Register of the California Eagle Photograph Collection, Late 1800s-Late 1950s

Collection number: PH 001

Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
Los Angeles, California

Contact Information:
Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research
6120 S. Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90044
Phone: (323) 759-6063
Fax: (323) 759-2252
Email: archives@socallib.org
URL: http://www.socallib.org

Processed by:
Mary Tyler
Date Completed:
October 1996
Encoded by:
Xiuzhi Zhou

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Descriptive Summary
Title: California Eagle Photograph Collection,
Date (inclusive): Late 1800s-Late 1950s
Collection number: PH 001
Creator: California eagle (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Extent: 1 cubic foot
Repository: Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research.
Los Angeles, California
Language: English.

Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], California Eagle Photograph Collection, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles.

Biography
The California Eagle, the oldest African American newspaper in Los Angeles traces its origins to 1879, when John J. Neimore, a Texan, started the paper. It was first known as The Owl, later to become the Eagle, and when Charlotta Spears Bass took over, the California Eagle.
When John Neimore died in 1912, Captain G.W. Hawkins, a second-hand store dealer, bought the paper and turned it over to Charlotta Bass to own and operate. Charlotta Bass (1879-1969) had moved from her brother's home in Rhode Island to Los Angeles in 1910 for health reasons. It was intended as a two year stay, but the high cost of living drove Mrs. Bass to find work within several months of her arrival. She landed a job with the *Eagle* and proved to be a great asset to the paper.

Charlotta Bass continued in the crusading tradition of the *Eagle* in fighting for equality and against racial bigotry. In addition, to the activism of the paper, Mrs. Bass integrated the social page to please the myriad of interests in the Los Angeles African American community.

Charlotta Bass was running the paper alone until Joseph Blackburn Bass, a founder of the *Topeka Plaindealer*, moved to Los Angeles in 1913. He and Charlotta Bass married the following year. They ran the paper together, Mr. Bass took care of the business end, while Mrs. Bass did most of the writing. Mr. Bass became ill in 1932 and died in 1934. Mrs. Bass continued to run the paper alone. There was hope that Charlotta Bass's young nephew, John Kinloch who moved to Los Angeles in the late 1930s would take over the paper. His young life was cut short when he was killed in combat during World War II. Once again Mrs. Bass was left to run the paper alone.

Money problems plagued the *California Eagle*, but Charlotta Bass continued to publish the paper despite competition from the *Los Angeles Sentinel* (established 1933) and the *Los Angeles Tribune* (established 1940). Mrs. Bass had been contemplating selling the paper, but it wasn't until 1951 that she decided to sell the paper to Loren Miller, the former city editor of the *California Eagle*. Miller continued in the same tradition of putting out an activist paper as Bass and Neimore. Miller, a civil liberties lawyer, had a particular interest in discrimination and housing. His work against restrictive covenants and other racially segregated practices led to his appointment as municipal court judge by Governor Edmund "Pat" Brown in 1964.

Miller's appointment to the bench led to the acquisition of his majority stock by a group of 14 people. A.S. "Doc" Young was designated as the president and editor, while James Tolbert would be publisher and executive vice-president. Tolbert would manage the business side, while Young would make the editorial decisions. Under the beginning of the short-lived Tolbert-Young era, the *California Eagle* increased its circulation from 3,000 to 21,000 papers. But, within six months the paper went bust due to missed business opportunities and mismanagement. Young resigned four months into the Tolbert-Young partnership leaving Tolbert, who had very little editorial experience to manage. The paper rapidly deteriorated and on January 7, 1965, the *California Eagle* ceased publication after its beginning 85 years before.

**Bibliography**


**Scope and Content**

The collection is divided into six categories: Charlotta Bass; General; Individuals; Labor; Social Causes; and Society. Most of the photographs were taken for the *California Eagle*. The collection dates from the late 1800s to the late 1950s. The later photographs were used under Loren Miller. Many of the earlier photographs are of Charlotta Bass and in that series. Other earlier photographs can be found in the Society category under *Portraits*.

**Charlotta Bass**

**Scope and Content Note**

Photographs of Mrs. Bass can be found throughout the collection. But, the Charlotta Bass series contain photographs that are personal to and of her. For example, the photographs of Jessie Mae Brown, Helen Gahagan Douglas and Photo Greetings are signed photos to Mrs. Bass. The *Political Campaigns*, an integral part of Mrs. Bass's life, are divorced from her role as a journalist. Many of the photos in the Charlotta Bass series include photographs of friends and her activities with them.
General
Scope and Content Note
The General series are photographs that were probably used by the California Eagle for feature stories. Such as the Hollywood Ten or those of the Civic Leaders. The photograph that is most used is for reports, monographs, and exhibits is "This Tract is Exclusive and Restricted." Segregated housing in Los Angeles, Early 1950s.

