Inventory of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation Records

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Inventory of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation Records

Collection number: R191

California State Archives
Office of the Secretary of State
Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Dept. of Parks and Recreation Records
Dates: 1904-2003
Collection number: R191
Creator: State Park Commission
Creator/Collector: State Park and Recreation Commission
Creator/Collector: Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Parks
Creator/Collector: Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Beaches and Parks
Collection Size: 52 cubic feet including 30 maps
Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California
Abstract: The Dept. of Parks and Recreation was originally named the Dept. of Natural Resources when first created in 1927. The records of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation consist of fifty-two cubic feet and include thirty maps covering the years 1907 to 2003, with the bulk of the records covering 1929 to 1991.
Physical location: California State Archives
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Collection is open for research.
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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition and Custodial History
Frederick A. Meyer became Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s assistant in 1946 as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. Meyer then worked for the Dept. of Parks and Recreation and its predecessor agencies from 1947 until 1980. After Olmsted died in 1957, Meyer began collecting Olmsted's records during the early 1960s when he discovered that many of Olmsted's records had been discarded when agency headquarters moved from San Francisco to the Sacramento location during the early 1940s. He transferred the remaining Olmsted records to the California State Archives beginning in 1989 through 1992.
Agency History
The Dept. of Parks and Recreation was originally named the Dept. of Natural Resources when first created in 1927 by Chapter 128. The bill also allowed for a new Division of Parks to be established within the department. The Legislature introduced three more park-related bills that same year. Chapter 763 created the state's first State Park Commission with executive and administrative authority over the state park program. Chapter 764 provided for a survey of potential park areas for acquisition as state parks. Chapter 765 provided for the submission of a $6 million bond issue that would provide funds for state park acquisition purposes. According to Chapter 765, each dollar of state funds would have to be matched by funds or land from local or private sources before acquisition could proceed. Governor C. C. Young signed the bills in May 1927. The State Park Bond Act passed in the 1928 general election.

The first State Park Commission consisted of five members: chairman William E. Colby, and members Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, Henry W. O'Melveny, Major Frederick Russell Burham, and Senator Wilbur F. Chandler. The commissioners offered landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (1867-1957) the job of surveying possible state park sites. Olmst'd efforts resulted in the California State Parks Survey, published in 1929. The commissioners accepted the recommendations outlined in the survey and began a program of acquisition.

California's coastal population increased in the late 1930s, and with this change came an increase in beach acquisitions. On June 2, 1941 Governor Culbert Olson signed Chapter 550 authorizing the Division of Parks to change its name to the Division of Beaches and Parks to reflect the new emphasis on beach properties. The State Park Commission received $15 million from the 1945 Omnibus Park Acquisition Bill. The Commission again hired Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. as an advisor on inland park acquisition and development in 1945. Already working on the acquisition of the Calaveras South Grove and highway design in several north coast parks for the Commission, Olmsted agreed to provide recommendations for projects such as the town of Columbia and scenic highways along the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. He submitted his reports beginning in 1946 but did not present the final General Report on Potential State Park and Recreational Areas until 1950.

Passed on March 15, 1961 by the California Legislature, Assembly Concurrent Resolution (ACR) 25 directed the Dept. of Natural Resources through the Division of Beaches and Parks to undertake a study of the historical resources of the state and to formulate a long-range plan for the preservation, restoration, and interpretation of the historical resources and values of the state. The Division of Beaches and Parks never officially adopted the resulting program, the Historical Resources Study.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 mandated states to implement a comprehensive state historic preservation plan, conduct a statewide survey of historic sites, nominate properties to the National Register of Historic Places, and administer a matching grants-in-aid program for survey activities, planning activities, and for acquisition and development projects. An historic preservation plan was not formulated until after 1967, when new Division director William Penn Mott, Jr. reorganized the Division of Beaches and Parks and the Division of Recreation into the Dept. of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Governor Ronald Reagan signed Chapter 1179 on August 15, 1967 authorizing the name change. Under the same legislation, the State Park Commission merged with the Recreation Commission, becoming the State Park and Recreation Commission and increased from five members to nine members. Governor Reagan then designated Mott as State Liaison Officer in March 1967, with the authority to implement the NHPA in California.

