Finding Aid of the Mineral King Development records 0037

Finding aid prepared by Jacqueline Morin
Processing of this collection was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives program.
USC Libraries Special Collections
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2011
Title: Mineral King Development records
Collection number: 0037
Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 linear ft. 1 box
Date: 1963-1978
Abstract: The collection consists of environmental reports, correspondence, scrapbooks, and other ephemera pertaining to the controversial 1960s development of a 16,000 acre tract of the Sequoia National Forest in Tulare County, California. The materials were created and collected by conservation activists Jean and Richard Koch.
creator: Henderson, Robert Arthur, 1925-
creator: Koch, Jean
creator: Koch, Richard, 1921-
creator: McCloskey, J. Michael (John Michael), 1934-
Preferred Citation
[Box/folder# or item name], Mineral King Development Records, Collection no. 0037, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California
Conditions Governing Access
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE: Advance notice required for access.
Conditions Governing Use
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Related Archival Materials
Mineral King Collection, Sanoian Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.
Historical Background
Mineral King is a glacial valley in the southern Sierra Nevada mountains, only 7 1/2 square miles in size and one of the oldest communities in the High Sierras. At one time, the area had been occupied by two Native American tribes-- the Wikchumni Yokut and the Tubatulabel-- who created summer settlements on the valley floor primarily for hunting and trading with the Paiutes, who lived east of the Sierra Nevada.
In the 1860s, the first Americans of European descent discovered the valley while building a toll trail from Visalia to Independence and began to mine for precious metals, leading to the discovery of silver in the Mineral King Valley in 1872. Following the discovery, the first road to Mineral King was created in 1873 by the Mineral King Wagon and Toll Road Company. Over time, the minerals were found to be unprofitable to extract from their ore, but the valley kept its hopeful name: Mineral King.
Mineral King had been part of Sequoia National Forest since 1926, and in the late 1940s the United States Forest Service began to give consideration to Mineral King as a potential site for recreational development. Prodded by a rapidly increasing demand for ski facilities, the Forest Service published a prospectus in 1965, inviting bids from private developers for the construction and operation of a ski resort that would also serve as a summer recreation area. The proposal of Walt Disney Enterprises, Inc. was chosen from those of six bidders, and Disney received a three-year permit to conduct surveys and explorations in the valley in connection with its preparation of a complete master plan for the resort.
The final Disney plan, approved by the Forest Service in January 1969 (and supported by Governor Ronald Reagan, a friend of Walt Disney), outlined a $35 million complex of motels, restaurants, swimming pools, parking lots, and other structures designed to accommodate 14,000 visitors daily. The complex was to be constructed on 80 acres of the valley floor under a 30-year use permit from the Forest Service. Other facilities, including ski lifts, ski trails, a cog-assisted railway, and utility installations, were to be constructed on the mountain slopes and in other parts of the valley under a revocable special-use permit. To provide access to the resort, the state of California proposed to construct a highway 20 miles in length. A section of that road would have traversed Sequoia National Park, as would have a proposed high-voltage power line needed to provide electricity for the resort.
In June 1969 the Sierra Club filed a Federal suit in the Northern District of California court to attempt to stop the project. The court issued a temporary injunction the following month which blocked implementation of the Forest Service/Disney development plan for the basin for three full years before the U.S. Supreme Court finally addressed the Sierra Club's lawsuit. (Disney had anticipated opening the resort in 1970 or 1971.) In an April 1972 decision, the Court rejected the suit
on the grounds that the Sierra Club had not established that it was suffering direct harm as a result of the Forest Service's actions.

In June the Sierra Club filed an amended suit; soon public opposition to Mineral King development began to increase in an era of unparalleled environmental awareness and activism. After years of legal battles between pro-development and preservationist groups, the Mineral King Valley was annexed into Sequoia National Park in 1978 by an act of Congress. That legislation effectively stopped the plan to ever develop the area into a ski resort.

**Acquisition**

The collection was acquired by USC in 1997 from Dr. and Mrs. Richard Koch.

**Scope and Content**

The Mineral King Development records consist of two boxes of files and ephemera pertaining to the controversial proposed development of the Mineral King valley by Disney Enterprises, Inc. The files were kept by activists Dr. Richard and Jean Koch, chiefly the latter. Nearly a third of the collection is comprised of correspondence, mostly between the Koches and government or media entities. The remainder of the collection consists of articles, testimonies, clippings, news releases, environmental impact reports, etc. concerning the lengthy battle over the status of Mineral King.

