Guide to the Rousseau Family Papers

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Guide to the Rousseau Family Papers

Collection number: MS 44

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Rousseau family papers
Dates: 1904-1958
Collection number: MS 44
Creator: Rousseau family.
Collection Size: .1 linear feet(1 box)
Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612

Abstract: The Rousseau family was a family musical ensemble consisting of husband and wife, Walter H. and Margaret Rousseau, and their seven children: Anna E. Rousseau, James L. Rousseau, Charles P. Rousseau, Milton T. Rousseau, Margaret Rousseau, and Green M. Rousseau. Beginning the 1910s, the family began performing at church and vaudeville theater venues throughout California, including a four month long performance at the Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego, California in 1915-1916. The Rousseau family papers include photographs, correspondence, and contracts that document the musical performances and business activities of the Rousseau family.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
No access restrictions. Collection is open to the public.

Access Restrictions
Materials are for use in-library only, non-circulating.

Publication Rights
Permission to publish from the Rousseau Family Papers must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

Preferred Citation
Rousseau family papers, MS 44, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

Processing Information
Processed by Sean Heyliger, 06/28/2013.

Biography / Administrative History
The Rousseau family was a family musical ensemble consisting of husband and wife, Walter H. and Margaret Rousseau, and their seven children: Anna E. Rousseau, James L. Rousseau, Charles P. Rousseau, Milton T. Rousseau, Margaret Rousseau, and Green M. Rousseau. Beginning the 1910s, the family began performing at church and vaudeville theater venues throughout California, including a four month long performance at the Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego, California in 1915-1916. The family performed as the ‘World’s Most Famous Rousseau Family of Musicians’ and the ‘Silver Star Musical Family’ playing an assortment of over 25 musical instruments, including the steel guitar, ukulele, mandolin, and violin.

Scope and Content of Collection
The Rousseau family papers include photographs, correspondence, and contracts that document the musical performances and business activities of the Rousseau family. The papers consist of 21 photographs of various members of the Rousseau family, including two group photographs from the 1920s depicting members of the Rousseau family musicians with their musical instruments. The papers also includes letters of recommendation from theater hall managers attesting to the musical abilities of the Rousseau family, a letter related to the Rousseau’s performance at the Panama-California International Exposition in 1916, two contracts for performances at theaters throughout California, and W.H.H. certificate of appointment for the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in El Centro, California.

**Arrangement**

Series I. Photographs  
Series II. Correspondence  
Series III. Contracts

**Indexing Terms**

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

- Rousseau family (musical group).
- African American musicians--California.
- African American families--California.

**Photographs**

- **Physical Description:** 1 folder
- **Series Scope and Content Summary**
  - Includes 21 photographs of the Rousseau family.
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged by photograph identification number.

- **Box 1:1**
  - Portrait of Walter Henry Rousseau [001] undated
  - Portrait of the Rousseau Family with musical instruments, Los Angeles, California [002] 1924
  - Portrait of the Rousseau Family with musical instruments, caption: ‘The World Famous Rousseau Family’ [003] circa 1920s
  - (Left-right): Charles Rousseau, Milton Rousseau, James Rousseau, and Walter R. Rousseau standing in front of fence [004] circa 1920s
  - Portrait of Anna Rousseau Knox [005] undated
  - Portrait of Margaret Rousseau [006] undated
  - Portrait of Cornelia Mason [007] circa 1900s
  - Portrait of Anna Mae Rousseau [008] 1923
  - Portrait of Cornelia Blakeney Rousseau [009] circa 1900s
  - Portrait of William Henry Rousseau wearing Hawaiian lei [010] circa 1920s
  - Unidentified woman sitting on sofa [011] circa 1950s
  - Man and woman standing next to television [012] 1956
  - Ella Rousseau [013] undated
  - Portrait of a boy, reverse: ‘Lincoln Pegeese’ [015] undated
  - Soldier lying on ground aiming rifle, reverse: ‘field pack for 12 mile hike Billy’ [016] undated
  - Man in military uniform smoking a pipe [017] 1958
  - Two soldiers standing in the woods [018] 1958
  - Family leaning over concrete wall [019] circa 1950s
  - Photographs sitting on table in bedroom [020] circa 1950s
  - Portrait of Gladys Blakeney Pettis [021] undated
Box 1:2  
**Correspondence 1904-1956**  
Physical Description: 1 folder  
Series Scope and Content Summary  
Includes letters of recommendation and correspondence related to the scheduling of various Rousseau family musical performances.  
Arrangement  
Arranged chronologically.

Box 1:3  
**Contracts 1920-1928**  
Physical Description: 1 folder  
Series Scope and Content Summary  
Includes two contracts for the Rousseau family to give performances in Los Angeles, California and at the Ackerman & Harris circuit of theatres in Oakland, Sacramento, Stockton, San Francisco, Fresno, and Long Beach. Also includes a W.H.H. Rousseau's certificate of appointment to serve as pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in El Centro, Calexico, Brawley, and Imperial, California.  
Arrangement  
Arranged chronologically.