San Francisco Public Library

ELMER E. ROBINSON PAPERS

1935-1982 (Bulk 1947-1956)

Collection number: SFH 6

San Francisco History Center
San Francisco Public Library

2009

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INTRODUCTION

Access

Collection is open for research. Photographs are available for research during the San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection hours.

Publication Rights

Copyright has been assigned to the San Francisco Public Library. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the City Archivist. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the San Francisco Public Library as the owner of the physical items and the copyright.

Collection Number

SFH 6

Size

6.25 cubic feet (in 10 boxes), 1 oversized folder

Materials Cataloged Separately

The following items were transferred to the book collection of the San Francisco Public Library: *Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities*,1970; and *Ancestral Lines and Family History of Our Family, Including the Families of Robinson-Barrett, Pelet-Rahlves, Gould-Newcomb, Asbill-Graeter.*

Processed by

Tami J. Suzuki

Date Completed

February 2002

Date Revised

June 24, 2009

Revision Note

An accession of materials was received from Elmer Robinson's granddaughter on June 4, 2009, and subsequently folded into the collection. These included scrapbooks documenting his 1947 mayoral campaign, the renovation of the Municipal Railway, and his court cases as a judge.

Preferred Citation

[*Identification of item*], Elmer E. Robinson Papers (SFH 6), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Related Materials

Researchers are encouraged to see also the San Francisco History Center's subject and biographical files, other Mayoral Papers, and the Historical Photograph Collection, and to check the catalog holdings of the San Francisco Public Library for related materials. The Historical Photograph Collection houses the San Francisco News-Call Bulletin Photograph Archive which includes photographs documenting Robinson's time in office.

Related Collections

Researchers are encouraged to see related collections at The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, San Francisco News-Call Bulletin Photograph Archive (approximately 200 negatives of Mayor Robinson); and Stanford University Libraries, Elmer E. Robinson Collection, 1764-1973; and Elmer E. Robinson Americana, 1765-1950 (both historical document collections created by Robinson).

Conservation Note

During processing, the entire collection was refoldered and re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes. Some metal staples remain. Some documents on acidic paper were kept in their original state and separated with either Permalife bond or Apollo buffered paper. Photographs were transferred to the San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection.

BIOGRAPHY

Elmer Edwin Robinson was born Oct. 3, 1894 to Ralph and Edith Robinson in the Richmond District of San Francisco. He spent his youth near Fort Bragg where his father operated hauling and ice businesses. Robinson returned to San Francisco, working his way through night law school at the now-defunct Kent College, and was admitted to the bar in 1915. He married Doris Gould in 1917 with whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth Jane. He married twice more, to Rosemarie Kerr and later to Ora Norris.

Robinson worked as a deputy District Attorney for six years before going into private practice as a civil and criminal attorney. In 1935, Governor Frank Merriam appointed Robinson to the Municipal Court bench and promoted him to the Superior Court within nine months. As presiding Superior Court judge, Robinson brought the court calendar up to date for the first time in 57 years.

A member of the Republican Party, Robinson served as secretary of the state Republican Committee. He was twice defeated as the Republican candidate for state Senate in 1922 and 1931. With the support of Republican, Mason and legal circles, Robinson was elected San Francisco's 33rd mayor in 1947 when the city was emerging from World War II. He presided during an era that has been described as "the last of the city's old-time good times," when vice quietly flourished. Robinson was re-elected in 1951 over George Christopher, a bitter opponent at the time. Term limits prevented a third run.

In his two terms as mayor from 1948 through 1955, Robinson oversaw building programs including the Cherry Valley Dam, the International Airport, schools, branch libraries, playgrounds and recreation centers, police stations, firehouses, parking garages, and the modernization of the Municipal Railway. He established the Parking Authority and the Redevelopment Agency, which planned the city's first major redevelopment project. Robinson also established the children's fishing program at Lake Merced. He lowered the tax rate three times, and left the next mayor-elect with over $100 million of bonds for further improvements. He also built a civil defense program and served as President of the United States Conference of Mayors.

Upon leaving City Hall, Robinson returned to his private law practice. He continued to serve as president of a Colma cemetery. A collector of original American historical documents, he was an acknowledged expert on forms of government in the United States. Robinson lived quietly until his death on June 7, 1982 in Butte County at the age of 87.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection documents the two-term administration of Mayor Elmer E. Robinson during the years of 1948 to 1956. The Robinson mayoralty was noted for its many building programs including the start of redevelopment. The papers provide a snapshot of post-World War II activities and changes undertaken at City Hall.