**Processing Note**

Processing of the Mineral King Development records was generously funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). USC Libraries was awarded a Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant from 2010-2012, “Uncovering California’s Environmental Collections,” in collaboration with eight additional special collections and archival repositories throughout the state and the California Digital Library (CDL). Grant objectives included processing of over 33 hidden collections related to the state's environment and environmental history. The collections document an array of important sub-topics such as irrigation, mining, forestry, agriculture, industry, land use, activism, and research. Together they form a multifaceted picture of the natural world and the way it was probed, altered, exploited and protected in California over the twentieth century. Finding aids are made available through the Online Archive of California (OAC).

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

California. Dept. of Fish and Game. -- Archives
California. Fish and Game Commission. -- Archives
Cranston, Alan, 1914-2000 -- Archives
Koch, Jean
Koch, Jean -- Archives
Koch, Richard, 1921-
Koch, Richard, 1921- -- Archives
McCloskey, J. Michael (John Michael), 1934- -- Archives
Muir, John, 1838-1914 -- Archives
National Register of Historic Places. -- Archives
National Wildlife Federation. -- Correspondence
Sierra Club. -- Correspondence
Sweigert, William T., 1900-1983 -- Archives
United States. Forest Service. -- Correspondence
United States. National Park Service. -- Archives
Walt Disney Company. -- Archives
Walt Disney Productions. -- Archives
Bills, legislative--United States--Archival resources
Clippings
Correspondence
Disneyland (Calif.)--Archival resources
Environmental impact statements
Environmental policy--California--Archival resources
Environmental policy--Citizen participation--Archival resources
Environmental protection--California--Archival resources
Environmental sciences--California--Archival resources
Environmentalists--Archival resources
Memorandums
Mineral King (Calif.)--Archival resources
Mineral King Valley (Calif.)--Archival resources
National parks and reserves--Law and legislation--California--Archival resources
Newsletters
Pamphlets
Periodicals
Press releases
Reports
Scrapbooks
Sequoia National Forest (Calif.)--Archival resources
Sequoia National Park (Calif.)--Archival resources
Sierra Nevada (Calif. and Nev.)--Archival resources
Ski resorts--California--Archival resources
Speeches
Tulare County (Calif.)--Archival resources
Uncovering California's Environmental Collections Project

Personal Papers

Box 1, Folder 1-5  Correspondence-- Originals 1965-1978
Scope and Content
This subseries consists of five folders of correspondence kept by Dr. and Mrs. Koch--mainly with government officials, environmental groups such as the National Wildlife Federation, and the press. Most of the letters are pleas to understand the plight of the Mineral King valley during the years in which Disney Productions was attempting to obtain the land to build a resort. There is much correspondence between Mrs. Koch and the National Wildlife Federation concerning the latter's stance on the proposed Mineral King development.

Box 1, Folder 6-8  Correspondence--Photocopies 1965-1978
Scope and Content
This subseries is comprised of three folders of photocopies of letters from many individuals as well as corporate and government entities. Represented in this series are letters detailing the controversy over the development of Mineral King from the Sierra Club, Walt Disney Productions, the U.S. Senate, the Los Angeles Times, the U.S. Forest Service, etc.

Box 1, Folder 9  Memoranda 1965-1978
Personal Papers
Periodicals 1967-1977

Box 1, Folder 10-11

Periodicals 1967-1977
Scope and Content

Box 1, Folder 12

Pamphlets and Guides 1963
Scope and Content
One folder comprises this subseries, with two slightly different copies of a leaflet called "Mineral King: The Place, the Issue, the Challenge" and two copies of a booklet called Mineral King Guide by Pat Adler. The two copies of the booklet are dated 1963 and 1975 (revised).

Box 1, Folder 13-14

Speeches, Transcripts & Editorials 1967-1973
Scope and Content
This subseries contains two folders of typed, handwritten, and photocopied speeches, transcripts, and various editorials from entities such as the Sierra Club, KABC TV, Jean Koch (for the Mineral King Task Force), The Mineral King District Association, Walt Disney Productions, and Congressman Jerome R. Waldie (supporting a march on Disneyland in 1973). There is also a letter/petition from a Fred M. Wilkins to Fred Eissler (Sierra Club director from 1963 to 1969) imploring him to do whatever he can "to stop this monstrous [Disney] project.

Box 1, Folder 15-16

Environmental Impact Statement-- Comments 1975-1976
Scope and Content
These two folders contain articles and comments regarding the March 1975 draft of an environmental impact statement on the proposed Mineral King development. All comments are addressed to Douglas R. Leisz, Regional Forester [San Francisco] since it was the U.S. Forest Service which published the Draft Environmental Statement. There are several copies of the comments of Michael R. Asay, an economist at the University of Southern California, as well as letters from Claire T. Dedrick (Secretary for Resources under California governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.), from Roger Gynar for the Environmental Information Council, Richard and Jean Koch, and several others. (The actual Draft Environmental Statement and the Final Environmental Statement are in Box 2.)

