Inventory of the Sir Francis Drake Commission Records

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Inventory of the Sir Francis Drake Commission Records

Collection number: R348

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

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Sir Francis Drake Commission records,
Date (inclusive): 1973-1984
Collection number: R348
Creator: Sir Francis Drake Commission
Extent: 3 cubic feet
Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California

Abstract: On September 17, 1973, Assembly Bill 252, Chapter 250, established the Sir Francis Drake Commission as an independent agency. The primary function of the Commission was to organize celebrations for the quadricentennial of Sir Francis Drake's landing in California in 1579. The Sir Francis Drake Commission records consist of three cubic feet of records, three posters, three commemorative medallions and one slide organized into four series: subject files, publicity files, correspondence, and meeting files. The Commission existed from 1973-1980; however, these files contain material dated up to 1984.

Physical location: California State Archives
Language: English.
Access
Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Sir Francis Drake Commission, R348,[series & folder or item number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.

Acquisition Information
The California State Archives received these records sometime after the last official meeting of the Commission.

Commission History
On September 17, 1973, Assembly Bill 252, Chapter 250, established the Sir Francis Drake Commission as an independent agency. The primary function of the Commission was to organize celebrations for the quadricentennial of Sir Francis Drake's landing in California in 1579. The Commission met approximately six times each year between 1973 and 1980. During these years, two commissioners died and two resigned; four new commissioners were appointed. The final meeting of the Commission was held on December 13, 1980. See appendix A in the Master Finding Aid in the California State Archives reference room for a list of the commissioners.

According to legislation that established the Commission, it was to have at least one annual celebration every year from 1974-1980. This purpose of the Commission was fulfilled by events such as the 1975 visit to San Francisco Bay by the Golden Hinde II, which was seen in person by about 250,000 spectators and by many more on television. The Commission also sponsored student essay contests and a high school student exchange program with youth in Plymouth, England. Commissioners took trips to England to meet with officials in Plymouth and other locations. On one of these visits, commissioners viewed Drake materials with Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.

1979 was declared Drake year in California, and the Commission planned, sponsored or helped organize several major events. The U.C. Regents dedicated University of California Charter Day, April 5, 1979, to Drake. The event featured speeches at the Berkeley campus by the British Ambassador to the United States, Peter Jay, and the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Kingman Brewster, Jr. In May and June, Clark Library at UCLA held seminars and a six-week program in which six post-doctoral fellows studied the influence of Drake's circumnavigation. The key scholarly event in the California celebrations, however, was an international conference on Drake, held from June 10-17, 1979, with participation from influential Drake scholars. In San Francisco on June 17, 1979, another celebration took place with a Landing Day parade and a sermon at Grace Cathedral by the Lord Bishop of London.

In 1979, many Drake exhibits appeared - with extensive help from commissioners - at the California State Library, the Huntington Library, the De Young Museum, the California Academy of Sciences, UCLA and the Museum of Man in San Diego, and other locations.

Commissioners were also instrumental in having special postage stamps, postcards and commemorative medallions issued. And although the Commission was not charged with providing a definitive answer to the divisive scholarly debate on the original landing place of Sir Francis Drake's ship in California, it did place three bronze plaques commemorating the event: at Vista Point in Marin County, at Drake's Bay in Marin County and at the base of Drake's statue in Plymouth, England.

Scope and Contents Note
The Sir Francis Drake Commission records consist of three cubic feet of records, three posters, three commemorative medallions and one slide reflecting the activity of the Commission in organizing celebrations in honor of the quadricentennial of Drake's landing in California in 1579. The Commission existed from 1973-1980; however, these files contain material dated up to 1984. The records are organized into four series: subject files, publicity files, correspondence, and meeting files. Dr. Norman J. Thrower gathered most of these records during his tenure as president of the Commission.

