. Each donation was turned into a series and added to the collection. The series are: 1. Malibu Real Estate and Railroad; 2. Malibu Ranch; 3. Pacific Coast Highway (Roosevelt Highway) Road Battle; 4. Malibu Water Company.

Related Archival Materials

Frederick Hastings Rindge Collection, Cambridge Historical Commission.

Processing Information note

The collection was arranged and described by Katie Richardson and Catie Golitzin, February 2012.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Adamson family

Adamson, Merritt, 1888-1949

Adamson, Merritt, Jr., 1926-1986

Gross, R.F.

Leason F. Pomeroy & Associates.

Malibu Water Company.

Marblehead Land Company.

Rindge Adamson, Rhoda Agatha, 1893-1962

Rindge family

Rindge, Frederick H.

Rindge, Rhoda May, 1864-1941

Southern Pacific Railroad Company. -- History

California Highway 1 (Calif.)

Correspondence
Dam construction--California--Los Angeles County
Financial records
Irrigation--California--Malibu
Malibu (Calif.)--History
Malibu Dam (Calif.)
Maps
Pacific Coast Highway
Photographs
Railroad tracks--California--History
Railroads--California, Southern--Design and construction
Ranches--California--History
Ranching--California--History
Receipts (financial records)
Road construction--California--Malibu

- Box 1, Folder 1-7 **Series 1: Malibu Real Estate and Railroad 1891-1960**
Physical Description: (Plus one oversize map)
Scope and Content
The series includes article clippings, financial records, legal documents, maps and blueprints of the surrounding area, railroad timetables and brochures, and correspondence regarding leases and sales of parcels to clients. The materials document how the family used and managed the Malibu land as well as their struggle to keep Southern Pacific Railroad from building a railroad through their property.
- Box 1, Folder 1 **Article Clippings 1905-1960**
Scope and Content
The articles, which come from Los Angeles-area newspapers, range from 1905 to 1960 and discuss such topics as real estate, wildfires, public beaches, and the development of roads and railways in the area.
- Box 1, Folder 2 **Correspondence 1901-1940**
Scope and Content
The correspondence dating from 1901 to 1940 includes handwritten and typed letters mostly addressed to May K. Rindge. Topics include financial matters pertaining to the Malibu Ranch, building a railroad on the property, current and prospective tenant issues, Marblehead Land Company meetings, general news pertaining to the company, and requests from outside parties to use the Malibu Ranch for various purposes.
- Box 1, Folder 3 **Financial Records 1891-1941**
Scope and Content
This broad range of financial documents, dated 1891 to 1941, includes several deeds, company bills, personal receipts, tax statements, value estimates of lots, and handwritten notes, all pertaining in some way to the Rindge family and their management of Malibu Ranch through Marblehead Land Company.
- Box 1, Folder 4 **Financial Records- Malibu Inn 1934-1935**
Scope and Content
The file includes receipts and invoices from the Malibu Inn.
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Box 1, Folder 5

Maps and Blueprints 1891-1932

Scope and Content

The eleven maps and blueprints show houses, lots, roads, and subways on the Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit from 1922-1932. Included are maps of tracts in neighboring areas and a map of the railroad department of the YMCA from 1891. The dated materials are organized chronologically. The maps are printed, but many contain handwritten notes or additions.

Box 1, Folder 6

Railroad Timetables and Brochure 1887-1920

Scope and Content

The file contains three timetables ranging from 1887-1920 issued by Southern Pacific Lines, Santa Fe Passenger Department, and Topeka Traffic Department. One descriptive brochure of the Pullman's Palace Car Company from Chicago is also included.

Box 1, Folder 7

Miscellaneous 1915-1940

Scope and Content

The miscellaneous file includes printed and handwritten documents dating from 1915-1940. The folder includes notes, an advertisement for Malibu Encinal, instructions on using gunite from the LA Cement Gun Company, and an advertisement for Palisades Tavern and Bungalows.

Box 1, 3

Series 2: **Malibu Ranch**

Scope and Content

The series includes article clippings, correspondence, financial records, and other printed materials pertaining to the family's life on the Malibu Ranch. The material is mostly print, originals, and photocopies.

Box 1, Folder 8

Article Clippings 1893-1903

Scope and Content

The file consists mainly of newspaper clippings from the *Los Angeles Times*. Topics include profitable agricultural crops and livestock, advertisements for equipment and agricultural services, developments in oil drilling and irrigation technology, and the state of local bodies of water in light of the *Water Problem of Southern California*. Some other news stories, such as court cases and articles addressing Christian values, are also included. Most clippings are undated, but visible dates range from 1893 to 1903.

