Overview of the Collection
Title: St. Francis Dam Disaster Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1928-1929
Collection Number: mssSt. Francis Dam
Extent: 12 items, containing 974 pages of material, in 2 boxes.
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 consists of 12 notebooks with documents including correspondence, meetings minutes, press releases, photographs, and reports about the St. Francis dam collapse in Los Angeles County, California, in March 1928, which led to the deaths of hundreds of people. The papers, dating from 1928-1929, document, in detail, how various governmental committees and non-governmental organizations worked together for the disaster's relief and compensation.
Language: English.
Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. St. Francis Dam Disaster Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
Most of the papers were a gift of R. G. Cleland, February 1944. One item, "Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage (HM 70408)," was the gift of Judge Peirson M. Hall, December 6, 1944.
Biographical Note
From 1924 to 1926, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power built the St. Francis Dam in the San Francisquito Canyon to help provide water for the city. However, the dam collapsed in the night between March 12 and 13, 1928. The flood travelled south through San Francisquito Canyon, turned west to the Santa Clara River, and destroyed parts of several towns and cities in Ventura and Los Angeles counties including Santa Paula City before it reached the Pacific Ocean. Hundreds of people were killed, homes became debris, agricultural plants in the field were washed away, and the value of land in the flooded area drastically decreased. The county and city governments, with the help of personnel from the state and federal agencies, established several committees to investigate the cause of the dam's failure, to provide material support for the survivors, and to compensate for the loss caused by the disaster. The Red Cross, the American Legion, and many individuals joined the relief efforts.
Scope and Content
This collection consists of 12 notebooks with documents including correspondence, meetings minutes, press releases, photographs, and reports about the St. Francis dam collapse in Los Angeles County, California. The collection contains 12 folders; the largest folder has 223 pages, while the smallest has only 21. As the original arrangement of the papers has been kept, most folders contain documents related either to one of the government-established committees or to some non-governmental organizations. The papers document, in detail, how various governmental committees and non-governmental organizations worked together for the disaster's relief and compensation. It also deals with the conflicts between the Los Angeles city government and the Red Cross on some relief issues, the legal aspects of Los Angeles city government’s relief efforts, and the investigation of the causes of the dam's failure. Among others, Charles C. Teague, mayor of the City of Santa Paula, participated in the decision making process of the disaster's relief and investigation and he is an author in the collection.
Subjects and participants in the collection include: American Legion, American Society of Civil Engineers, Lansing H. Beach, California State Board of Health, California Dept. of Finance, California Institute of Technology, Carnegie Institution of

**Arrangement**

Organized in the original order as received.

**Indexing Terms**

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

**Subjects**

Beach, Lansing H. (Lansing Hoskins), 1860-1945.

Cory, H. T. (Harry Thomas), b. 1870.

Crocheron, Bertram Hanford, 1882-.

Grunsky, Carl Ewald, 1855-1934.


Louderback, George D. (George Davis), 1874-1957.

Mead, Elwood, 1858-1936.

Willis, Bailey, 1857-1949.


Young, Clement Calhoun, 1869-.

American Society of Civil Engineers.

California State Board of Health.

California. Dept. of Finance.

California Institute of Technology.

Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Los Angeles (Calif.). City Council.

Los Angeles (Calif.). Dept. of Water and Power.

Los Angeles (Calif.). Office of the Mayor.

Los Angeles (Calif.). Police Dept.

Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

Los Angeles Times (Firm)

Newhall Land and Farming Company.

Southern California Edison Company.

Union Oil Company of California.

United States. Dept. of Agriculture.

University of California (1868-1952). College of Agriculture.

City attorneys -- California.

Public prosecutors -- California.

Mexicans -- California.

Saint Francis Dam Disaster, Saint Francis Dam, Calif., 1928.

Saint Francis Dam (Calif.)

**Forms/Genres**

Letters (correspondence) -- California -- 20th century.

Minutes -- California -- 20th century.

Official reports -- California -- 20th century.

Photographs -- California -- 20th century.
Press releases -- California -- 20th century.

**Additional Contributors**
Teague, Charles Collins, 1873-1942.
American Legion.
Red Cross and Red Crescent.

**Indexing: Added Entries**
Teague, Charles Collins, 1873-
- Participant in Notebook: Red Cross and American Legion. HM 70397.
- Participant in Notebook: Home Claims and Reconstruction. HM 70398.
- Participant in Notebook: Minutes of Los Angeles and Ventura County Joint Committee Meetings. HM 70399.
- Participant in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee (1928). HM 70401.
- Participant in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.
- Participant in Notebook: River Hazard Negotiations & Work. HM 70405.
- Participant in Notebook: Death Claims Committee. HM 70406.
- Participant in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.
- Participant in Notebook: Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage. HM 70408.

**Indexing: Subjects**
American Legion
- Subject in Notebook: Press Releases, Statements, Preliminary Estimates of Damage and Bulletins Issued. HM 70400.
- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

American Society of Civil Engineers
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.
- Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.

Beach, Lansing H. (Lansing Hoskins), 1860-1945
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.