Researchers interested in Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation, in public celebrations and in historical memory will find useful information in these records. Of special interest are the many subject files that contain discussions of the heated debate over the location of Drake's landing in California. Although the Commission was never charged with finding an answer, or even making a unanimous statement, concerning this debate, the issue was unavoidable at many Commission meetings. The files also provide insight into the inner workings of appointed commissions in California. For example, the subject files contain records of legal actions filed by Col. William Shaw, the first president of the Commission, as he alleged that other commissioners had significant conflicts of interest. Other items of interest to researchers in the subject files may include correspondence on the activities of the Commission, including organizing meetings, conferences, commemorative events, exhibits and trips to England.

The publicity files may be useful to those interested in California history, as they include published pamphlets, newspaper articles, journal articles and magazine articles on Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation. They also contain drafts of speeches, plaques, press releases and exhibits created by members of the Commission. The correspondence files contain all correspondence not filed under an individual commissioner or agency in the subject files. The meeting files contain minutes, agendas, drafts and some statements by commissioners.

Arrangement
The records have been organized into four series: subject files, publicity files, correspondence and meeting files.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been associated with these materials in the Archives' automated public access system.

Subjects
Sir Francis Drake Commission
Drake, Francis, Sir, 1540?-1596

Other Finding Aids

See Inventory of the Sir Francis Drake Commission Records, with appendices and series identification numbers, in the reference room at the California State Archives. Catalog cards are also available in the reference room.

Related Collections

Records of State Assembly Member John T. Knox, Commissioner, may be found in the John T. Knox Papers at the California State Archives.

Records of Dr. V. Aubrey Neasham, Commissioner, may be found in the Aubrey Neasham Collection, at the Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, 551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd., Sacramento, California, 95814.

Records pertaining to Sir Francis Drake, his circumnavigation, and celebrations of his landing in California may be found at the Huntington Library, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, California, 91108; the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California, 94720; the California Historical Society, 678 Mission Street, San Francisco, California, 94105; and the California State Library, 914 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, California, 95814, among other repositories.

Separated Material

A slide has been separated from the subject files to a cold-storage vault for preservation purposes. Three posters and three commemorative medallions have been separated from the publicity files. Separation sheets are in the files to alert to the researcher to the existence and location of these items.

Series 1. **Subject Files, 1973-1984**

**Physical Description:** 84 file folders, 1 item

**Arrangement**

Subject files are arranged in alphabetical order.

**Scope and Content Note**

The subject files of the Sir Francis Drake Commission are quite diverse. The series contains internal correspondence, photographs, drafts of bills, brief transcripts of public debates on Drake's landing site in California, letters from the public and some planning files. Some files are topical, like those pertaining to non-commission sponsored events, such as Operation Drake, an expedition organized and backed by a group in Plymouth, England. Some files are commissioner files, containing correspondence, drafts, plans and other records from individual commissioners. Other files contain records concerning the Commission's contacts or joint plans with the British Library, the California Historical Commission, the Mountain Play Association or other government and private groups.

See Appendix B in the master finding aid in the reference room of the California State Archives for a complete list of subject files.

Series 2. **Publicity Files, 1973-1984**

**Physical Description:** 18 file folders, 6 items.

**Arrangement**

Publicity files are arranged alphabetically by event and type of record.

**Scope and Content Note**

This series contains publications related to Sir Francis Drake's voyages and visit to California, as well as Drake stamps and postcards. Newspaper articles, press releases and information on the student essay contests and exchange programs are also contained in these files. Posters and commemorative medallions are stored separately from the records. Separation sheets are included in the publicity files to indicate current locations in the California State Archives.

See Appendix C in the Master Finding Aid in the reference room at the California State Archives for a complete list of publicity files.
Series 3. Correspondence, 1973-1984

Physical Description: 7 file folders

Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by date of correspondence.

Scope and Content Note
These files include all correspondence not filed in individual commissioners' files or under a group or agency in the subject files series. There is one folder for each year from 1973-1980, and a single file for 1981-1984.


Physical Description: 5 file folders

Arrangement
These records are arranged chronologically by date of meeting.

Scope and Content Note
Meeting files include minutes, proposed agendas, final agendas, and other material pertaining to planning the meetings.