

Yosemite Old Central Files Collection

Finding aid created by Yosemite National Park Archives staff using RecordEXPRESS

Yosemite National Park Archives

5083 Foresta Road

El Portal, California 95318

(209)379-1282

Paul_Rogers@nps.gov

<http://www.nps.gov/yose/historyculture/collections.htm>

2016

Descriptive Summary

Title: Yosemite Old Central Files Collection

Dates: 1851-1994

Collection Number: YCN: 1001 (YOSE 78585)

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 41 LF

Online items available 

[https://voro.cdlib.org/user-pdf-dav/yosnpa/OCFC%20Final%20Finding%20Aid%20Accretion 2014.FINAL.pdf](https://voro.cdlib.org/user-pdf-dav/yosnpa/OCFC%20Final%20Finding%20Aid%20Accretion%202014.FINAL.pdf)

Repository: Yosemite National Park Archives

El Portal, California 95318

Abstract: The Old Central Files Collection (OCFC) span from the late 1800's through circa 1950. The collection is comprised of 40 linear feet (80 boxes) of material revealing the management strategies and interactions of Yosemite National Park in the early 20th century. Materials range from general correspondence and memoranda to construction permits/plans and search & rescue reports. The OCFC contains material produced by Yosemite National Park which illuminates various aspects of park operations during the early 20th century including personnel activities, budget and hiring authorities, interpretation & education methodologies, concessionaire partnerships (Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company, Best's Studio, Pillsbury Pictures, Yosemite Park & Curry Company, etc.), transportation/construction contractors and projects (Yosemite Valley Railroad Company), natural and cultural resource management, and scientific research in Yosemite National Park. A majority of the documents in the collection are inter-office and inter-agency correspondence and memoranda that led to decisions in the National Park Service. Yosemite construction projects and development plans are found in the OCFC, most of which have accompanying oversize blueprints and photographic documentation. Charts and graphs illustrate park field operations, specifically documenting field research requests and subsistence programs. Publicity efforts, particularly partnerships with media and transportation outlets like the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Yosemite Valley Railroad Company, are prevalent throughout the collection. Other records highlighting land management strategies and development plans further expose park operations during its period of establishment. The majority of the material in the OCFC dates from 1910-1950. Material Type: The Old Central Files consist of correspondence, reports, brochures, clippings (information artifacts), telegrams, memorandums, personal papers, office files, black-and-white photographs, color photographs, maps, comprehensive plans, blueprints (reprographic copies), chronologies (lists), application forms, postcards, bar & line graphs, schedules (time plans, records, etc.), conceptual drawings, bulletins, minutes, surveys (documents), topographic surveys, questionnaires, pamphlets, leaflets, publications, legal documents, contracts, ledgers (account books), and notebooks.

Language of Material: English

Access

No restrictions.

Preferred Citation

Yosemite Old Central Files Collection. Yosemite National Park Archives

Acquisition Information

The Old Central Files Collection (OCFC) came to the Yosemite National Park Museum Branch through 7 separate accessions from the Federal Records Center (FRC) and from Yosemite National Park staff. Beginning in the 1930s, some of the OCFC documents were housed in the FRC in San Bruno, CA. In 1976, many of these materials were transferred back to the Yosemite Research Library and YOSE 107896 5 Museum, specifically accessions YOSE-05238, YOSE-05239, YOSE-05587, the last of which was transferred from the FRC in 1991. One accession, YOSE-05122, was transferred from the Mail & Files Clerk to the Yosemite museum in 1976. The final two accessions, YOSE-05121 acquired in August 1988, and YOSE-07156 acquired in August 2011, were National Park Service field collections. Most materials were transferred to the Yosemite Archives by c. 2005. However 24 linear feet associated with YOSE-07156 were removed from the Yosemite Research Library by Archives staff in 2007 and re-joined with material already housed in the Yosemite Archives OCFC. One LF of research material about the early development of the museum was found within Interpretation and Education Division records and Museum, specifically accessions YOSE-05238, YOSE-05239, YOSE-05587, the last of which was transferred from the FRC in 1991. One accession, YOSE-05122, was transferred from the Mail & Files Clerk to the Yosemite museum in 1976. The final two accessions, YOSE-05121 acquired in August 1988, and YOSE-07156 acquired in August 2011, were National Park Service field collections. Most materials were transferred to the Yosemite Archives by c. 2005. However 24 linear feet associated with YOSE-07156 were removed from the Yosemite Research Library by Archives staff in 2007 and re-joined with material already housed in the Yosemite Archives OCFC. One LF of research material about the early development of the

museum was found within Interpretation and Education Division records and accreted by the archive staff in the summer of 2014.

