Overview of the Collection

Title: Conservative Water Company Records

Dates (inclusive): 1900-1967

Collection Number: mssConservative Water records

Creator: Conservative Water Company.

Extent: 310 items in 2 boxes + an oversize folder

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
Email: reference@huntington.org
URL: http://www.huntington.org

Abstract: This collection includes correspondence, reports and ephemera of the Conservative Water Company in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, California, dating from 1900-1967. Many of the letters deal with the company's public health, financial, and legal issues.

Language: English.

Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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Preferred Citation

Provenance
Purchased from Elliot Mittler, November 20, 2009; several maps were a gift of Elliot Mittler, April 26, 2010.

Historical Note
The Conservative Water Company was a water supply company in the neighborhood of Watts, within Los Angeles, California. Originally named Conservative Realty Company, this company was founded by W.C. Elderton and it served the Watts community selling land on the Burkhard home tract. In 1904, the company got into the water supply business; supplying water at a rate of 75 cents with 5000 gallons as the maximum water used. In 1910, the company raised its rate to $1.25 with maximum limit of 8000 gallons of water. By 1913, the company wanted to raise its rate again, but the California State Railroad Commission denied the company the ability to do so. The California Public Utilities Act of 1912 gave the State Railroad Commission the power to regulate all public utilities, including water companies, telephone companies, and railroads. This law basically stunted the company's desire to continuously raise its rates.

Wilmer W. Pedder became president of the company in the 1920s, and changed the name of the company to the Conservative Water Company. Pedder died of heart disease in 1932 and Otto B. Frank became the new president. In 1933, an earthquake devastated the company’s water supply, and according to the company records, it struggled to stay afloat. Its water supply was constantly monitored by the California Department of Public Health and the California State Board of Public Health. By the 1950s, Elizabeth E. Pedder became president of the company with her brother, Theodore B. Pedder, serving as secretary. The company continued to have problems and in August, 1967, the Department of Water and Power purchased the utilities company.

Scope and Content
The collection includes correspondence, reports and ephemera.

The Correspondence series is primarily related to the Conservative Water Company. Many of the letters deal with the company’s public health, financial and legal issues. Though the letters are to or from the Conservative Water Company, many are addressed to and signed by Elizabeth E. Pedder and Otto B. Frank. The company corresponded with institutions like Bank of America, the California Department of Public Health, Hellman Commercial Trust & Savings Bank, and Pacific-Southwest Trust & Savings Bank. The series is arranged in alphabetical order by author and then by addressee.
The Reports series is arranged in alphabetical order by author and then by addressee. The reports are primarily about the company’s water supply. Moreover, there are some reports about the company’s financial state. Many of the reports contain financial information and correspondence inside. Lastly, the Ephemera series includes newspaper clippings, financial documents, legal documents, maps, pamphlets, empty envelopes and public health documents. There are also several maps. This series is arranged in alphabetical order.

Arrangement
The Conservative Water Company Records are arranged in the following series: 1. Correspondence (Box 1); 2. Reports (Box 2); and 3. Ephemera (Box 2).

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

Subjects
Conservative Water Company.
Water utilities -- California -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.
Los Angeles (Calif.)
Watts (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Forms/Genres
Business records -- California -- 20th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- California -- 20th century.
Maps -- California -- 20th century.
Reports -- California -- 20th century.

Additional Contributors
Bank of America.
California. Dept. of Public Health.
California. State Board of Public Health.

Correspondence

Box 1

Folder 1  Correspondence

Folder 2  Bennett, James S. 1 letter (1926, Feb. 1) to Banks-Huntley & Company.

Folder 3  Bennett, James S. 6 letters (1923-1924) to Conservative Water Company.

Folder 4  Bennett, James S. 3 letters (1923) to Hellman Commercial Trust & Savings Bank.

Folder 5  Bennett, James S. 2 letters (1923-1924) to W.W. Pedder.


Folder 8  California. Dept. of Public Health. 3 memos (1958-1966) to Water Purveyors, Health Officers, and other Interested Parties.

Folder 9  California. Dept. of Public Health. 1 memo (1962, May 16) to unknown addressee.

Folder 10  California. Dept. of Water Resources. 1 letter (1960, Oct. 14) to Conservative Water Company. Signed by Lucian J. Meyers; Addressed to Elizabeth E. Pedder.

Folder 11  Clark, Everett L. 1 letter (1948, Dec. 1) to Otto B. Frank. Also signed by Ralph U. Fitting.

Folder 12  Conservative Realty Company. 1 letter (1910, Jan. 4) to S.J. Lord. Signed by W.C. Elderton.

Folder 13  Conservative Realty Company. 1 letter [undated] to unknown addressee.

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<th>Correspondence</th>
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<td>Conservative Water Company. 1 letter (1928, Dec. 3) to James S. Bennett.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Conservative Water Company. 4 letters (1924-1925) to Pacific-Southwest Trust &amp; Savings Bank.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Conservative Water Company. 1 letter (1928, June 25) to Railroad Commission of the State of California.</td>
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<td>Conservative Water Company. 1 letter (1940, Sep. 16) to Mary Schroer.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Conservative Water Company. 1 letter (1953, Aug. 10) to Southland Escrow Corporation. Signed by Elizabeth E. Pedder.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Hellman Commercial Trust &amp; Savings Bank. 1 letter (1923, Sep. 7) to James S. Bennett.</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Morrow &amp; Trippet. 4 letters (1949) to Bank of America. Signed by Clarence M. Heublein</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Morrow &amp; Trippet. 2 letters (1949) to Elizabeth E. Pedder. By-laws enclosed; Signed by Clarence M. Heublein &amp; James M. Bennett.</td>
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<td>Murphy, William J. 1 letter (1940, May 27) to Conservative Water Company.</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Pacific-Southwest Trust &amp; Savings Bank. 5 letters (1924-1925) to Conservative Water Company.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Pedder, Elizabeth E. 1 letter (1964, July 8) to A.C.L. Meats. Addressed to Miss Kravig.</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>Pedder, Elizabeth E. 1 letter (1952, May 27) to W.F. McCay.</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Redlin, G.A. 1 memo (1964, Sep. 21) to W.J. MacPherson.</td>
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<td>Rorke, Frederick J. 1 letter (1907, Dec. 29) to Conservative Realty Company.</td>
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<td>Schroer, Mary. 2 letters (1940) to Conservative Water Company.</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>Smith, John C. 1 letter (1910, Jan. 21) to S.J. Lord.</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>Stanford, J.O. 7 memos (1910) to Conservative Water Company.</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>Southland Escrow Corporation. 2 letters (1953) to Conservative Water Company. Signed by Marjorie Burke.</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Stotenberg, Edward G. 1 letter (1952, June 13) to Elizabeth E. Pedder.</td>
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<td>Williamson Company (The). 2 letters (1923) to Conservative Water Company.</td>
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Reports and Ephemera

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<th>Box</th>
<th>Reports and Ephemera</th>
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Folder 8  

Folder 9  

Folder 10  

Folder 11  

Folder 12  

Folder 13  

Folder 14  

Folder 15  
Ephemera: Empty Envelopes [undated]. 5 items.

Folder 16  

Folder 17  

Folder 18  

Folder 19  

Folder 20  

Folder 21  

Folder 22  
Ephemera: Minutes (1924, Aug. 11). 1 item.

Folder 23  
Ephemera: Miscellaneous [undated]. 10 items.

Folder 24  

Folder 25  

Folder 26  

Folder 27  

Folder 28  
Ephemera: Property Documents [undated]. 3 items.

Folder 29  

Folder 30  

Folder 31  

Folder 32  

Oversize folder