In 1969 the National Parks Service provided $40,000 to California for the purposes of developing a National Register of Historic Sites and a California History Plan. Completed in 1973, California History Plan Volume I, the Comprehensive Preservation Program recommended methods of improving preservation efforts, summarized the history of California, and described the status of historic preservation in the state. California History Plan Volume II, the Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites included an ongoing inventory of the state's historic resources. California History Plan Volume III, the Annual Preservation Program reported the status of the California History Preservation Program, long-range preservation goals, and immediate plans and preservation activities. DPR updated Volume III until 1975, when DPR created the Office of Historic Preservation.

The California Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee originally served as the official review board for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. The committee approved their first nomination in July 1970. From July 1, 1972 to October 20, 1975 the new History Preservation Section of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation assumed responsibility for the nominations. In late October 1975, the Dept. of Parks and Recreation created the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) directed by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Under the jurisdiction of the DPR, the OHP accepted all the duties concerning historic preservation in California, including National Register nominations. Nominations are based on evidence of the property's physical integrity, architectural style, historical or archaeological significance, or connection to a significant person or place. Applications are denied for failing to meet the required criterion. Withdrawn or removed applications usually result from properties that have been destroyed before the nomination process was complete. Today, the OHP continues to review and forward qualified National Register of Historic Places nominations to the Keeper of the Register in Washington D.C.

Scope and Content
The records of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation consist of fifty-two cubic feet and include thirty maps covering the years 1907 to 2003, with the bulk of the records covering 1929 to 1991. The Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Parks records cover the period from 1927 to 1941 when the Division of Parks changed to the Division of Beaches and Parks, which covers the period from 1941 to 1967. The Dept. of Parks and Recreation records cover the period from 1967 to 2003. The State Park Commission records range from 1917 to 1967 when reorganization changed the commission to the State Park and Recreation Commission, covering the period from 1967 to 1989.


According to retired DPR employee Frederick Meyer, many of Olmsted's records were thrown away during a move from San Francisco to Sacramento, but no record exists of what was discarded. Most of the information concerning the Olmsted surveys will not be found in the correspondence, but rather in the subject files and reports. The records include two sketch maps by Olmsted and several maps, which include notations by Olmsted. Several files include Meyer's notes, which he added when he transferred the records in 1989. Historical Resources Study files do not include a final report. California History Plan Volume II files include the DPR identification numbers beginning with 348.0 to designate correspondence, 348.1 for reports, and 348.2, which corresponds with the alphabetical listing of counties. National Register of Historic Places applications are filed by DPR identification number beginning with 537.4, which corresponds with the alphabetical listing of counties. The OHP index contains an incomplete record of denied, removed, or withdrawn applications submitted to the National Register of Historic Places. The index accompanies the applications in the previous series and includes the site name, a DPR identification number beginning with 537.4, and the status of the nomination.

**Indexing Terms**

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

- Parks and Recreation Department
- Olmsted, Frederick Law, 1879-1959
- Parks California
- Historic preservation

**Related Collections at the California State Archives**

- Dept. of Natural Resources Records, 1927-1961.
- Dept. of Public Works-Director's Office Records, 1927-1972.
- Dept. of Forestry Records, 1885-1986.

