
Inventory of the San Francisco Building & Construction Trades Council Records, 1907-1986

Accession number: 1990/078

Labor Archives & Research Center

San Francisco State University
San Francisco, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council Records,

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Accession number: 1990/078

Creator: San Francisco Building & Construction Trades Council

Extent: 2.5 cubic feet and 2.5 linear feet (volumes)

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Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Center's online catalog.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Introduction

These records were donated by the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council in 1990. The collection was processed by Kim Klausner in the winter of 1996.

History

The San Francisco Building Trades Council (BTC) was formed in February 1893 by several local unions of carpenters, plasterers, painters, cornice makers, and granite stone cutters to represent the interests of the city's construction trades workers. Under the 29-year reign (1893-1922) of its second president, P. H. McCarthy, the organization grew to considerable influence in San Francisco's vibrant labor movement and in the political realm. In 1908 the BTC affiliated with the Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor. At some point the name of the organization was changed to the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council.

The Trades Council was headquartered at 978 Mission Street when the 1906 earthquake struck. Its building demolished, the BTC authorized P. H. McCarthy to purchase land at the southwest corner of Guerrero and Fourteenth Streets in order to construct a Labor Temple. Plans were drawn up and ground was broken within six months. Incorporation papers for the San Francisco Building Trades Council's Temple Association were signed in June 1907 and the building was officially opened in April 1908 at a dedication ceremony attended by 10,000 people (*Barons of Labor*, page 102).

The block-long, three-story, steel and concrete structure, fronted by Ionic columns, represented status and equity for the BTC as it emerged as a major player in San Francisco's political scene. The building contained nine meeting halls, a 3,000 seat auditorium, offices for most BTC locals, recreation facilities, and employment services. The BTC had outgrown its space and had already expanded into offices on Market Street when the edifice was destroyed by fire in 1961.

The Temple Association financed the building through a combination of loans provided by local unions and the Anglo American Bank and through \$5 membership certificates sold to members of affiliated building trades unions. By 1925, under the astute business leadership of W. H. Bemiss and George Newsom, the Temple Association's first two secretary-building managers, all bank debt had been repaid.

In 1942 the Temple Association board of directors voted "to transfer the control of this Association from individuals to local unions and building and construction trades councils." (Minutes, page 199)

The following is a list of Temple Association officials and their term of offices:

President:

- P.H. McCarthy 1907-1922
- Larry Flaherty 1922-1926
- John T. Burns 1926-1936
- Frank McDonald 1936-1948
- Jack Smith 1948- ?

Secretary:

- W. H. Bemiss 1907-1922
- George Newsom 1922-1948
- James (Jimmy) Newsom 1948- ?

Scope and Content

The BTC files are divided into two series: the San Francisco Building Trades Council (later known as the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council) and the San Francisco Building Trades Council's Temple Association. Neither series contain complete records for their respective organization. Types of materials within the collection include articles of incorporation and by-laws, title papers and other real estate documents, membership certificates, minutes, wage rates and statistics handbooks, and financial and membership records. A detailed series list is attached.

Among the earliest materials contained in the collection are those dating from the Temple Association's 1907 incorporators' meeting and also include other documents related to the purchase of the Guerrero Street property. The most current materials are wage rates and statistics

handbooks from 1952-1976 and a per capita tax ledger from 1949-1986. Volumes one through six are Local and Office Receipts Ledgers from January 1931 to November 1940 (March-April 1935 are missing).

Bibliography

More information about the BTC can be found in:

- *The Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* by Michael Kazin (University of Illinois Press, Urbana: 1987)
- *A History of the Labor Movement in California* by Ira B. Cross (University of California, Berkeley: 1935)
- *Golden Anniversary Commemorative Edition of Organized Labor: 1900-1950*

Material Cataloged Separately

For related materials on the Temple Association's membership certificates see accession 1995/078 donated by Thelma Gilland.

1. 8x10 group photo, includes Daniel Del Carlo.
Relocated to Photograph Collection 4: Subjects A-Z (unprocessed)
2. Panorama photo, 1958 BTC meeting.
Relocated to Panorama Photographs (unprocessed)
3. Booklet, "Pilebutt: Stories & Photographs about Pile Driving."
Relocated to Ephemera-Pile Drivers, Bridge, Wharf & Dock Builders
4. By-laws of Displaymen and Show Card Writers' Union, 1937.
Relocated to Ephemera [check with Carol Cuenod where]
5. Three union pins.
Relocated to LARC Button & Badges collection

Series I: SAN FRANCISCO BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL, 1912-1986

Physical Description: 14 folders & 8 volumes

Scope and Content Note

Contains constitution and by-laws, Council meeting minutes from January 1912 to December 1912, January 1913 to September 1913, February 1914, and January 1959 to December 1960. Also included are wage rates and statistics handbooks from 1952 to 1976, two photos, and some membership records from January 1932 to November 1940 (incomplete).

Series II: SAN FRANCISCO BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL'S TEMPLE ASSOCIATION, 1906-1962

Physical Description: 6 folders & 2 volumes

Scope and Content Note

Contains articles of incorporation and by-laws, title records for Guerrero Street and Market Street properties, financial record from 1906, membership certificates, minutes from meetings of Temple Association incorporators, its board of directors, and finance committee, and a file on the murder of Dow Wilson.

San Francisco Building & Construction Trades Council

Box-folder 1/2	Constitution And By-Laws n.d.
Box-folder 1/3	Official Minutes 1912
Box-folder 1/4	Official Minutes 1913-1914
Box-folder 1/5	Official Minutes 1959-1960
Box-folder 1/6	Sec.-Treas. D. Del Carlo Biography 1951
Box-folder 1/7	Pres. J. O'Sullivan Biography 1981
Box-folder 1/8	Wage Rates & Statistics 1952-1967
Box-folder 1/9	Wage Rates & Statistics 1968-1976
Box-folder 1/10	Union Cards 1940-1981
Box-folder 1/11	Photos 1958/n.d.
Box-folder 1/12	State Btc Handbook & Directory (Copy) 1915
Box-folder 1/13	Sf Labor Council Hall Association 1931
Box-folder 1/14	East Bay Labor Journal 1950
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Local & Office Receipts, Unlabeled (Oversize) 1932-1935
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Local & Office Receipts, Book 1 (Oversize) 1935-1936
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Local & Office Receipts, Book 2 (Oversize) 1936-1938
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Local & Office Receipts, Book 3 (Oversize) 1938-1939
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Local & Office Receipts, Book 4 (Oversize) 1939-1940
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Local & Office Receipts, Book 5 (Oversize) 1940
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Per Capita Tax 1949-1986
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Cash Disbursements Journal 1930-1936
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Caricatures: John Hogg & Chris O'Callaghan, (Oversize) 1967-1971

San Francisco Building Trades Council's Temple Association

Box-folder 1/15	Articles & By-Laws 1907, 1942
Box-folder 1/16	Deed, Promissory Note, Legal 1907-1910
Box-folder 1/17	Financial Record 1906
Box-folder 1/18	Market St. Property Title Papers 1951-1962
Box-folder 1/19	Membership Certificates 1943
Box-folder 1/20	Dow Wilson 1966-1967
Box-folder 2/1	Membership Certificates (Oversize) 1907
Volume Bnd. Vol.	Minutes (Oversize) 1907-1961