Individuals
Scope and Content Note
The photographs in the Individuals series include those of Paul Robeson and a young Tom Bradley, former Mayor of Los Angeles. Other photographs of individuals from the Los Angeles African-American community include Elbert Hudson, President of Broadway Savings and Loan, Leon Washington, publisher of the Los Angeles Sentinel, and Gladys Owens Smith, great granddaughter of Biddy Mason. The California Eagle championed liberal causes for which there are photographs of well-known liberals such as Helen Gahagan Douglas, Leo Gallagher, Pettis Perry, and Pete Seeger.

Labor
Scope and Content Note
The Labor series include many black workers on the job and on the picket line in Los Angeles. See Picket Lines, Work, Red Caps, Group Photographs, and Work.

Social Causes
Scope and Content Note
The California Eagle was one of the few papers in Los Angeles that was sympathetic to progressive issues. The photographs represented in the series Social Causes reflect some of the struggles of progressives during the Cold War era of the 1950s such as the "LA 21" Smith Act Case. Included in this section is a photograph of the Laws Family. The Laws Family were ordered to leave their home under the racial-restrictive covenants of the 1940s and 1950s. They wouldn't leave and were jailed for several days until the California Supreme Court released them on a writ of habeas corpus. Their attorney was John McTernan, a Los Angeles civil liberties lawyer.

Society
Scope and Content Note
The last in the series is Society. Most of the photographs are of African Americans and the cultural life of that community. The photographs date from the late 1800s. The photographs that were taken in the 1930s-1950s were probably used in the society section. Often, the photographs are of the elite of the Los Angeles African American community and their social functions. These urban elite are featured in Portraits and Social Functions. Publicity includes photographs of entertainers probably used for advertising local gigs in South Central Los Angeles.

CHARLOTTA BASS
Folder 1  Banquet
Folder 2  Jessie Mae Brown, Helen Gahagan Douglas
Folder 3  Celebration
Folder 4  Civic Functions
Folder 5  Family
Folder 6  Social Functions
Folder 7  Negative, Print (early 1900s).
Folder 8  Photo Greetings
Folder 9  Political Campaigns
Folder 10  Portraits
Folder 11  Scrapbook
Folder 12  Self
Folder 13  Trip to the Soviet Union (1950s?).

GENERAL

Folder 14  African American Women Professionals
Folder 15  Angels Flight. 1960s.
Folder 16  Birthday Celebration
Folder 17  The California Eagle and Staff 1920s?, 1932. (Print, negative, slide)
Folder 18  Civic Functions
Folder 19  Civic Leaders
Folder 20  Civil Rights Congress. 1950s.
Folder 21  Civil Rights Congress Citizens Jury. 1952.
Folder 23  Miscellaneous Photographs and Snapshots
Folder 24  Highlander Folk School. 1950s.
Folder 26  Houses
Folder 27  International Book Shop. San Francisco, (1940s?).
Folder 30  Military
Folder 31  Negatives
Folder 32  Printing Plates
Folder 33  Progressive Party. Late 1940s.
Folder 34  School Group Photographs. Early and Late 1900s.
Folder 35  "This Tract is Exclusive and Restricted." Segregated Housing in Los Angeles. (1950s?). Copy negative and print.
Folder 36  Trains. Print and Negatives.
Folder 37  War? Photographs
Folder 38  WPA Theatre. Photographs form "Arena" by Halle Flanagan.

INDIVIDUALS

Folder 39  Reuben W. Borough
Folder 40  Joseph and Edna Brock
Folder 41  Edmund G. "Pat" Brown
Folder 42  Charles Carr
Folder 43  Helen Gahagan Douglas
Folder 44  Leo Gallagher
Folder 45  Elbert Hudson, President Broadway Savings and Loan. 1940s.
Folder 46  Hattie McDaniel
Folder 47  Marilyn Miller
Folder 48  Pettis Perry
Folder 49  Paul Robeson
Folder 50  Paul Robeson, Tom Bradley, et al. Print, Slide, Negative.
Folder 51  Mrs. Paul Robeson
Folder 52  Paul Robeson, Jr's Children. 1958.
Folder 53  Eleanor Roosevelt
Folder 54  Pete Seeger
Folder 55  Gladys Owens Smith (Great granddaughter of Biddy Mason)
Folder 56  William "Bill" Taylor
Folder 57  Henry Wallace
Folder 58  Leon Washington

LABOR

Folder 59  Eldon Manufacturing Company
Folder 60  Group Photographs
Folder 61  Harvill Corporation
Folder 63  Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers
Folder 64  National Automobile School. Early 1920s
Folder 65  Picket Lines
Folder 66  Red Caps
Folder 67  Trona, California
Folder 68  Work

SOCIAL CAUSES

Folder 69  General
Folder 70  "Ban the Bomb" Peace Demonstration
Folder 71  "LA 21" Smith Act Case
Folder 72  The Laws Family
Folder 73  Poverty
Folder 74  Smith Act
Folder 75  Robert Wesley Wells

SOCIETY

Folder 76  Portraits
Folder 77  Publicity
Folder 78  Social Functions