**Oral Histories**


**Related Collections at Other Repositories**

- Bishop (Frances Evelyn) Papers, California State Parks. Calaveras Big Trees State Park, P.O. Box 120, Arnold, California 95223.
- California State Historic Landmark Collection. Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California 92093-0175.
- Aubrey Neasham Collection, Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, 551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd. Sacramento, California 95814
- Sierra Club Records. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720-6000.
Series 1 Correspondence 1917-1950

Physical Description: 9 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.
Scope and Content Note
State Park Commissioners hired landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in 1927 and again in 1945 as a contractor to survey possible state park sites in California. Olmsted co-owned the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm. Correspondence includes letters and telegrams received, copies of outgoing letters and telegrams, and company memoranda between the Olmsted Brothers offices in Brookline, Massachusetts and Palos Verdes Estates, California and architectural firms, landscape engineers, and various agencies and commissions. Topics primarily concern accounts and expenses incurred on state bond project reports and the final 1950 Olmsted report. Most information concerning the surveys is found in the subject files and reports, rather than correspondence.

Series 2 Subject Files 1924-1979

Physical Description: 80 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged by general files chronologically, then by subject chronologically.
Scope and Content Note
General files were created by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and include data about state park projects presented before the Park Commission, including acreage, estimated cost, and state allocation; a classification list of State Park projects, a list of projects being investigated, a summary of land acquisition report by the director of Division of Parks Newton Drury, and a 1929 compilation of state bond reports. Individual site surveys include State Bond Projects, Redwood Highway, and Calaveras South Grove, and include correspondence, reports, photographs, maps, blueprints, publications, and newspaper clippings.
See Appendices A, B, and C for title and site lists.

Series 3 Reports 1928-1989

Physical Description: 34 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.
Scope and Content Note
Survey reports by the Olmsted Brothers office, including a copy of the original 1928 State Park Survey of California and survey reports for the 1946 state park bond. The State Park Survey included the criteria by which parks should be selected, a list of park sites, and served as a guideline for the establishment of future state parks. Additional reports by other forest engineers and landscape architectural firms working with the Olmsted Brothers include correspondence, maps, and photographs. The State Park Commission accepted most of Olmsted’s recommendations in both surveys in determining new state park sites.
See Appendix D for title list.
Series 4 Publications 1946-1961

Physical Description: 9 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note
Publications include State Park Commission annual reports, Senate and Assembly Interim Committee reports, Division of Beaches and Parks five-year program reports, and the 1946 National Conference on State Parks Yearbook on parks and recreation progress. Annual reports for the years 1948 to 1950 include information concerning the hierarchy of the Division, and provide data about individual park sites. The five-year program reports for the years 1953 to 1961 include long-range plans for the park system and a list of new areas in the process of acquisition by the Division.
See Appendix E for title list.

Series 5 Maps 1932-1950

Physical Description: 30 maps
Arrangement
Arranged by National Monument and National Park maps in one box, and other maps in a second box.

Scope and Content Note
Included are U.S. Dept. of the Interior National Park Service maps of California National Monuments and Sequoia, General Grant, and Yosemite National Parks. Other maps by Olmsted Brothers, Division of Beaches and Parks, Dept. of Public Works, and state counties concern population density, roads, highways, and parks. Includes two sketch maps by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and several maps with notations by Olmsted.
See Appendix F for title list.

Records of the Dept. of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Division of Beaches and Parks/Dept. of Parks and Recreation

Records of Acquisition and Development

Series 1 Project Files 1929-1989

Physical Description: 212 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note
Records include surveys concerning the feasibility of state resources for suitable parks and conservation. Files include correspondence, reports, maps, photographs, newspaper clippings, and articles. Projects include state power plants, Central Valley Project (CVP), rivers, lakes, dams and reservoirs, beaches, routes and scenic highways, and Golden Gate, Redwood, Toyon, and Yosemite National Parks.
See Appendix G for title list.

