Finding Aid to the San Francisco Recreation Department Records SFH 3751927-1983 (bulk 1935-1951)

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Title: San Francisco Recreation Department Records,
Date (inclusive): 1927-1983
Date (bulk): (bulk 1935-1951)
Collection Identifier: SFH 375
Physical Description: 5 cartons, 1 flat box(6.0 linear feet)
Contributing Institution: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

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Abstract: This collection is primarily visual documentation of the programmatic activities of the San Francisco Recreation Department. Subjects pertain to administrative units of the department and include materials related to: music, dance, drama, costuming, holiday celebrations, pageants, doll shows and puppetry. In addition to photographs the range of ephemera includes: newspaper and magazine clippings, holiday plays and skit scripts, music and dance scores, scrapbooks, puppets, flyers, play bills, instructional material, press releases and background research material.

Physical Location: The collection is stored onsite.

Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.

Access
The collection is available for use during San Francisco History Center hours, with photographs available during Photo Desk hours. Collections that are stored offsite should be requested 48 hours in advance.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
San Francisco Recreation Department Records, SFH 375, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Provenance
This collection was received in 2014 from the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department.

Organizational/Historical note
The history of the San Francisco Recreation Department can be traced to the 1860s, when the Department of Streets, Sewers, and Squares began publishing Municipal Reports including expenditures on park improvements. A Park Commission under the jurisdiction of the State of California was established in 1871, in part to oversee the development of Golden Gate Park. By 1900 the City took over the Park Commission under the Home Rule Charter. In 1907 a separate Playground Commission was approved by voters. The Playground Commission became the Recreation Commission in 1932, to support the establishment of the San Francisco Recreation Department, which had become a municipal department in 1926. The history of services in San Francisco can be divided into three periods: 1) 1907-1911 when the Playground Commission was established and the first playgrounds were built; 2) 1911-1926 when budgetary imperatives and uneven growth could not meet the demand for sports and other recreation programming at city facilities; and 3) 1926-1950 when the city had a dedicated Recreation Department. In 1950 the Parks Department and Recreation Department consolidated.

The history and development of the San Francisco Recreation Department is tied to the work of one of the first women to supervise a major recreation department, Josephine Dows Randall who became the first Superintendent of Recreation in San Francisco in 1926, holding the position until 1951. After earning a BA and MA in Zoology from Stanford University, she became the Director of Playgrounds in San Diego in 1913 and the Mid-West and Pacific Coast field representative for the National Recreation Association in 1920. After conducting a study for the Special Committee on Recreation of the Council of Social and Health Agencies of San Francisco from November 1924 through March 1925, she was named to the position she held for 25 years.

The 1930's were a golden age of municipal recreation, and playground expansion and improvement in San Francisco. Under Josephine Randall’s leadership the community recreation program included drama groups, music clubs, dance programs, a community orchestra, costume-making shops, puppetry groups, doll shows and recreation for commercial and industrial workers, including the 300,000 war industry workers flooding into San Francisco during World War II. She also initiated recreation programs in public housing developments and successfully implemented community and school-based programs with the Chief of Police, the Chief Probation Officer, and the Superintendent of Schools designed to reduce juvenile delinquency. The department was known for implementing a high quality professional development program for...
By the time she resigned her position in 1951, in opposition to the proposed consolidation of the Recreation and Park Department, San Francisco Recreation Department services had become part of a larger social reform movement designed to promote the health, well-being, character development and participatory citizenship of urban dwellers.

Scope and Contents
This collection is primarily visual documentation of the programmatic activities of the San Francisco Recreation Department. Materials date from 1927-1983; the bulk from 1935-1959. Subjects pertain to administrative units of the department and include materials related to: music, dance, drama, costuming, holiday celebrations, pageants, doll shows and puppetry. Material related to the department’s participation in the Gold Gate International Exhibition (1939 and 1940) and joint UNESCO programming is also included.

