Yosemite Conversation Club Collection

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**Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Yosemite Conversation Club Collection

**Dates:** 1934-1995

**Collection Number:** YCN: 2032 (YOSE 237673)

**Creator/Collector:**

**Extent:** 2.3 LF


**Repository:** Yosemite National Park Archives

El Portal, California 95318

**Abstract:** The Conversation Club records are comprised of 2.3 linear feet of materials. The bulk of the collection is paper, although there are also 23 photographs from a photo album of the club. The materials cover a date range from the start of the club in 1934 to 1995. Materials include original and revised versions of the club’s Constitution and By-laws; retrospective papers written looking back on the club history; announcements for meetings and meeting minutes; membership lists; schedules of readers and hosts; correspondence and invitations to membership; and essays written by members to be presented at meetings. The photograph album is comprised of photographs from a club social in 1988. The largest part of the collection is comprised of the essays written for discussion at the club meetings.

**Language of Material:** English

**Access**

No restrictions.

**Preferred Citation**

Yosemite Conversation Club Collection. Yosemite National Park Archives

**Acquisition Information**

The Yosemite Conversation Club Collection is comprised of three separate accessions: YOSE-061414, YOSE-07468, and YOSE-05506. The first accession, YOSE-061414 is .25 LF of Conversation Club materials donated by Keith Walklet in 1999 after he had left employment at the park. The second accession, YOSE-07468, was deposited in the Yosemite Research Library and accessioned to the archive in 2013. The final accession, YOSE-05506 was accessioned as part of the museum collection and transferred to the archives in 2013.

**Biography/Administrative History**

The Yosemite Conversation Club was organized on April 26, 1934 as a group of men (usually those in well-known positions within the Yosemite National Park and park concessions hierarchy) who gathered once a month for dinner and a lively discussion. Each meeting had a host who, originally was responsible for paying for each member’s dinner, although later that responsibility changed to providing wine for the meeting instead. There was also a reader for the evening, who wrote and presented an essay meant to spark discussion. These essays ranged in subject from worldly issues, war, and government to economics, education, and hobbies. Generally, topics of religion and partisan politics were avoided. Conversation Club meetings were scheduled for the last Monday of each month, beginning with dinner, followed by a reading of the month’s essay, and ending with a discussion. For many years, dinner was held at the Ahwahnee, but moved for brief periods to the Yosemite Lodge, the Four Seasons Restaurant, and occasionally, Curry Village. On rare occasions, meetings were held at the houses of members. The typical number of members was 20 men, but this was amended several times, changing increasing to 25 or 30 members before changing back to a smaller enrollment number. Notable members of the Conversation Club include several superintendents, as well as John Curry, Rusty Rust, Charley Proctor, Ed Hardy, Dr. Avery Strum, and many more. The problem of dwindling membership began in the 1970's and continued for the remainder of the life of the club. Meeting nights were moved from Monday nights to avoid televised broadcasts of Monday Night Football. The club was finally discontinued in 1995.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The Conversation Club Collection is comprised of six series that reflect the types of materials, record function and their original arrangement. Series I: Constitutions and By-Laws, Series II: Club History, Series III: Administrative Records, Series IV: Correspondence, Series V: Essays, and Series VI: Photograph Album.