Box 1, Folder 9

Correspondence Bulk, 1892-1904 1892-1938

Scope and Content

The file consists of correspondence mainly pertaining to Frederick Rindge's business with Malibu Ranch. Topics covered include purchases of crops, sales of wool to the Angora Robe and Glove Company, and having a telephone installed on the property. Additionally, there is a letter dated 1938 addressing May K. Rindge's plan to build a yacht harbor at Point Dume, a draft of an advertisement for a mousetrap, and an article on cheerfulness by the Conservative Life Insurance Company, which Mr. Rindge founded. Materials include print and originals.

Box 1, Folder 10

Financial Records 1892-1936**Scope and Content**

The file includes two groups of documents, one pertaining to Frederick Rindge's affairs from 1892 to 1904, and one to May K. Rindge's affairs from 1931 to 1936. In the first group, there are checks written by Frederick Rindge, receipts of groceries and kitchen supplies purchased by Fred Haussmann for the Rindges, business documents, and receipts for services including labor, surveys, and consultations. In the second group, there are statements on Malibu Ranch livestock sales, information on Marblehead employees, Marblehead's grant deeds, and Marblehead receipts. Materials include print and originals.

Box 1, Folder 11

Financial Records- Deposit Slips ca. 1890s**Scope and Content**

The file includes four blank pads of deposit slips circa 1890s from the Bank of Santa Monica, the Farmers and Merchants Bank, and the First National Bank of Los Angeles.

Box 1, Folder 12

Malibu Ranch Gate Log 1927, 1929**Scope and Content**

The Malibu Ranch gate log documents who entered and exited the Malibu Ranch via Los Flores Canyon between June 26, 1927, and July 4, 1927, and June 10, 1929, and June 18, 1929.

Box 3

Malibu Ranch Records circa 1900s**Scope and Content**

The Malibu ranch records include two books of handwritten notes and article clippings documenting life on the ranch and water and irrigation issues in southern California. The books appear to have belonged to Frederick Rindge.

Box 1, Folder 13

Notes and Poetry by Frederick Rindge circa 1892-1893**Scope and Content**

The file contains handwritten notes and poetry by Frederick Rindge circa 1892-1893 on agriculture, horticulture, and miscellaneous subjects.

Box 1, Folder 14

Notice Signs circa 1900s**Scope and Content**

The file consists of several cloth notice signs signed by Frederick Rindge, advising that no shooting, hunting or camping is allowed on the Malibu Ranch.

Box 1, Folder 15

Skinner Residence Organ circa 1927**Scope and Content**

The file contains three booklets describing the Skinner Organ. The Skinner Residence Organ purchased by May K. Rindge is probably the organ in the Serra Retreat.

Box 1, Folder 16

Tide Tables for the Pacific Coast of America 1894**Scope and Content**

The booklet contains tide tables for the Pacific Coast in 1895 and is published by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey. It was used to plan a trip along the beach at low tide from Santa Monica to Malibu by Frederick Rindge.

Box 1, Folder 17

Tide Tables for the Pacific Coast of the United States 1899, 1903**Scope and Content**

The two booklets give tide tables for the years 1900 and 1904 and are published by the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Box 1, Folder 18

Miscellaneous Ranch Items undated

Scope and Content

The file includes handwritten notes, handwritten excerpts from books, and a pamphlet. The notes are difficult to read. The articles and pamphlet discuss agricultural-related topics such as angora goats, olive culture, and species of trees.

Box 1,
Folder 19-22

Series 3: **Pacific Coast Highway/Roosevelt Highway Road Battle**

Scope and Content

The series includes advertisements, financial records, blueprints, maps, and a photograph. The materials document the family's battle with the state to prevent the building of a highway on their Malibu land. The family eventually lost the battle and the county obtained a right-of-way through the property. In June 1929, the Roosevelt Highway (now the Pacific Coast Highway) opened.

Box 1, Folder 19

Advertisements 1920

Scope and Content

The file contains four copies of an advertisement excerpted from the April 4, 1920, issue of the *Los Angeles Times*. The ad, financed by the Rindge Company, outlines why the proposed state highway should not be built on the Rindges' property.

Box 1, Folder 20

Financial Records 1935

Scope and Content

The file includes the contract between the state and the Marblehand Land Company giving the state a right-of-way through the Malibu Ranch to build the Pacific Coast Highway.

Box 1, Folder 21

Maps 1916-1924

Scope and Content

The file contains four large printed maps. Two of these, dating from 1916, belong to a greater five-part map and show land to be condemned for the opening of Malibu Road through the Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit. The other two show Latigo Canyon Road and date from 1924. One shows the road as it was presently, stretching from the State Highway to Malibu Road, and the other shows land to be acquired for extension of the road.

