Finding Aid of the Jackie Coogan Ranch records 0389

Finding aid prepared by Katie Richardson, Andrew Goodrich, and Sarah Schreiber
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Title: Jackie Coogan Ranch records
Collection number: 0389
Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 Linear feet1 box
Date (inclusive): 1924-1936
Abstract: In the mid-1920s, Jackie Coogan Productions purchased a cattle ranch near Campo, California, approximately fifty miles east of San Diego, on behalf of child actor Jackie Coogan. The collection contains correspondence and financial documents related to the operations of the ranch between 1924 and 1936.
creator: Fuquay, Genevieve C.
creator: Fuquay, J. C., (Joseph C.)
Conditions Governing Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.
Conditions Governing Use
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Acquisition
The collection was given to the University of Southern California by Howard Karno Books, Inc. on November 13, 2006.
Scope and Content
The collection is comprised of materials related to the operation of the Jackie Coogan cattle ranch between 1924 and 1936. Included is correspondence; receipts and invoices related to ranch expenses; checks, bank statements, and deposit slips signed by ranch manager J.C. Fuquay and his wife, Genevieve; letters pertaining to the ranch's mortgage; and an official ranch ledger that was maintained between 1926 and 1930.
Historical note
John Leslie "Jackie" Coogan, the son of John and Lillian Dolliver Coogan, was born on October 26, 1914 in Los Angeles, California. Coogan's parents were both seasoned vaudevillians: his father was a dancer and actor, and his mother was a stage performer and former child star. At the age of four, Coogan made his first appearance on stage at a New York theater, where he earned accolades for his charisma and stage presence. By the age of five, he began touring with his parents and became a regular in their vaudeville circuit.
Coogan's rise to fame came in 1919, when silent film star, Charlie Chaplin first noticed Coogan performing on stage at a downtown Los Angeles theater. Chaplin gave the young actor a small part in A Day's Pleasure (1919), and later assigned him a leading role in The Kid (1921). Coogan's popularity surged soon thereafter, and by the mid-1920s he was one of Hollywood's highest-paid silent film stars. Among the best known of his films are Peck's Bad Boy (1921), Oliver Twist (1922), Daddy (1923), Long Live The King (1923), The Rag Man (1925), Tom Sawyer (1930), and Huckleberry Finn (1931).
In the mid-1920s, a cattle ranch was purchased on Coogan's behalf near Campo, California, approximately fifty miles east of San Diego, for $159,000. While Coogan's production company financed the ranch and received its profits, its day-to-day operations were overseen by J.C. Fuquay and his wife Genevieve, who served as the resident managers. The ranch functioned both as a source of extra revenue for Jackie Coogan Productions and also as a retreat for Coogan, his family, his colleagues, and his friends.
Tragedy struck in May, 1935 when Coogan, his father, and three friends were returning to the ranch from a hunting expedition in Mexico. The vehicle that was transporting the men careened into a ditch after Coogan's father, who was the driver, attempted to avoid an oncoming car and lost control. The accident killed every passenger except for Coogan, who escaped with only minor injuries. Traumatized by the death of his father and several of his closest friends, Coogan subsequently relinquished his business ties with the Fuquays and sold his ranch for $40,000 - a small fraction of the initial purchase price.
Wishing to cash in on the money he had made as a child star in the 1920s, he asked his mother and stepfather to turn over his earnings, only to discover that almost all the money had been squandered away. In response, Coogan filed suit in 1938 against his mother and stepfather for the four million dollars that he had made. However, at the time, there was no law on the books that regulated the earnings of child actors, and ultimately Coogan was awarded only $126,000 of his initial claim. The public outcry that accompanied the verdict culminated in the passage of the California Child Actor's Bill, more commonly known as the Coogan Act, which safeguards the wages of child actors into adulthood.
Coogan enlisted in the United States Army in 1941 and was transferred to the United States Air Force after the United States entered World War II. He returned to acting after the war had ended, but was able to attain only minor roles in low-budget films and guest appearances on television shows. Between 1964 and 1966, he had his most famous television role in *The Addams Family* as Uncle Fester. He retired from acting altogether in the mid-1970s.

Coogan died of a heart attack on March 1, 1984 in Santa Monica, California, at the age of 69.

**Preferred Citation**

[Box/folder# or item name], Jackie Coogan Ranch records, Collection no. 0389, Regional History Collection, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Coogan, Jackie -- Archives  
Fuquay, Genevieve C. -- Archives  
Fuquay, J. C., (Joseph C.) -- Archives  
Account books  
Banks and banking, American--California--Archival resources  
Campo (Calif.)--History--Archival resources  
Correspondence  
Ledgers (account books)  
Legal correspondence  
Ranch life--California--San Diego County--Archival resources  
Ranch managers--California--San Diego County--Archival resources  
Ranchers--California--San Diego County--History--Archival resources  
Ranches--California--San Diego County--Archival resources  
Receipts (financial records)  
San Diego County (Calif.)--History--Archival resources  

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**Box 1, Folder 1-2**  
**Correspondence 1924-1926**  
Scope and Content  
The files contain business correspondence from ranch manager J. C. Fuquay and a 1926 Christmas card from Jackie Coogan.

**Box 1, Folder 3-14**  
**Receipts 1925-1930**  
Scope and Content  
The files include receipts and invoices from ranch manager J.C. Fuquay, all of which relate to the operation of the Coogan Ranch.

**Box 1, Folder 15-19**  
**Bank of Italy 1929-1931**  
Scope and Content  
The files include checks, bank statements, and deposit slips from ranch manager J.C. Fuquay's account with the Bank of Italy. Materials pertain to the monthly expenses of the Coogan Ranch.

**Box 1, Folder 20-32**  
**First National Bank 1933-1936**  
Scope and Content  
The files include checks, bank statements, and deposit slips from ranch manager J.C. Fuquay's account with First National Bank. Materials pertain to the monthly expenses of the Coogan Ranch.
Box 1, Folder 33  
**Fuquay Mortgage 1927-1930**

**Scope and Content**

The file includes correspondence regarding ranch manager J.C. Fuquay's mortgage, as well as an informational pamphlet issued by the California Tax Agency regarding its Tax Service.

Box 1, Folder 34  
**Jackie Coogan Ranch Ledger 1926-1930**

**Scope and Content**

The file consists of a ledger book for the Coogan Ranch, which functions as a repository for the ranch's financial documents between 1926 and 1930. Included in the ledger are monthly statements that list the ranch's earnings and expenditures, as well as several receipts that relate to the ranch's operation.