Records of Grants and Statewide Studies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Physical Description</th>
<th>Arrangement</th>
<th>Scope and Content Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Historical Resources Study Files 1952-1954</td>
<td>1952-1954</td>
<td>16 file folders</td>
<td>Arranged chronologically.</td>
<td>Preliminary study to gather information on state historical resources includes incoming letters from California historical societies, state legislators, and interested private individuals concerning the 1961 legislation that approved the study, ACR 25. Also includes copies of outgoing letters from the Division of Beaches and Parks. Reports include the Proposal for the Historical Resources Study. The County Historical Data and Information Resource Files contain correspondence, inventory questionnaires, reports, photographs, publications, and maps. Pilot studies for Lassen, Mariposa, San Diego, and Siskiyou counties include agendas, reference material, and forms. The Division executed the pilot studies as test cases for a future comprehensive historical resources inventory, but the program stalled for the next ten years until the implementation of the California History Plan, included in the next series. Reports do not include a final report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>California History Plan Volume I Files 1953-1976</td>
<td>1953-1976</td>
<td>6 file folders</td>
<td>Arranged by correspondence chronologically, then by reports chronologically.</td>
<td>Correspondence includes incoming and copies of outgoing letters concerning the findings and recommendations for the California History Plan Volume I, the first stage of a comprehensive preservation program for the state. Volume I recommended methods of improving preservation efforts, summarized the history of California, and described the status of historic preservation in the state. Reports include copies of drafts and the final copy of the Preliminary California History Plan, an early draft of County Historic Sites, and other reports on architecture, historic preservation, and California history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>California History Plan Volume II Files 1904-1980</td>
<td>1904-1980</td>
<td>157 file folders</td>
<td>Arranged by correspondence chronologically, reports chronologically, then by county chronologically.</td>
<td>Correspondence includes incoming letters and copies of outgoing letters pertaining to the inventory of historic features for the California History Plan Volume II, the second stage of the comprehensive preservation program for the state. Includes reports, publications, and historical research of each county requested by the Division of Beaches and Parks for use in developing and compiling a comprehensive inventory of the state's historic resources. Files also include procedural guides, journals, newsletters, brochures, maps, articles, and newspaper clippings. See Appendix H for inventory list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series 4 California History Plan Volume III Files 1970-1977

Physical Description: 4 file folders

Arrangement
Arranged by correspondence chronologically, then by reports chronologically.

Scope and Content Note
Correspondence includes incoming letters and copies of outgoing letters concerning the creation of the California History Plan Vol. III, the third stage of the comprehensive preservation program for the state, which reported the status of the California History Preservation Program, long-range preservation goals, and immediate plans and preservation activities. Records include the DPR identification numbers beginning with 348.0 to designate correspondence, 348.1 for reports, or 348.2, which corresponds with the alphabetical listing of counties. Reports include copies of the Preliminary California History Plan Vol. III and final copies of California Comprehensive History Plan: Vol. III Annual History Preservation Program. The program ended with the creation of the Office of Historic Preservation in 1975.

Series 1 National Register Applications 1963-2003

Physical Description: 894 file folders

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by county and then alphabetically by site.

Scope and Content Note
Denied, removed, or withdrawn applications submitted to the OHP for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Files include applications, correspondence, photographs, maps, reports, publications, newspaper clippings, and articles. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 mandated states to implement a comprehensive state historic preservation plan, which included submitting nominated properties to the National Register of Historic Places. The OHP reviews the applications and determines if the property qualifies for the National Register and forwards qualified nominations to the Keeper of the Register in Washington D.C. Reports are filed by DPR identification number beginning with 537.4, which corresponds with the alphabetical listing of counties. The denial of an application could result from insufficient evidence of the property's physical integrity, architectural style, historical or archaeological significance or connection to a significant person or place. Withdrawn or removed applications resulted from properties destroyed before the nomination process was complete. An incomplete corresponding card file index to the sites is described in series R191.012. See Appendix I for application list.

Series 2 National Register Sites Index 1963-2003

Physical Description: 1 index card box

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by county and then alphabetically by site.

Scope and Content Note
OHP-compiled card index of denied, removed, or withdrawn applications submitted for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Index accompanies the applications in the previous series. Includes the site name, DPR identification number beginning with 537.4, and the status of the nomination. Card index is not complete; it contains cards that do not have files and is missing several cards that do have files.