Finding aid for the Wandalee Thompson Collection of San Gabriel Mountains History

Debbie Henderson, Shelia Afnan-Manns, and Amanda Milbourn
Sierra Madre Historical Archives, Sierra Madre Public Library
440 West Sierra Madre Boulevard
Sierra Madre, California 91024
Phone: (626) 355-7186
Fax: (626) 355-6218
Email: dhenderson@cityofsierramadre.com
URL: http://www.cityofsierramadre.com/local-history
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The Sierra Madre Historical Archives
Sierra Madre Public Library
Sierra Madre, California

Processed by:
Debbie Henderson, Shelia Afnan-Manns, and Amanda Milbourn
Date Completed:
2011
Encoded by:
Amanda Milbourn

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Wandalee Thompson collection of San Gabriel Mountains history
Dates: 1898-1987
Bulk Dates: 1920-1969
Creator: Thompson, Wandalee, 1914-2004
Collection Size: approximately 4.5 linear feet
Repository: Sierra Madre Historical Archives Sierra Madre Public Library
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Abstract: This collection contains the materials that Wandalee Thompson (1914-2004) collected while preparing to write a history of the San Gabriel Mountains. Though the book was never realized, Thompson collected a substantial amount of material during her research including historic maps, diaries, camp brochures and signs, postcards, newspaper articles, correspondence with camp owners, photographs, and scrapbooks. The collection also includes materials related to Thompson's forest conservation and hiking activities in the San Gabriel Mountains. Provenance: Wandalee Thompson began collecting information on the San Gabriel Mountains in 1944 with the intention of publishing a book. Recognizing their historical value, her son Muir Thompson donated the materials to the Sierra Madre Public Library in January 2002. Additional installments of the collection were donated by Muir Thompson in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2010. The Wandalee Thompson Collection is currently stored in the Sierra Madre Public Library's California Room, which houses multiple materials and special collections related the California history.

Physical location: California Room, Sierra Madre Public Library
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
Collection is open for research. Please contact the Archives to schedule an appointment.

Publication Rights
Copyright restrictions may apply. All requests for permission to publish, quote, or reproduce materials from the Collection should be submitted to the Associate Librarian-Archival Collection. A copy of the work in which collection materials are published must be donated to the Archives.

Preferred Citation

Provenance
Wandalee Thompson began collection information on the San Gabriel Mountains in 1944 with the intention of publishing a book. Recognizing their historical value, her son Muir Thompson donated the materials to the Sierra Madre Public Library in January of 2002. Additional installments of the collection were donated by Muir Thompson in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2010. The Wandalee Thompson Collection is currently stored in the Sierra Madre Public Library's California Room, which
houses multiple materials and special collections related to California history.

**Biography / Administrative History**

Wandalee Thompson was born on July 8, 1914 in Wichita, Kansas to Ersa and Ransome Nickell. Four years later, the Nickell family moved to Glendale, California, where Thompson's lifelong love of mountaineering and conservation work began. She joined the Sierra Club at age 18, and moved to Sierra Madre in 1938 with her newly wed husband, Kenneth B. Thompson. Thompson began researching the San Gabriel Mountains and acquiring historical materials through her friendships with camp proprietors, forest rangers, and other researchers. Thompson was a dedicated conservationist, actively planting trees in the 1940s and 1950s throughout the San Gabriel Mountains. In 1951, she became the first living person to receive the James McLachlan Bissell medal for forest conservation, awarded for her volunteer reforestation efforts and her work educating hikers about trail safety and fire prevention measures. Thompson passed away in 2004.

**Chronology**

Materials range in date from Wilbur M. Sturtevant's journal of accounts from 1898 to Thompson's correspondence from 1987. The bulk of the materials range from 1920 to 1969.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The collection is comprised of the materials the Thompson collected while researching San Gabriel Mountain history as well as documentation of her personal forest conservation and hiking activities. Thompson collected a wide range of materials including historic maps, manuscripts, diaries, photographs, postcards, brochures, signs, scrapbooks, photograph albums, newspaper articles, correspondence, guidebooks and ephemera. Many of these materials directly relate to the thirty four recreational camps in the San Gabriel Mountains, with significant material for Colby Ranch, Loomis Ranch, Mt. Lowe, Muir Peak, Opid's Camp, Sturtevant's Camp, Valley Forge Lodge, and Mt. Wilson. There is also significant material regarding early modes of mountain transportation. Thompson's research notes are included in the collection. Her personal materials include items related to her conservation activities, including newspaper articles and numerous photographs of tree planting and dedication ceremonies.

**Arrangement**

The collection is arranged into two series: 1) San Gabriel Mountains Research and Collecting, and 2) Personal Activities. The San Gabriel Mountain Research and Collecting series includes sub-series such as General San Gabriel Mountain History, Angeles National Forest, Transportation: Modes of the Mountain, and Resorts and Recreation. The Personal Activities series is dividing into sub-series including Book Writing, Conservation Work and Research, Natural Disasters, Tree Planting and Hiking, and Will Thrall Peak. This arrangement is an extension of Thompson's original system of grouping materials into envelopes marked with designated subject categories.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

San Gabriel Mountains (Calif.)--History.
Wilson, Mount (Calif. : Mountain)--History.
Forest conservation--California, Southern--History.
Mountain resorts--California--Los Angeles County--History.
Baldwin, Elias Jackson, 1828-1909
Stade, Odo B.
Chantry, Charles E.
Opid, John
Mount Wilson Observatory
Devore, Kenyan
Newcomb, Louis Taylor
Sturtevant, Wilbur M.
Overturff, Ben
Vernon, Charles Clark
Mendenhall, William V.
Kratka, William R.
Loomis, Captain Lester G.
Loomis, Grace
Carter, Nathaniel Coburn, 1840-1904
Will Thrall Peak