Finding Aid to the Lois Lenski *San Francisco Boy* Papers 1955BASC 7

Finding aid prepared by Susanne Mari Sakai
Book Arts & Special Collections
October 2019
100 Larkin Street
San Francisco 94102
bookarts@sfpl.org
Title: Lois Lenski San Francisco Boy Papers
Date: 1955
Identifier/Call Number: BASC 7
Creator: Lenski, Lois, 1893-1974
Physical Description: 1 box (0.5 Linear Feet)
Contributing Institution: Book Arts & Special Collections
100 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 557-4567
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Physical Location: Collection is stored on site.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
Conditions Governing Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item/Title of folder], Lois Lenski San Francisco Boy Papers (BASC 7), Book Arts & Special Collections, San Francisco Public Library.

Provenance
The original artwork, publisher's proof, and book dummy were donated to the Effie Lee Morris Historical and Research Collection at San Francisco Public Library in 1955. They were transferred to Book Arts and Special Collections in the 1990s.

Related Materials
Researchers are encouraged to see also the Lois P. Lenski Papers and the Lois Lenksi photograph collection at the Bancroft Library, the Lois Lenski Collection at Capital University Archives, the Lois Lenski Collection at Milner Library, and the Lois Lenski Collection at Syracuse University.

Biographical Note
Lois Lenski (1893-1974) was an award-winning author and illustrator of children's books. She was born in 1893 in Springfield, OH. Although she trained to become a teacher, she followed her passion to study art in New York City after graduating college. In the fall of 1920, she travelled to Europe to study and work. Lenski was first hired in London to illustrate books for the publisher John Lane. She returned from abroad in 1921 and spent much of her early career as an illustrator for children's books written by others, including Watty Piper's The Little Engine That Could (1930) and the Betsy Tacy series by Maud Hart Lovelace. Later, upon her publisher's suggestion she also began to write stories to accompany her illustrations. In 1927, Lenski published her first book, Skipping Village, and in the following year, A Little Girl of 1900, both of which are based on her childhood experiences. In the 1930's and early 1940's she created several books in two categories – picture books for very young children and fictionalized historical books aimed at older youth that told of children's lives in the 18th and 19th centuries. The first category includes The Little Family (1932), the first picture book designed to fit the small hands of toddlers, and the Mr. Small series. The second includes Phebe Fairchild: Her Book (1937) and Indian Captive: The Story of Mary Jemison (1941), both of which garnered a Newbery Honor. In the 1940's Lenski's health issues prompted her to spend winters in the warmer climate of the South, first in Louisiana and then in Florida. It was during her travels that she began researching and working on her series of regional books, which told the stories of children growing up in lesser known parts of the country. Her research methodology involved not only archival research but also visiting and staying with local families, and talking to classrooms of children who told her about their lives. Beginning with Bayou Suzette (1943), based on life in the Louisiana backcountry, Lenski wrote some 16 regional books over the next twenty years. Her second regional book Strawberry Girl (1945), about a farming family who migrates to the Florida backwoods, won the Newbery Medal in 1946. San Francisco Boy (1955), about a Chinese boy who struggles to adapt to life
in the big city, was her eleventh in the series. In December 1952, she received an invitation from Mrs. Dina Gianni's fourth graders at Commodore Stockton School in San Francisco's Chinatown to come visit them. Other letters followed during the next couple of years, accompanied by drawings and paintings by the students depicting all phases of their daily lives, until she finally made the visit to San Francisco in June 1954.

Scope and Content
The collection contains Lois Lenski's original pencil drawings for San Francisco Boy as well as the proof and dummy for the book. A few miscellaneous items relating to Lenski and San Francisco Boy such as a booklet titled “Lois Lenski: Friend of Children” and copies of the endpaper for San Francisco Boy are also included.

Arrangement
Arranged at the folder level by type of material.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Lenski, Lois, 1893-1974
Children's literature
Illustrated children's books
Illustration of books -- Juvenile literature
Illustrators -- Juvenile literature.
Women artists -- United States
Women authors, American
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Fiction

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box 1, folder 1  
Original drawings I
  Physical Description: 9 Leaves

box 1, folder 2  
Original drawings II
  Physical Description: 9 Leaves

box 1, folder 3  
Page proofs

box 1, folder 4  
Book dummy

box 1, folder 5  
Printed materials relating to Lois Lenski and San Francisco Boy
  General Note
  Includes a booklet titled "Lois Lenski: Friend of Children" and 2 copies of the endpaper for San Francisco Boy