Materials include reports, mayoral and campaign speeches, correspondence, newspaper clippings, and historical documents. The collection is particularly rich in speeches from 1948 to 1953, and there is good coverage on the topic of a second Bay crossing from 1947 to 1954. Internal and constituent correspondence is limited. Subjects include civil defense, renovation of the Municipal Railway, Radio Free Europe, the warehouse strike of 1949, growth of rapid transit, the visit of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, and Robinson's 1947 mayoral campaign. He was a collector of original American historical documents, and a few are contained within Series 4. Others can be found at Stanford University Libraries.

Researchers are encouraged to see also the History Center's biographical and subject files, such as Parks; Port Authority; Recreation and Park, Bay--Reber Plan; and Bay Bridges; as well as other mayoral papers, as some related materials are housed there.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE

The material has been arranged into four series: 1) Mayoral Activities, 2) Speeches, Articles, and Commendations, 3) Campaigns, and 4) Historical Documents. Folders in Mayoral Activities and Historical Documents are in alphabetical order by folder title, and then by date. The other series are organized chronologically. Within folders, materials are filed chronologically.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series 1: MAYORAL ACTIVITIES, 1936-1956
3.4 cubic feet plus 1 oversized folder

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

This series contains Robinson's official activity files. A highlight of this series is the subject of a second Bay bridge crossing and particularly the Southern Crossing which Robinson advocated.

Series 2: SPEECHES, ARTICLES AND COMMENDATIONS, 1935-1982
1.5 cu. ft.

Speeches are followed by articles, then commendations. Arranged chronologically.

This series focuses on speeches from 1948-1953 and includes Robinson's inaugural address. Also included are newspaper clippings, especially from 1948-1955, and a couple of commendations.

Series 3: CAMPAIGNS, 1947-1956
.66 cubic feet

Arranged chronologically by election year.

This series contains speeches from Robinson's mayoral campaigns. Also included is Robinson's testimony before the U.S. Court of Appeals. In it, he denied any participation in branding a 1947 opponent, Franck R. Havenner, as a member of the Communist Party.

Series 4: HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, 1874-1935
.7 cubic feet

Arranged alphabetically.

This series contains original American historical documents collected by Robinson.

CONTAINER LISTING

Series 1. Mayoral Activities, 1936-1956

Container	Folder	Folder Title	Date
Box 7	1	Airport News Clipping	1954
Box 1	1	Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Commission	1951-1956
	2	BART News Clippings	1953-1955
	3	Bay Bridge, New Approaches	1949-1950
MD 5	2	Bay Bridge Railway Terminal, Embarcadero Plan	n.d.
		Bay Bridge, Second Crossing,	
Box 1	4	Letters Received Before Inauguration	1947
	5	Armed Services Sub-Committee Hearing	1948-1949
	6	Bay Area Council Plan	1950-1951
	7	George W. Burpee Statement	[Nov. 1, 1948]
	8	Charles E. De Leuw Statement	May 9, 1949
	9	East Bay Committee	1951-1953
	10	Federal, State, and Municipal Action	1949-1953
	11	Gould Plan	1949
	12	Little Plan	1947-1953
	13	Miscellaneous	1948-1952
	14	Miscellaneous Plans	1946-1953
	15	New Approaches and Refinancing	1951-1953
	16-17	Reber Plan	1946-19555
	18	Resolutions	1947-1949
	19	Responses to Mayor's Letter	1949-1951
	20	Shoreline Development	1948
	21	State Legislative Committee Hearing	1952-1953
	22-23	Statements and Press Clippings	1948-1952
Box 2	1	Bay Bridge, Southern Crossing	1947-1949
		Bay Bridge, Southern Crossing,	
	2-3	Amendment to Public Law 695, 1 of 2	1949-1953
	4	The Case for the Southern Crossing	May 7, 1949
	5	Information Summary	[19--]
	6	Navy Hearing	1952-1953
	7	Navy Hearing Transcript	1953
	8	Newsclippings	1952-1953
	9	Supervisors' Resolutions	1947-1953
	10	Post-Amendment to Public Law 695	1953-1954
	11	Bay Bridges Map, Call-Bulletin	Feb. 4, 1953
	12	Board of Supervisors Journal of Proceedings	1950
	13	Buena Vista Park	1950-1951
	14	California Legislative Reports	1949-1951
Box 5	2	City Officials, Board, and Commission Members Photos	[19--]
Box 2	15	Civic Center Plan	1953
	16	Civil Defense	1950-1951

