
Finding aid prepared by Tami J. Suzuki
San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library
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February 2002
Title: Elmer E. Robinson Papers
Date (inclusive): 1935-1982
Date (bulk): 1947-1956
Collection Identifier: SFH 6
Creator: Robinson, Elmer E. (Elmer Edwin), b. 1894
Physical Description: 10 boxes, 1 oversized folder (6.25 cubic feet)
Contributing Institution: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library
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Abstract: Reports, mayoral and campaign speeches, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and historical documents documenting Robinson's mayoralty, which was noted for its many building programs, including the start of redevelopment. The papers provide a snapshot of post-World War II activities and changes undertaken at City Hall.
Physical Location: The collection is stored onsite.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
Access
The collection is open for research, with photographs available during Photo Desk hours. Please call the San Francisco History Center for hours and information at 415-557-4567.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Elmer E. Robinson Papers (SFH 6), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.
Provenance
Transfer from City Hall. An additional accession of materials was received from Elmer Robinson's granddaughter on June 4, 2009, and subsequently folded into the collection. These included scrapbooks documenting Robinson's 1947 mayoral campaign, the renovation of the Municipal Railway, and his court cases as a judge.
Related Archival Collections
Researchers are encouraged to see related collections at The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley: San Francisco News-Call Bulletin Photograph Archive (approximately 200 negatives of Mayor Robinson); and Stanford University Libraries: Elmer E. Robinson Collection, 1764-1973; and Elmer E. Robinson Americana, 1765-1950 (both historical document collections created by Robinson).
Related Materials
Researchers are encouraged to see also the San Francisco History Center's subject and biographical files, other Mayoral Papers, and the San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection; and to check the catalog holdings of the San Francisco Public Library for related materials. The San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection houses the San Francisco News-Call Bulletin Photograph Archive, which includes photographs documenting Robinson's time in office.
Conservation Note
During processing, the entire collection was refoldered and re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes. Some metal staples remain. Some documents on acidic paper were kept in their original state and separated with either Permalife bond or Apollo buffered paper.
Materials Transferred
Photographs were transferred to the San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection.
Materials Cataloged Separately
The following items were transferred to the book collection of the San Francisco Public Library: Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, 1970; and Ancestral Lines and Family History of Our Family, Including the Families of Robinson-Barrett, Pelet-Rahlves, Gould-Newcomb, Asbill-Graeter.
Biographical/Historical note
Elmer Edwin Robinson was born October 3, 1894 to Ralph and Edith Robinson in the Richmond District of San Francisco. He spent his youth near Fort Bragg where his father operated hauling and ice businesses. Robinson returned to San Francisco, working his way through night law school at the now-defunct Kent College, and was admitted to the bar in 1915. He married Doris Gould in 1917 with whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth Jane. He married twice more, to Rosemarie Kerr and later to Ora Norris.

Robinson worked as a deputy District Attorney for six years before going into private practice as a civil and criminal attorney. In 1935, Governor Frank Merriam appointed Robinson to the Municipal Court bench and promoted him to the Superior Court within nine months. As presiding Superior Court judge, Robinson brought the court calendar up to date for the first time in 57 years.

A member of the Republican Party, Robinson served as secretary of the state Republican Committee. He was twice defeated as the Republican candidate for state Senate in 1922 and 1931. With the support of Republican, Mason and legal circles, Robinson was elected San Francisco’s 33rd mayor in 1947 when the city was emerging from World War II. He presided during an era that has been described as “the last of the city’s old-time good times,” when vice quietly flourished. Robinson was re-elected in 1951 over George Christopher, a bitter opponent at the time. Term limits prevented a third run.

In his two terms as mayor from 1948 through 1955, Robinson oversaw building programs including the Cherry Valley Dam, the International Airport, schools, branch libraries, playgrounds and recreation centers, police stations, firehouses, parking garages, and the modernization of the Municipal Railway. He established the Parking Authority and the Redevelopment Agency, which planned the city’s first major redevelopment project. Robinson also established the children’s fishing program at Lake Merced. He lowered the tax rate three times, and left the next mayor-elect with over $100 million of bonds for further improvements. He also built a civil defense program and served as President of the United States Conference of Mayors.

