Guide to the H. A. Betaque Papers

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2011-03-25
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Guide to the H. A. Betaque Papers 1918/1922

Special Collections & University Archives

Overview of the Collection
Collection Title: H. A. Betaque Papers
Dates: 1918-1922
Bulk Dates: 1918-1920
Identification: MS-0475
Creator: Betaque, H. A.
Physical Description: 3.66 linear ft
Language of Materials: English
Repository: Special Collections & University Archives
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San Diego, CA, 92182-8050
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Biographical Information:
Harry Andrew Betaque worked as an inspector and later as a resident representative for the United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation from 1918 to 1921. The US Shipping Board sought to expand the United States' merchant marines during and after the First World War. Because of steel and lumber shortages during the First World War, the government turned to concrete as an affordable alternative. Thus, the Emergency Fleet Corporation created its Concrete Ship Section and began building concrete ships. The Faith, built in 1917, was the first concrete ship built in the US.

Having worked as a civil engineer in Washington State, and as the Head of Hull Construction, Betaque appears to have begun work with the Emergency Fleet Corporation in 1918 when he was appointed the resident inspector for the construction of the Atlantus, a concrete ship built by the Liberty Shipbuilding Company in Brunswick, GA.

After the completion of the Atlantus, the Emergency Fleet Corporation transferred Betaque to San Diego as the Resident Representative to oversee the Pacific Marine Construction Company's construction of two sister ships, the SS San Pasqual and the SS Cuyamaca. Although the San Diego Yard had been commissioned to build a total of eight concrete ships, the US Shipping Board ceased concrete construction in 1921 because of a surplus of steel ships freed for use at the conclusion of World War I. The San Pasqual and Cuyamaca were the only two concrete ships built in San Diego. That same year, the US Shipping Board transferred the ship yard to the Navy, creating today's Naval Yard. Betaque left San Diego and pursued oil interests in Louisiana.

Betaque had a wife, Cora, and two sons, Harry and Norman.

Access Terms
This collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Corporate Name:
United States Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation

Genre/Form of Material:
Personal Papers
Photographs

Topical Term:
Concrete ships -- United States
Merchant ships -- United States
Shipbuilding – California -- San Diego

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**Preferred Citation:**
Identification of item, folder title, box number, H.A. Betaque Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University.

**Related Materials:**
San Diego Chamber of Commerce Records
Records of San Diegans, Inc.

**Arrangement of Materials:**
I. Personal Papers
II. Photographs

**Scope and Contents**
The *H.A. Betaque Papers* document Betaque's career as a resident representative for the United State Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation between 1918 and 1922, with particular emphasis the construction of the *SS San Pasqual* and the *SS Cuyamaca* in San Diego, California. Highlights include panoramic photographs of the San Diego Harbor and shipyard, as well as construction photographs of the *SS San Pasqual* and the *SS Cuyamaca*. The collection includes correspondence, reports, costs analyses, engineering formulas, Emergency Fleet directives, photographs and photograph albums. The collection is divided into two series: Personal Papers (1918-1921) and Photographs (1918-1920).

The *Personal Papers* (1918-1922) document Betaque's professional activities with the Emergency Fleet Corporation in Brunswick, GA and San Diego, as well as his personal financial interests, including stocks and oil interests between 1918 and 1921. The series includes correspondence, directives, memorandums, cost analyses, reports, formulas, news clippings, and blueprints. The reports, formulas, blue prints and cost analyses primarily document Betaque's work on the *Atlantus*, the *SS San Pasqual* and the *SS Cuyamaca*. Reports on the *Faith* and the *Palo Alto* are also included. Of particular interest are letters from both Betaque and his colleagues referencing a depressed economy, lack of work, and a growing interest in oil.

This series is filed alphabetically and primarily dates from 1918 to 1920.

The *Photographs* (1918-1920) mostly provide visual documentation for the construction and launching of the *SS San Pasqual* and the *SS Cuyamaca*, although there are a few photographs of the *Palo Alto* and the *Atlantus*. The majority of photographs date from 1919 to 1920. Filed alphabetically by folder title, this series includes two photograph albums and many loose photographs, which appear to have been disassembled from albums. Most of the *San Pasqual* and *Cuyamaca* photographs have a number and a brief description on the lower right corner of the image. It is unclear what individual or corporation created these numbers. The photographs are arranged numerically within folders. Highlights include the two photograph albums, which include images of construction workers, panoramic shots of the San Diego Yard, and the launching ceremonies of the *SS San Pasqual* and the *SS Cuyamaca* in San Diego.

**Personal Papers 1918-1921**

- Box 1, Folder 1: *Comparison of Concrete and Steel Ships 1919*
- Box 1, Folder 2: *Concrete Ships: A Possible Solution of the Shipping Problem December 1917*
- Box 1, Folder 3: *Correspondence: Fraternal and Professional Organizations (San Diego Lodge, American Society of Engineers, Etc.) 1919-1921*
- Box 1, Folder 4: *Correspondence: Personal and Work Related 1919-1921*
- Box 1, Folder 5: *Correspondence: Stock Investments 1919-1921*
- Box 1, Folder 6: *Cost Analyses and Synopses for Concrete Ships 1918*
- Box 1, Folder 7: *Emergency Fleet Corporation Headquarters Directives and Correspondence 1918-1919*
- Box 1, Folder 8: *"Faith" Report 1918*
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<th>General Instructions to Inspecting Engineers</th>
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<td>Reports on the Concreting and Launching of Ships 1918-1919</td>
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<td>Semi-Annual Report of Design Branch of Concrete Ship Section, Steel Ship Division circa 1919</td>
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<td>Specifications for the Construction of a Concrete Oil Tank Steamer of 7500 tons August 1920</td>
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