Benjamin Poff Draper collection

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Benjamin Poff Draper collection
Dates: 1907-1980
Collection Number: MSS-137
Creator/Collector: Draper, Benjamin Poff
California Academy of Sciences
Extent: 15 manuscript boxes (5.88 linear feet)
Repository: California Academy of Sciences
San Francisco, California 94118

Abstract: The papers of Benjamin Poff Draper, a Professor of Broadcast and Communications, who wrote communications and produced educational television series for the California Academy of Sciences. Included are bibliographies, correspondence, manuscripts, publications, scripts, and research on Sir Francis Drake and the Colorado Theater.

Language of Material: English

Access
Access is unrestricted

Preferred Citation
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Biography/Administrative History
Born on July 10, 1907 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Benjamin Poff Draper was raised by an aunt in Colorado. He attended the University of Denver where he received a BA in Speech (1928) and an MA in Radio Studies (1936). After completing his undergraduate studies Draper worked for four years as the payroll auditor for the City and County of Denver and served one term as City Clerk between 1932 and 1935. He went on to attend the University of Chicago, in Illinois (1936-1941), and studied for a Ph.D. Political Science and Economics, which he never completed. During this time Draper was a Research Associate with the Illinois Tax Commission and wrote three volumes of the Survey of Local Finance of Illinois, a 12-volume collection. He also had a short correspondence with Gertrude Stein (1939-1942). Draper received a Civil Service Certification as an Economist and in 1941, from the University of Chicago, was appointed to the faculty of Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he was asked to move to Washington, D.C. and assist with creating price regulations within the United States. Less than six months later he was transferred to the Civil Services Commission in Hawaii, under the Office of Price Administration, where he worked from 1942-1944. Upon completion of his assignment in Hawaii, Draper enlisted in the United States Coast Guard as a Seaman 1st class, based out of San Francisco. He served with the Coast Guard until the end of the war when he was honorably discharged. Draper returned to Colorado for a short time after his discharge and started Georgetown Enterprises, which operated four businesses in Georgetown, Colorado for the purpose of restoring the town and generating tourism. He continued to devote his summers to this venture for much of his life, although he never permanently returned to Colorado. In 1949, Draper joined the California Academy of Sciences as a temporary editor for the monthly newsletter and wrote articles to promote membership to the Academy. He became the Executive Producer of Science in Action, the Academy’s innovative television show, in 1950. He remained with the Academy in this capacity for the next 13 years, his work on Science in Action receiving a multitude of awards. Additionally, Draper produced the show Explorers of Tomorrow, a children’s series, for the Academy. Draper left the Academy in 1963, to become a Professor of Broadcast and Communication at San Francisco State University, where he remained until his death in 1980. While there he studied the voyages of Sir Francis Drake extensively and published several articles about him and the Voyage of Circumnavigation. In 1969 he received a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Denver; his thesis was entitled The Colorado Theater 1859-1900. Dr. Draper was presented several medals and awards including the Thomas Alva Edison Award, the Payne Communication Award, the California State Fair Medal, and the Governor’s Award, which was presented at the local Emmy Awards in 1975. Dr. Draper was a founding member and member of the board of the Academy of Television Arts and Science. Dr. Benjamin Poff Draper, died of a heart attack in July of 1980.

Scope and Content of Collection
The papers of Benjamin Poff Draper, a Professor of Broadcast and Communications, who wrote communications and produced educational television series for the California Academy of Sciences. Included are bibliographies, correspondence, manuscripts, publications, scripts, and research on Sir Francis Drake and the Colorado Theater.

Indexing Terms
Broadcasting
Children's television programs
Educational television programs
Drake, Francis, approximately 1540-1596