Biography/Administrative History

The Yosemite Old Central Files Collection (OCFC) depicts early park operations and reflects some of the trends and momentous changes in the management of Yosemite National Park and of the National Park Service as an agency from its inception until c. 1950. The documentation exposes the origin of Yosemite's management strategies – particularly regarding natural & cultural resources, construction & development, concessionaire partnerships & visitor use, and interpretation & education methodologies – and reflects the early history one of the world's first national parks. The first effort to set aside Yosemite as a protected area occurred on June 30, 1864, when President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill creating the Yosemite Grant. Carved from California state lands, the Grant was initially ceded back to the state for management. This act marks the first federally mandated instance that land was set aside specifically for conservation efforts and public use, and set a precedent for the 1872 creation of Yellowstone as the nation's first national park. In response to growing conservation concerns in the years following, Congress established Yosemite National Park on October 1, 1890. Beginning in 1891, the U.S. Army's Fourth Cavalry Regiment administered the new national park. Yet despite the park's formation based on the boundaries delegated by original Yosemite Grant, the State of California retained control and oversight of the Yosemite Valley and of the Mariposa Grove. In 1906, Congress and President Theodore Roosevelt enacted legislation incorporating both Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove under the control of the U.S. Army. The Fourth Cavalry Regiment eventually passed administrative responsibility to the National Park Service (NPS) after Congress created the agency in 1916. The Yosemite National Park Old Central Files Collection consists of a variety of materials created, received, and managed by the National Park Service as the park "central files" from the park's origin until circa 1950. These documents are fundamental program records that contain critical information regarding the administration and management of the park over time, including the establishment of park policies and planning efforts. The OCFC is organized following the original Filing Scheme of the National Park Service, a Dewey decimal based coding system that was implemented in 1925. Records created prior to 1925 were integrated into the new Dewey decimal central file coding system by park staff. These numeric decimal codes designate functional record series reflecting fundamental park operations including History & Legislation, Administration & Personnel, Budget Bureau, Supplies and Equipment, Publicity, Lands & Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Interpretation & Other Services, and Concessionaires. In the 1930s, a series of acts governing the National Archives and Federal Records Center (FRC) resulted in the transferring of records to one central branch records center in San Bruno, CA. By the 1950s, the DO-19 alphanumeric code system replaced the original Dewey decimal code system as the primary filing schedule, and official park correspondence was done in triplicate. Extra copies were often sent to the Pacific West Regional Office (PWRO) and the Washington Support Office (WASO). Yosemite records sent to WASO have been transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) at College Park, Maryland, and contain documentation that is not located on site at Yosemite. The Yosemite Archives has primarily received these records in two ways: through return of materials stored at the FRC at San Bruno, YOSE 107896 2 CA, and through direct transfer of inactive records from staff managing the central files at the park. The bulk of the records were returned to the park from the FRC between 1976 and 1991, but park Museum and Archives staff also received accessions directly from the park Mail & Files Clerk in 1976 (specifically File Code 660-05 – Water Supply, General). The majority of these records were kept in the Yosemite Valley Museum & Library Building until they were transferred to the new archives facility at the El Portal Administrative Site in the early 2000s. However, the records are not complete. Because these files were originally governed by an internal records disposition schedule, a time frame delineated how long certain materials must be retained. As a result, records deemed by the park staff to have historical significance were sent to the Yosemite Research Library while many others were either destroyed or sent to the FRC in San Bruno, CA. In 2007, records were retrieved from the Research Library and rejoined with the larger record group already in the Archives. Although some file unit titles in the record group are designated "temporary" according to the Filing Scheme of the National Park Service, these folders contain important archival information – primarily due to their informational, evidential, and/or intrinsic value – and will be permanently preserved. Yosemite Archives Staff completed processing and cataloging of an accretion to the collection in 2012. For the 2014 Accretion found in Series XII, these records were received from the Interpretation and Education Division in 1988 and stored in the Museum attic until 2007, when they were transferred to the Archives in El Portal in association with unprocessed Interpretation and Education Division records. The records address the history and development of the Yosemite Museum and the work of park naturalists from the early 1920s through the end of the 1940s, with a few documents dated into the early 1960s. They appear to have been removed from their original context within Old Central Files for reference and research and held separately for many years. In order to maintain the original context of these records as well as their arrangement as received into the archive, a separate subseries has been created with folders arranged according to the Old Central File code. Notations have been added to the finding aid where individual folders from this subseries would have originally been included.

Scope and Content of Collection

Divided into 12 series and arranged according to Dewey Decimal NPS central filing codes, one series of un-coded materials arranged alphabetically, and one series of OCFC records recovered from other collections.