Box 1, Folder 17

Newspaper clippings 1969
Scope and Content
This small subseries includes two newspaper clippings mentioning Jean Koch--one of them unrelated to the Mineral King controversy-- and two photocopies of newspaper articles from the Visalia Times-Delta (1969 and 1975) regarding Mineral King, Silver City, and the Disney project.
Summary and Background

Scope and Content

The first folder in this subseries contains what appears to be the typed draft of a book-length manuscript on Mineral King, though the author is not stated anywhere in the draft. The material provides useful background information on the cultural and physical history of Mineral King as well as details of the Disney project controversy and litigation.

The second folder contains flyers and other typed and printed information on Mineral King, including the controversy over the proposed Disney project. One eight-page manuscript—probably intended as a pamphlet— is titled "Mineral King: National Game Refuge or Disney Wonderland?" and was authored by the Mineral King Task Force of the Sierra Club in 1970. Much of the information in many of the flyers and intended pamphlets appears to have come from Pat Adler’s "Mineral King Guide." (The actual guide is in Folder 12.)

Bound volumes

Box 2

Mineral King: Final Environmental Statement 1976 February 26

Scope and Content

Approximately 600 pages in length, the Final Environmental Statement of the Mineral King Recreational Development was published in February 1976 by the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Region 5, Sequoia National Forest. The first 285 pages contain the actual Statement, conclusion, and bibliography; the remainder is the appendices.

Box 2

Mineral King: Draft Environmental Statement 1974 December 30

Scope and Content

The Draft Environmental Statement Mineral King Recreation Development is a spiral-bound volume of approximately 300 pages published by the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Region 5, Sequoia National Forest, on December 30, 1974. Comments on the draft are included in Folders 15 and 16.

Box 1, Folder 20

Mineral King Study Group 1973 July

Scope and Content

This bound volume is comprised of a series of reports and articles compiled by ten Environmental Studies students from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1973. In the Introduction to the volume, they are referred to as the Mineral King Study Group. This group, under the guidance of Penelope N. Campbell and Dr. Orrin Sage, conducted a six-month study to determine the optimum use of the Mineral King area by exploring the surrounding controversy. The manuscripts include a history of Mineral King and reports on geology, flora and fauna, population, recreational demand, and the government officials and agencies concerned with the development of Mineral King.

Box 1

Scrapbooks 1964-1976

Scope and Content

The scrapbooks are actually four 3-ring binders dating from April 1964 to approximately August 1976. All of them consist of newspaper clippings pasted onto notebook paper and pertain to the Mineral King development controversy and related issues.

Business Activities
News Releases 1967-1977

Scope and Content
This folder consists of several news releases issued between 1967 and 1977 pertaining to the proposed development of Mineral King. The releases were issued from the United States Department of Agriculture, the Sierra Club, Congressman Jerome R. Waldie, and California Assemblyman Alan Sieroty.

News and Newsletters 1965-1978

Scope and Content
There are a few newsletters of the Mineral King District Association in this folder; however, most of the newsletters are those of the Sierra Club's Mineral King Task Force.

Publicity 1968-1973

Scope and Content
Much of the contents in this folder consists of flyers regarding a "March on Disneyland" in 1969, a screening of a documentary film on Mineral King in 1972, and a Mineral King "Hike-In" in 1968.

Testimony 1976-1978

Scope and Content
This folder contains material pertaining to testimonies and depositions on the Mineral King controversy and includes information from the Subcommittee on National Parks and Insular Affairs, Sierra Club's Mineral King Task Force, the Desomount Club, Skiers to Keep Mineral King Natural, and various individuals commenting on a variety of bills and resolutions introduced between 1976 and 1978.

Bills 1967-1977

Scope and Content
This folder contains the text of a number of bills introduced between 1967 and 1977 including the following:

H.R. 9629: To transfer the Sequoia National Game Refuge to Sequoia National Park (1967)
S. 3322, H.R. 13280, H.R. 4354: To enlarge the Sequoia National Park in the State of California by adding to such park the Mineral King Valley area, to provide for certain planning respecting the management of such addition, and for other purposes (1976, 1977)

Government Publications 1964-1977

Scope and Content
Several of the items in this folder are publications of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including a booklet called Mineral King: A Planned Recreation Development (1969) and a sample "Prospectus for a proposed Recreational Development at Mineral King in the Sequoia National Forest" (1965).
Miscellany 1967-1977

Scope and Content
This slim folder includes several miscellaneous items such as a California Highway Commission "Route Adoption Report" (1967), nine completed handwritten public surveys on Mineral King, a typed bibliography on Mineral King, a couple of maps that show where Mineral King is in Sequoia National Forest, a Walt Disney Productions "Notice of Annual Meeting of Stockholders" (1972), etc.