Box 1, Folder 22

Road Description 1912-1913

Scope and Content

The file includes a photograph and typed notes describing road work done on the Rindge property.

Box 1-2

Series 4: **Malibu Water Company 1926-1967****Scope and Content**

The series includes correspondence and reports from the Public Utilities Commission, documents from Los Angeles County departments, correspondence with lawyers and irrigation customers, company reports, financial documents, administrative files, article clippings, correspondence regarding Malibu Dam, photographs and negatives of the dam, water analyses from the dam, blueprints, maps, documents regarding water treatment issues, and well production reports from 1926 to 1967.

Historical note

Marblehead Land Company, a land holding and subdividing corporation created in 1905 to manage Frederick Rindge's holdings, was the parent company of Malibu Water Company. As a result of the difficulties of the Great Depression, Marblehead filed a voluntary petition for bankruptcy in 1936. During a period of reorganization, Marblehead created Malibu Water Company in 1938 as a public utility water company to oversee water system operations in the area it had previously served. Marblehead served as the sole stockholder of Malibu Water Company. Merritt H. Adamson, husband of Rhoda Agatha Rindge, served as president of the company for a number of years until shortly before his death when R. F. Gross took over the position in 1948. About three years later, the position passed again to Merritt Adamson, Jr.

Box 1, Folder 23

Administrative Files 1943-1970**Scope and Content**

The file includes correspondence, memoranda, financial documents, reports, blueprints, and legal documents pertaining to the Malibu Water Company and Merritt and Rhoda Agatha Adamson. Topics include building a dam in the Malibu area, Rhoda Agatha Adamson's protest against the appropriation of her water sources, and the obligations and rates set forth by the Malibu Water Company. Materials are mainly print and date from 1943 to 1970.

Box 1, Folder 24

Application No. 48586 to Abandon and Discontinue Irrigation Service 1956-1967**Scope and Content**

The file contains legal documents, correspondence, newspaper clippings, blueprints, a historical note about the company, financial documents including receipts and graphs of customer statistics, and the application for Malibu Water Company to abandon and discontinue irrigation service. The materials are mainly print with some originals, and range from 1956 to 1967.

Box 1, Folder 25

Article Clippings 1950-1956**Scope and Content**

The articles come from the October 4, 1956, issue of the *Topanga Journal*, and the July 28, 1950, issue of the *Malibu Times*. The former displays pictures and captions regarding construction on the Shoup Reservoir Dam, while the latter contains a *complete water report*.

Box 1, Folder 26

Correspondence- Malibu Canyon Patrol 1958**Scope and Content**

The letter sent by Marblehead Land Company on November 7, 1958, informs the Los Angeles Sheriff that a certain party has permission to use the Malibu Canyon area for the purpose of photographing, trapping, and banding birds.

Box 1,
Folder 27-28

Correspondence- Malibu Dam 1928-1966

Scope and Content

The file contains mostly correspondence and memoranda, but a small amount of legal documents and photographs are also included. The materials discuss the process of getting the dam approved, safety concerns regarding the dam, and improvements made to the dam over the years. Frequent correspondents include the California State Department of Public Works, the Engineering Service Corporation, Taylor and Taylor, Consulting Engineers, and Gerald FitzGerald (Consulting Engineer). Materials range in date from 1928-1966.

Box 2, Folder 1,
Box 1, Folder 29

Correspondence- Irrigation Customers 1943-1967

Scope and Content

The file contains mostly correspondence and memoranda, but a small amount of lists, charts, and newspaper clippings are also included. Topics include a search for a solution to the drought in Malibu, changes in Malibu Water Company's irrigation service, and proposals to drill a well. Significant individuals who appear in the file include R. F. Gross (President of Malibu Water Company in 1948) and David Yale of Malibu Water Company.

Box 2, Folder 2

Irrigation Services- De Wit, Maarten 1956-1957

Scope and Content

The file includes correspondence, charts, memoranda, financial documents, notices, agreements, and other documents regarding the legal case between Malibu Water Company and their customer, Maarten de Wit. Materials include print and originals, and date from 1956 to 1957.

Box 2, Folder 3

Irrigation Water Services- MacGregor, Charles A. 1960-1963

Scope and Content

The file includes materials relevant to the dispute between Malibu Water Company and Charles A. MacGregor regarding MacGregor's excessive use of water and drilling of a well during the drought in Malibu. Documents include an application for water service, a brief from the District Court of Appeals pertaining to the case, correspondence, memoranda, a grant deed and other legal documents, notices, records and receipts. Materials are prints and originals and range from 1960 to 1963.