Upon leaving City Hall, Robinson returned to his private law practice. He continued to serve as president of a Colma cemetery. A collector of original American historical documents, he was an acknowledged expert on forms of government in the United States. Robinson lived quietly until his death on June 7, 1982 in Butte County at the age of 87.

**Scope and Contents**

This collection documents the two-term administration of Mayor Elmer E. Robinson during the years of 1948 to 1956. The Robinson mayorality was noted for its many building programs including the start of redevelopment. The papers provide a snapshot of post-World War II activities and changes undertaken at City Hall.

Materials include reports, mayoral and campaign speeches, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and historical documents. The collection is particularly rich in speeches from 1948 to 1953, and there is good coverage on the topic of a second Bay crossing from 1947 to 1954. Internal and constituent correspondence is limited. Subjects include civil defense, renovation of the Municipal Railway, Radio Free Europe, the warehouse strike of 1949, growth of rapid transit, the visit of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, and Robinson’s 1947 mayoral campaign. He was a collector of original American historical documents, and a few are contained within Series 4. Others can be found at Stanford University Libraries.

**Arrangement**

The material has been arranged into four series: Series 1. Mayoral Activities; Series 2. Speeches, Articles, and Commendations; Series 3. Campaigns; and Series 4. Historical Documents. Folders in Mayoral Activities and Historical Documents are in alphabetical order by folder title, and then by date. The other series are organized chronologically. Within folders, materials are filed chronologically.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Robinson, Elmer E., (Elmer Edwin), b. 1894--Archives
Bridges--California--San Francisco Bay Area--Planning
City planning--California--San Francisco
Housing policy--California--San Francisco
Mayors--California--San Francisco
San Francisco (Calif.)--Politics and government--20th century
Urban policy--California--San Francisco
Urban renewal--California--San Francisco
Series 1 Mayoral Activities, 1936-1956

Physical Description: 3.4 cubic feet

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Scope and Contents
This series contains Robinson's official activity files. A highlight of this series is the subject of a second Bay bridge crossing and particularly the Southern Crossing which Robinson advocated.

Box 7, Folder 1  Airport News Clipping, 1954
Box 1, Folder 1  Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Commission, 1951-1956
Box 1, Folder 2  BART News Clippings, 1953-1955
Box 1, Folder 3  Bay Bridge, New Approaches, 1949-1950
Box 5, Folder 2  Bay Bridge Railway Terminal, Embarcadero Plan, undated
Bay Bridge, Second Crossing
Box 1, Folder 4  Letters Received Before Inauguration, 1947
Box 1, Folder 5  Armed Services Sub-Committee Hearing, 1948-1949
Box 1, Folder 6  Bay Area Council Plan, 1950-1951
Box 1, Folder 7  George W. Burpee Statement, [November 1, 1948]
Box 1, Folder 8  Charles E. De Leuw Statement, May 9, 1949
Box 1, Folder 9  East Bay Committee, 1951-1953
Box 1, Folder 10  Federal, State, and Municipal Action, 1949-1953
Box 1, Folder 11  Gould Plan, 1949
Box 1, Folder 12  Little Plan, 1947-1953
Box 1, Folder 13  Miscellaneous, 1948-1952
Box 1, Folder 14  Miscellaneous Plans, 1946-1953
Box 1, Folder 15  New Approaches and Refinancing, 1951-1953
Box 1,折叠16-17  Reber Plan, 1946-1955
Box 1,折叠18  Resolutions, 1947-1949
Box 1,折叠19  Responses to Mayor’s Letter, 1949-1951
Box 1,折叠20  Shoreline Development, 1948
Box 1,折叠21  State Legislative Committee Hearing, 1952-1953
Box 1,折叠22-23  Statements and Press Clippings, 1948-1952
Bay Bridge, Southern Crossing
Box 2,折叠1  1947-1949
Box 2,折叠2-3  Amendment to Public Law 695, 1 of 2, 1949-1953
Box 2,折叠4  May 7, 1949
Box 2,折叠5  Information Summary, [19--]
Box 2,折叠6  Navy Hearing, 1952-1953
Box 2,折叠7  Navy Hearing Transcript, 1953
Box 2,折叠8  Newsclippings, 1952-1953
Box 2,折叠9  Supervisors’ Resolutions, 1947-1953
Box 2,折叠10  Post-Amendment to Public Law 695, 1953-1954
Box 2,折叠11  Bay Bridges Map, Call-Bulletin, February 4, 1953
Box 2,折叠12  Board of Supervisors Journal of Proceedings, 1950
Box 2,折叠13  Buena Vista Park, 1950-1951
Box 2,折叠14  California Legislative Reports, 1949-1951
Box 2,折叠15  City Officials, Board, and Commission Members Photos, [19--]
Box 2,折叠16  Civic Center Plan, 1953
Box 2,折叠17  Civil Defense, 1950-1951
Box 2,折叠18  Commissioners, [19--]
Box 2,折叠19  Consolidation, City and County, circa 1949
Box 2,折叠20  Events and Proclamations, 1949-1955
Box 2,折叠21  Fleishhacker Pool, 1949
Box 2,折叠22  Gift Playing Cards, [19--]
Box 2, Folder 22  
Golden Gate Park Concerts, 1952