California State Board of Health
- Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.
- Subject in Notebook: Death Claims Committee. HM 70406.

California. Dept. of Finance
- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

California Institute of Technology
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.

Carnegie Institution of Washington
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.

City attorneys--California
- Subject in Notebook: Death Claims Committee. HM 70406.

Cory, H. T. (Harry Thomas), b. 1870
- Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.

Crocheron, Bertram Hanford, 1882-
- Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee. HM 70401.
- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.
District attorneys

- Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam.
- Subject in Notebook: River Hazard Negotiations & Work. HM 70405.

Grunsky, C. E.

- Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.

Henny, David Christian, 1860-1935

- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.

Hill, Louis C. (Louis Clarence), 1865-1938

- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.

Los Angeles (Calif.). City Council

- Subject in Notebook: Minutes of Los Angeles and Ventura County Joint Committee Meetings. HM 70399.
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage. HM 70408.

Los Angeles (Calif.). Dept. of Water and Power

- Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee. HM 70401.
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.
- Subject in Notebook: River Hazard Negotiations & Work. HM 70405.
- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

Los Angeles (Calif.). Office of the Mayor

- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

Los Angeles (Calif.). Police Dept.

- Subject in Notebook: Press Releases, Statements, Preliminary Estimates of Damage and Bulletins Issued. HM 70400.
- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce

- Subject in Notebook: Red Cross and American Legion. HM 70397.
- Subject in Notebook: Press Releases, Statements, Preliminary Estimates of Damage and Bulletins Issued. HM 70400.
- Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee. HM 70401.
- Subject in Notebook: River Hazard Negotiations & Work. HM 70405.
- Subject in Notebook: Death Claims Committee. HM 70406.
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage. HM 70408.

Los Angeles. City Attorney

- Subject in Notebook: Red Cross and American Legion. HM 70397.
- Subject in Notebook: Home Claims and Reconstruction. HM 70398.
- Subject in Notebook: Minutes of Los Angeles and Ventura County Joint Committee Meetings. HM 70399.
- Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee. HM 70401.
- Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.
- Subject in Notebook: Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage. HM 70408.

Los Angeles Times (Firm)

- Subject in Notebook: River Hazard Negotiations & Work. HM 70405.

Louderback, George D. (George Davis), 1874-1957

- Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.

Mead, Elwood, 1858-1936

- Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.
Mexicans--California
  • Subject in Notebook: Death Claims Committee. HM 70406.

Newhall Land and Farming Company
  • Subject in Notebook: Minutes of Los Angeles and Ventura County Joint Committee Meetings. HM 70399.
  • Subject in Notebook: Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage.

Red Cross and Red Crescent
  • Subject in Notebook: Press Releases, Statements, Preliminary Estimates of Damage and Bulletins Issued. HM 70400.
  • Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

Southern California Edison Company
  • Subject in Notebook: Photographs. HM 70404.

Teague, Charles Collins, 1873-
  • Subject in Notebook: Red Cross and American Legion. HM 70397.
  • Subject in Notebook: Home Claims and Reconstruction. HM 70398.
  • Subject in Notebook: Minutes of Los Angeles and Ventura County Joint Committee Meetings. HM 70399.
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  • Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

Union Oil Company of California
  • Subject in Notebook: Report of Joint Committee on Personal Property Damage. HM 70408.

United States. Dept. of Agriculture
  • Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee (1928). HM 70401.

University of California (1868-1952). College of Agriculture
  • Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee (1928). HM 70401.

Willis, Bailey, 1857-1949
  • Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.

Wood, Harry O. (Harry Oscar), 1879-1958
  • Subject in Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70402.

Young, Clement Calhoun, 1869-
  • Subject in Notebook: Press Releases, Statements, Preliminary Estimates of Damage and Bulletins Issued. HM 70400.
  • Subject in Notebook: Land & Improvements Joint Committee (1928). HM 70401.
  • Subject in Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam. HM 70403.
  • Subject in Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster. HM 70407.

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<td>Notebook: Home Claims and Reconstruction (1928). 21 pages. HM 70398</td>
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<td>Notebook: Minutes of Los Angeles and Ventura County Joint Committee Meetings (1928). 41 pages. HM 70399</td>
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<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Notebook: Press Releases, Statements, Preliminary Estimates of Damage and Bulletins Issued (1928). 73 pages. HM 70400</td>
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<td>Notebook: Land &amp; Improvements Joint Committee (1928). 178 pages. HM 70401</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Notebook: Report of Committee Appointed by the City Council of Los Angeles to Investigate and Report the Cause of the Failure of the St. Francis Dam (1928). 116 pages. HM 70402</td>
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<td>Reports of investigating committees, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Notebook: Engineering Reports on Failure of the St. Francis Dam (1928). 223 pages. HM 70403</td>
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<td>Notebook: River Hazard Negotiations &amp; Work (1928-1929). 48 pages. HM 70405</td>
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<td>Notebook: Death Claims Committee (1928). 24 pages. HM 70406</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Notebook: History of the St. Francis Dam Disaster (1929). 72 pages. HM 70407</td>
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