Container	Folder	Folder Title	Date
Box 2	17	Commissioners	[19--]
	18	Consolidation, City and County	circa 1949
	19	Events and Proclamations	1949-1955
	20	Fleishhacker Pool	1949
	21	Gift Playing Cards	[19--]
	22	Golden Gate Park Concerts	1952
	23-24	International Congress of Local Authorities	1953-1955
	25	Lapham, Mayor Roger D., Article	1946
	26	MacArthur, Gen. Douglas, Newsclippings	1951
MD 5	2	Map of San Francisco (Department of Public Works)	1947
Box 6	1	Municipal Railway Bus Design	[1948?]
Box 5	3-5	Municipal Railway Progress Photographs	[1948-19--]
Box 2	27	Orpheum Theatre Wall	1948
	28	Paris Visit	1953
Box 8	1	Public Buildings	1953-1954
	2	Public Buildings Meeting Minutes	1953-1954
Box 2	29	Radio Free Europe Crusade for Freedom Kit	1954
	30	Radio Free Europe Crusade for Freedom Tour	1954
	31	Radio Free Europe Visit	1954-1955
	32	Rapid Transit Report	1936
	33	Rapid Transit Reports	1950-1952
Box 6	2	Republican Mandate Article	1953
Box 2	34	Republican National Convention, 1 of 2	1955
	35	Republican National Convention, Briefing Material for San Francisco Inspection Trip	1955
	36	Republican National Convention, 2 of 2	1956
	37	Resume of Administration	ca. 1951
	38	San Francisco Annual Report	1955
	39	Serra, Father Junipero	1949-[1954]
	40	Smog Reports	1949-1951
	41	Smog Correspondence, 1 of 2	1949-1954
Box 3	1	Smog Correspondence, 2 of 2	1954-1955
	2	United Indian War Veterans	1948-1951
	3	United Nations Charter, 10th Anniversary	1955
	4-5	United States Conference of Mayors	1953-1956
	6	War Housing, Disposition Citizens Committee	1950-1953
	7	War Housing, Disposition of	1953-1954
	8	Warehouse Strike, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Local 6	1949
	9	Washington Conference of Mayors Report	1955
	10	Youth Guidance Center	1953-1955

Series 2. Speeches, Articles, and Commendations, 1935-1982

Container	Folder	Folder Title	Date
Box 3	11	Speeches, Pre-Mayoral	1936-1937
	12	Pre-Inaugural Address	Dec. 4, 1947
	13	Inaugural Address	Jan. 8, 1948
	14-16	Speeches and Press Releases	Jan.-Dec., 1948
	17	Speeches and Press Releases	Jan.-Dec., 1949
	18	Speeches and Press Releases	1949
	19-21	Speeches and Press Releases	Jan.- Dec., 1950
	22-24	Speeches and Press Releases	Jan.-Dec., 1951
	25-26	Speeches and Press Releases	Jan.-Dec., 1952
	27-28	Speeches and Press Releases	Jan.-Dec., 1953
Box 4	1	Speeches and Press Releases	1954
	2	Speeches and Press Releases	1955
	3	Newspaper Clippings, 1 of 4	1935-1947
	4	Newspaper Clippings, 2 of 4	1948-1951
	5	Newspaper Clippings, 3 of 4	1952-1956
	6	Newspaper Clippings, 4 of 4	1957-1982
Box 9	1	Newspaper Clippings: Pacific States Loan Co.	1944-1946
Box 4	7	Newspaper Editorials	1951
Box 9	2	Scrapbook of Clippings, Court Cases	1930-1937
	3	Scrapbook of Clippings, Court Cases	1935-1938
Box 4	8	U.S. Court of Appeals Transcript, Brandhove vs. Tenney, et al.	[1949?]
Box 6	3	Commendations	1936-1979
Box 7	3	Commendations (oversized)	1935-1938

Series 3. Campaigns, 1947-1956

Container	Folder	Folder Title	Date
Box 4	9	1947 Mayoral Campaign Biography	1947
	10	Mayoral Campaign Congratulations	1947
Box 10	1	Mayoral Campaign Newspaper Clippings	1947
	2	Mayoral Campaign Scrapbook	1947
Box 4	11	Mayoral Campaign Speeches	1947-1948
	12	Mayoral Campaign Speech Score Sheets	[1948]
	13	Mayoral Campaign Speeches of Supporters	1947
	14	Propositions	1947
	15	Re-election Campaign	1951
	16	Biography and Statement	[1951]
Box 10	3	Newspaper Clippings	1951
Box 7	3	Ephemera	1951
Box 4	17	Speeches	1951
	18	1956 Propositions	1956

Series 4. Historical Documents, 1874-1940

Container	Folder	Folder Title	Date
Box 4	19	Liliputian Newspaper	1874
	20	Mexico Inauguration Souvenir	1922
	21	Pacific Bank Centennial Statement	1888
Box 6	4	Golden Gate Bridge Bond	1935
Box 4	22	Stanford University Honorary Curator	1940