Box 2, International Congress of Local Authorities, 1953-1955

Folders 23-24

Box 2, Folder 25  
Lapham, Mayor Roger D., Article, 1946

Box 2, Folder 26  
MacArthur, Gen. Douglas, Newsclippings, 1951

Box 5, Folder 2  
Map of San Francisco (Department of Public Works), 1947

Box 6, Folder 1  
Municipal Railway Bus Design, [1948-?]

Box 5, Folders 3-5  
Municipal Railway Progress Photographs, [1948-19--]

Box 2, Folder 27  
Orpheum Theatre Wall, 1948

Box 2, Folder 28  
Paris Visit, 1953

Box 8, Folder 1  
Public Buildings, 1953-1954

Box 8, Folder 2  
Public Buildings Meeting Minutes, 1953-1954

Box 2, Folder 29  
Radio Free Europe Crusade for Freedom Kit, 1954

Box 2, Folder 30  
Radio Free Europe Crusade for Freedom Tour, 1954

Box 2, Folder 31  
Radio Free Europe Visit, 1954-1955

Box 2, Folder 32  
Rapid Transit Report, 1936

Box 2, Folder 33  
Rapid Transit Reports, 1950-1952

Box 6, Folder 2  
Republican Mandate Article, 1953

Box 2, Folder 34  
Republican National Convention, 1 of 2, 1955

Box 2, Folder 35  
Republican National Convention, Briefing Material for San Francisco Inspection Trip, 1955

Box 2, Folder 36  
Republican National Convention, 2 of 2, 1956

Box 2, Folder 37  
Resume of Administration, circa 1951

Box 2, Folder 38  
San Francisco Annual Report, 1955

Box 2, Folder 39  
Serra, Father Junipero, 1949-[1954]

Box 2, Folder 40  
Smog Reports, 1949-1951

Box 2, Folder 41  
Smog Correspondence, 1 of 2, 1949-1954

Box 3, Folder 1  
Smog Correspondence, 2 of 2, 1954-1955

Box 3, Folder 2  
United Indian War Veterans, 1948-1951

Box 3, Folder 3  
United Nations Charter, 10th Anniversary, 1955

Box 3, Folders 4-5  
United States Conference of Mayors, 1953-1956

Box 3, Folder 6  
War Housing, Disposition Citizens Committee, 1950-1953

Box 3, Folder 7  
War Housing, Disposition of, 1953-1954

Box 3, Folder 8  
Warehouse Strike, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Local 6, 1949

Box 3, Folder 9  
Washington Conference of Mayors Report, 1955

Box 3, Folder 10  
Youth Guidance Center, 1953-1955

Series 2 Speeches, Articles and Commendations, 1935-1982

Physical Description: 1.5 cubic feet

Arrangement
Speeches are followed by articles, then commendations. Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Contents
This series focuses on speeches from 1948-1953 and includes Robinson's inaugural address. Also included are newspaper clippings, especially from 1948-1955, and a couple of commendations.

