A guide to the San Francisco Maritime Museum records, 1921-1979

Processed by: Mary Gentry, 2002 July 23.
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Phone: 415-561-7030
Fax: 415-556-3540
SAFR_Historic_Documents@nps.gov
URL: http://www.nps.gov/safr
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A Guide to the San Francisco Maritime Museum records

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San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

2015, National Park Service

**Title:** San Francisco Maritime Museum records  
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**Abstract:** The San Francisco Maritime Museum records consist of textual records in nine series: Organizational records, Financial records, Correspondence, Library records, Museum Vessel records, Museum Publications, Manuscripts, Periodical Articles and Newspaper Articles. The bulk of the collection dates are 1963 to 1977; inclusive dates are 1921 to 1978. The Museum was dedicated on May 27, 1951 in the Casino Building of Aquatic Park. Mrs. Alma de Brettville Spreckles and Karl Kortum were the lead individuals. The first vessel of the Historic Fleet was the Balclutha, purchased in 1954.

**Physical Location:** San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department

**Language(s):** In English.

**Access**  
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**Preferred Citation**  
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**Acquisition Information**  
SAFR-00001  
SAFR-00132, SAFR-00274, SAFR-00432, SAFR-00658, SAFR-00685, SAFR-01048, SAFR-01068, SAFR-01524, SAFR-01679, SAFR-02214, SAFR-02290  
This collection was transferred from Golden Gate National Recreation Area to San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

**Historical or Biographical Note**  
The San Francisco Maritime Museum Association was incorporated in California on January 6, 1950. The formal dedication of the San Francisco Maritime Museum occurred on May 27, 1951 in the Casino Building of Aquatic Park.  
The San Francisco Maritime Museum had its beginnings in the San Francisco Museum of Science and Industry, which was conceived by Mrs. Alma de Brettville Spreckels in 1939 and opened to the public in 1941. The Museum of Science and
Industry was comprised mainly of an impressive collection of ship models and artifacts, which were exhibited at Aquatic Park and various other locations in the Bay Area during World War II.

Karl Kortum, a maritime history enthusiast and able bodied seaman freshly returned from a voyage on the bark Kaiulani (1948), contacted Mrs. Spreckels to discuss his vision of a maritime museum for San Francisco. He believed that historic ships, on exhibit and available to the public, would create a more interesting and economically viable museum than ship models.

In 1954, the San Francisco Maritime Museum Association undertook the purchase and restoration of the historic sailing vessel Balclutha. A year later, after extensive restoration, the Balclutha opened to the public at Pier 43.

In 1956 a bill was passed through the state legislature that called for the purchase of the schooners C.A. Thayer and Wapama, and also created the San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park. The ferry Eureka and scow schooner Alma were acquired (1958-1959) and in 1960, the State Public Works Board approved the expenditure of $75,000 for the creation of an authentic Victorian Park.

In 1977, the San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park became part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area; in 1978 the holdings of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Association were transferred to the National Park Service.

Collection Scope and Content
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Arranged into 9 Series and ordered alphabetically by folder title:
Series 1: Organizational Records (1950-1961)
Series 3: Correspondence (1951-1978): by Individual (1951-1978) and by Subject (1951-1975
Series 4: Library Records (1954-1976)
Series 5: Museum Vessel Records (1921-1977)
Series 7: Manuscripts (1954, 1962)
Series 8: Periodical articles (1951-1977)

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Spreckels, Alma de Bretteville, 1881-1968
Kortum, Karl
Olmsted, Roger R., 1927-1981
San Francisco Maritime Museum Association
San Francisco Maritime Museum
San Francisco Museum of Science and Industry
Balclutha (built 1886; ship, 3m)
C.A. Thayer (built 1895; schooner, 3m)
Wapama (built 1915; steam schooner)
San Francisco Maritime State Historic Park (Calif.)
Eureka (built 1890; ferry)
Alma (built 1891; scow schooner)
Administrative records
Financial records
Correspondence
Publications
Articles
Park resource management records
Restoration (Ship)