In addition to photographs the range of ephemera includes: newspaper and magazine clippings, holiday plays and skit scripts, music and dance scores, scrapbooks, puppets, dolls, flyers, play bills, instructional material, press releases and background research material. Three scrapbooks compiled by department staff include photographs, and newspaper clippings from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and provide an insider's view of the development of the department during those decades. Along with dolls and puppets is visual documentation of three destroyed dolls that were displayed at the Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE), 1939 and 1940.

This collection does not contain meeting minutes, agendas, budgets or other financial records, or other records documenting the administrative work of the department. Other three-dimensional materials, dolls and puppets deemed in poor condition were not accepted into the collection.

Arrangement
Material is arranged by subject series and then chronologically, by date.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Randall, Josephine D.
San Francisco (Calif.). Recreation and Park Department. -- Archives
Parks -- California -- San Francisco.
Recreation -- California -- San Francisco.

Series 1 Music Department 1940-1945 and undated
Box 1, Folder 1 Music Album Photographs 1940s
Processing Information Note
Materials were separated from a photo album and placed in a file folder along with a copy of the album cover.

Box 1, Folder 2 Music Photographs undated
Series 2 Drama and Dance Department

Subseries 2.1 Drama
Box 1, Folder 3 Dramatics Album Ephemera 1935-1951 (bulk 1935-1951)
Processing Information note
Materials were separated from a photo album and placed in a file folder along with a copy of the album cover.

Box 1, Folder 4 Dramatics Album Golden Gate International Exhibition 1939 or 1940
Processing Information note
Materials were separated from an album and placed in a file folder along with a copy of the album cover.
### Subseries 2.1 Drama

- **Box 1, Folder 5**  
  **Dramatics Album Photographs 1940s**  
  Processing Information note  
  Materials were separated from a photo album and placed in a file folder along with a copy of the album cover.

- **Box 1, Folder 6**  
  **Doll Show Photographs 1947-1964 and undated**

- **Box 1, Folder 7**  
  **Doll Shows 1950s (bulk 1950-1957)**

- **Box 1, Folder 8**  
  **Puppet Teaching San Francisco 1927-1940 and undated**

- **Box 1, Folder 9**  
  **Puppet Teaching WPA NYC 1937-1939 (bulk 1937-1939)**

- **Box 1, Folder 10**  
  **Cinderella Pageant Photographs 1937**

- **Box 1, Folder 11**  
  **UNESCO 1950s**

- **Box 1, Folder 12**  
  **Camp Skits undated**

- **Box 2**  
  **Costuming Research undated**

- **Box 3-4**  
  **Puppets undated**

- **Box 5-6**  
  **Dolls 1939 or 1940**

### Subseries 2.2 Dance

- **Box 1, Folder 14**  
  **Dancing Album Photographs 1940s**  
  Processing Information note  
  Materials were separated from a photo album and placed in a file folder along with a copy of the album cover.

- **Box 1, Folder 15**  
  **Dance Photographs 1943-1949 and undated**

- **Box 1, Folder 16**  
  **Bellydancing 1983 (bulk 1983)**  
  Scope and Contents note  
  Photographs and negatives of Hoda's Belly Dance Class, Sunset Recreation Center.

- **Box 1, Folders 17**  
  **Dance Scripts 1940s and 1950s**  
  Series 3 Holidays

### Subseries 3.1 Christmas

- **Box 1, Folder 18-19**  
  **Christmas Scripts undated**

- **Box 1, Folder 20**  
  **Christmas Research 1937-1944 and undated**

### Subseries 3.2 Easter

- **Box 1, Folder 21**  
  Processing Information note  
  Materials were removed from a binder and placed in a file folder.

### Subseries 3.3 May Day

- **Box 1, Folder 22**  

- **Box 1, Folder 23**  
  **May Day Programs 1951-1964 (bulk 1951-1964)**  
  Series 4 Scrap Books
| Box 2 | **Scrap Book I 1920s and 1930s**  
Processing Information note  
Materials were separated from a scrapbook and placed in mylar envelopes. |
| Box 1, Folder 24-25 | **Scrap Book II 1920s, 1930s and 1940s**  
Processing Information note  
Materials were separated from a scrapbook and placed in mylar envelopes |
| Box 1, Folder 26 | **Scrap Book III 1930s** |