Box 3, Folder 11  
Speeches, Pre-Mayoral, 1936-1937

Box 3, Folder 12  
Pre-Inaugural Address, December 4, 1947

Box 3, Folder 13  
Inaugural Address, January 8, 1948

Speeches and Press Releases
January-December, 1948

Box 3, Folders 14-16

January - December, 1949

Box 3, Folder 17  
1949

Box 3, Folder 18  
January-December, 1950

Box 3, Folders 19-21
### Series 2

**Speeches, Articles and Commendations, 1935-1982**

| Box 3, Folders 22-24 | January-December, 1951 |
| Box 3, Folders 25-26 | January-December, 1952 |
| Box 3, Folders 27-28 | January-December, 1953 |
| Box 4, Folder 1 | 1954 |
| Box 4, Folder 2 | 1955 |

**Newspaper Clippings**

| Box 4, Folder 3 | 1935-1947 |
| Box 4, Folder 4 | 1948-1951 |
| Box 4, Folder 5 | 1952-1956 |
| Box 4, Folder 6 | 1957-1982 |
| Box 9, Folder 1 | Pacific States Loan Co., 1944-1946 |

**Newspaper Editorials, 1951**

| Box 9, Folder 2 | Scrapbook of Clippings, Court Cases, 1930-1937 |
| Box 9, Folder 3 | Scrapbook of Clippings, Court Cases, 1935-1938 |
| Box 4, Folder 8 | U.S. Court of Appeals Transcript, Brandhove vs. Tenney, et al., [1949?] |

**Commendations, 1936-1979**

| Box 4, Folder 7 | 1935-1947 |
| Box 4, Folder 10 | Biography, 1947 |
| Box 10, Folder 1 | Mayoral Campaign Congratulations, 1947 |
| Box 10, Folder 2 | Mayoral Campaign Newspaper Clippings, 1947 |
| Box 4, Folder 11 | Mayoral Campaign Scrapbook, 1947 |
| Box 4, Folder 12 | Mayoral Campaign Speeches, 1947-1948 |
| Box 4, Folder 13 | Mayoral Campaign Speeches of Supporters, 1947 |
| Box 4, Folder 14 | Propositions, 1947 |
| Box 4, Folder 15 | Re-election Campaign, 1951 |
| Box 4, Folder 16 | Biography and Statement, [1951] |
| Box 10, Folder 3 | Newspaper Clippings, 1951 |
| Box 7, Folder 3 | Ephemera, 1951 |
| Box 4, Folder 17 | Speeches, 1951 |
| Box 4, Folder 18 | 1956 Propositions, 1956 |

**Historical Documents, 1874-1935**

| Box 4, Folder 19 | Liliputian Newspaper, 1874 |
| Box 4, Folder 20 | Mexico Inauguration Souvenir, 1922 |
| Box 4, Folder 21 | Pacific Bank Centennial Statement, 1888 |
| Box 6, Folder 4 | Golden Gate Bridge Bond, 1935 |
| Box 4, Folder 22 | Stanford University Honorary Curator, 1940 |

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**Series 3 Campaigns, 1947-1956**

Physical Description: 0.66 cubic feet

Arranged chronologically by election year.

This series contains speeches from Robinson's mayoral campaigns. Also included is Robinson's testimony before the U.S. Court of Appeals, in which he denied any participation in branding a 1947 opponent, Franck R. Havenner, as a member of the Communist Party.

**1947 Mayoral Campaign**

Biography, 1947

**Mayoral Campaign Congratulations, 1947**

**Mayoral Campaign Newspaper Clippings, 1947**

**Mayoral Campaign Scrapbook, 1947**

**Mayoral Campaign Speeches, 1947-1948**

**Mayoral Campaign Speeches of Supporters, 1947**

**Propositions, 1947**

**Re-election Campaign, 1951**

Biography and Statement, [1951]

**Newspaper Clippings, 1951**

**Ephemera, 1951**

**Speeches, 1951**

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**1956 Propositions, 1956**

**Series 4 Historical Documents, 1874-1935**

Physical Description: 0.7 cubic feet

Arranged alphabetically.

This series contains original American historical documents collected by Robinson.

Liliputian Newspaper, 1874

Mexico Inauguration Souvenir, 1922

Pacific Bank Centennial Statement, 1888

Golden Gate Bridge Bond, 1935

Stanford University Honorary Curator, 1940