Box 2, Folder 4

Malibu Canyon Access Road 1954-1958

Scope and Content

The file contains documents ranging from 1954 to 1958, which include letters, invoices, utilities agreements, concrete delivery tickets, a proposal, a contract, a map sketch, and a handwritten letter regarding the Malibu Canyon Access Road and the resulting utility changes and relocation work.

Box 2, Folder 5

Malibu Dam Maps and Blueprints 1926-1961

Scope and Content

The file contains contour maps and blueprints, ranging from 1926 to 1961. The maps show different aspects of the Rindge Reservoir and Malibu Dam, as well as a lease map showing parcels in Malibu Canyon. Some maps show areas of the dam to repair or of possible improvement. Additionally, some maps are by Gerald FitzGerald or Taylor and Taylor, consulting engineers who worked alongside Malibu Water Company during the 1950s and 1960s.

Box 2, Folder 6	<p>Malibu Dam No. 773 1964-1967</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The file contains correspondence, charts, a pamphlet, and a map pertaining to Rindge Reservoir and Malibu Dam No. 773. The topic of concern is the possibility that the spillway apron on the dam would fail due to erosion and cause the loss of the entire reservoir. Correspondents include Merritt Adamson of Malibu Water Company, the California State Department of Water Resources, and Gerald FitzGerald, consulting engineer. Materials include print and originals and date from 1964 to 1967.</p>
Box 2, Folder 7	<p>Malibu Dam Spillway 1926</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The map is of the Malibu Dam Spillway Radial Gate Connections and dates from March 1926. The name and address of H. Hawgood are stamped below the title.</p>
Box 2, Folder 8	<p>Meter Readings undated</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The handwritten chart shows information on customers and their monthly water allotment. No date is given.</p>
Box 2, Folder 9	<p>Photographs and Negatives of Malibu Dam 1953-1966</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The file contains photographs and negatives dating from 1953 to 1966. The photographs show the Malibu Rindge Dam No. 773, especially the eroded area of the spillway, and the excavation and removal of gravel from the back of the dam.</p>
Box 2, Folder 10	<p>Pomeroy & Associates Analysis of Water from Malibu Dam 1954-1958</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The file includes correspondence, water sample analyses, and a graph regarding the quality and content of water and its suitability for irrigation use. Materials include print and originals and date from 1954 to 1958.</p>
Box 2, Folder 11	<p>Public Utilities Commission Reports on Malibu Canyon Dam Water Usage in Domestic System of Malibu Water Company 1955-1957</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The file contains correspondence between Merritt Adamson, president of Malibu Water Company, and the Public Utilities Commission, regarding the use of the Malibu Dam Reservoir for domestic purposes. Handwritten notes are also included. Materials date from 1955 to 1957.</p>
Box 2, Folder 12	<p>Refunds to Bonafide Irrigation Customers Per Decision 71803 1964-1967</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The file includes official documents of Malibu Water Company, correspondence, charts, and notes pertaining to <i>Refunds to Bonafide Irrigation Customers per Decision 71803</i>. Materials include print, originals, and copies of originals, and date from 1964 to 1967.</p>
Box 2, Folder 13	<p>Removal of Debris From Irrigation System- Public Utilities Commission Report (PUC) Decision No. 66234 on Application No. 43579 1964-1965</p> <p>Scope and Content</p> <p>The file contains correspondence from Malibu Water Company, the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California, and Brown and Caldwell, Consulting Engineers. The topic of concern is installation of facilities which would improve irrigation service to customers, specifically removing debris from the system. Materials are print and range from 1964 to 1965.</p>

Box 2, Folder 14

Rules and Regulations Governing the Supervision of Dams in California 1929-1965

Scope and Content

The file consists of one copy of an assembly bill and four booklets issued by the Division of Water Resources of the State of California's Department of Public Works. The booklets cover rules and regulations pertaining to the supervision of dams in California. The materials are printed and date from 1929 to 1965.

Box 2, Folder 15

Water Treatment Plant and Sanitation Issues 1952-1958

Scope and Content

The file contains correspondence, memoranda, water test results, a USGS map showing the outline of the watershed area, a booklet describing state water regulations, and an application to the State Board of Public Health to add water from Malibu Creek as a supply source. The documents regard the legal process of this addition and the tests necessary. Materials date from 1952 to 1958 and include prints and originals.

Box 2, Folder 16

Well Production Reports- Malibu Water Company 1947-1965

Scope and Content

The file includes memoranda, correspondence, historical information, water analysis results, and handwritten charts and notes detailing well production meter readings. The main topic of concern is the quality of water provided by the dam. Materials date from 1947 to 1965.