



Glendale Library, Arts & Culture

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Finding Aid for the Glendale Area Weather and Natural Disasters Collection, 1914-2011

Collection Overview

Title: Glendale Area Weather and Natural Disasters Collection, 1914-2011

Dates: 1914-2011

ID: GND

Primary Creator: This collection has been assembled by Glendale Central Library staff.

Extent: 4.17 linear feet, 7 boxes, 1 flat file folder

Arrangement: Series I: Earthquake Damage, 1933-1994

Series II: Floods, Flood Control, and Landslides, 1914-2009

Series III: Weather Conditions, 1917-2011

Series IV: Wildfires, 1919-2009

Forms of Material: Paper Records, Photographic Materials

Language of materials: English

Abstract

This collection consists of materials assembled by library staff documenting natural disasters and weather-related events impacting Glendale and surrounding areas in Los Angeles County. These events include earthquakes, floods, landslides, rainstorms, windstorms, drought, snowfall, and wildfires. The collection documents damage as well as recovery efforts and projects to mitigate future disasters. Some items appear to be materials created or used by *Glendale News-Press* or *Glendale Ledger* newspaper staff during their reporting or involvement in community activities.

History

With its location near the base of the San Gabriel Mountain range and close to several major fault lines, the Glendale area has been subjected to many destructive forces of

nature. Southern California's Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers followed by damp winters can also generate conditions ripe for disaster. Hot and sometimes fierce Santa Ana winds push through canyons with the potential to spread fires, and denuded mountain soils if drenched with too much rain too quickly, are unable to absorb water.

Such was the case in 1933, when a November wildfire in the San Gabriel Mountains burned a 7.5 square mile area above La Crescenta. A month later at midnight on New Year's Eve, 13 inches of rain fell in 14 hours, and the mountain slopes unleashed 600,000 cubic yards of debris and floodwaters into canyons, rivers, channels, and streets across foothill communities and Glendale. At least 48 people died, 12 at the American Legion Hall where the Red Cross had set up a relief station. The deluge destroyed highways, bridges, citrus groves, vineyards, and 400 homes, with property damage totaling more than \$5,000,000.

Four years later, two successive Pacific storms swept through the Los Angeles Basin causing the Los Angeles, San Gabriel and Santa Ana rivers to inundate surrounding areas, destroying bridges, roads and railroads, and burying houses in as much as 9 feet of sediment. Scholars consider the 1938 Los Angeles flood as one of the largest in Southern California history, causing the deaths of 115 people and \$78 million of damage.

Periodic flooding and landslides continued to plague the area every few years with significant events in the Glendale area in 1941, 1952, and throughout the 1960s. One major episode occurred in 1978, when the Shields Canyon Debris Basin overflowed and water loaded with debris suddenly inundated the new subdivision of Pinecrest. At least 9 homes were damaged, and one family was nearly killed.

Earthquakes have also taken their toll on the Glendale area. On March 10, 1933, nine months before the New Year's Eve flood, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck the Newport-Inglewood fault with most damage to structures in Long Beach and Compton. One hundred and twenty people died with most damage to unreinforced, poorly designed buildings throughout Southern California including Glendale.

The effects of the February 9, 1971 San Fernando (or Sylmar) earthquake was also felt in Glendale. Thirty-one Glendale buildings were damaged or required demolition and many chimneys collapsed, with total losses estimated at \$2 million. Sixty-five people died in Sylmar 18 miles to the northwest, most due to the collapse of the Veteran's Hospital.

The January 17, 1994 Northridge earthquake also caused damage in Glendale. With a magnitude of 6.7, the earthquake created widespread damage throughout the Los Angeles area. Fifty-seven people died and 1500 were seriously injured. In Glendale, several parking structures were damaged including those at the Glendale City Center, the Glendale Galleria, and Glendale Fashion Center. Experts determined that earlier retrofits mitigated more extensive damage.

Although an urban environment, the proximity of Glendale to the San Gabriel and Verdugo Mountains as well as the San Rafael Hills means that its citizens must always be aware of the potential for wildfires. In 1964, 34 homes were destroyed, and 27 others were damaged when winds swept fire through the Verdugo Mountains and sections of Whiting Woods,

Chevy Chase, Glenoaks Canyon, and Eagle Rock. Governor Edmund Brown declared sections of Glendale a disaster area.

During the Big Tujunga fire of 1975, more than 47,000 acres burned over 3 days in a fire started by an illegal campfire. Homes were lost in communities north of Glendale including Sunland, Tujunga and La Crescenta.

An arsonist started the 1990 College Hill fire at the juncture of Verdugo Road and Glendale Avenue where it grew to spread across the Glendale Freeway, eventually destroying 46 houses and damaging 20 others. Property damage totaled \$50 million.

Fallen power lines are also a fire danger, and such was the cause of the San Rafael fire in 1999. Power lines fell near Descanso Gardens in La Cañada Flintridge and high winds swept embers over the Glendale freeway. Damage was contained due to diminishing winds and water drops from helicopters. Five hundred and five acres burned, but only one structure was lost.

Set by an arsonist, the 2009 Station Fire burned over 161,000 acres in the San Gabriel Mountains, reaching into areas of Altadena and La Crescenta. Two hundred homes and other structures were destroyed. Two firefighters perished when their vehicle careened off a mountain road and was overtaken by flames.

Scope and Contents

The Glendale Area Weather and Natural Disasters Collection is comprised of materials assembled by library staff over several decades documenting unusual and sometimes catastrophic weather conditions and natural events. The collection consists primarily of photographic material and newspaper clippings, but also includes several manuscripts, a few pieces of correspondence, one map, and several teletypes.

The collection is arranged in four series: Earthquakes (1933-1994), Floods, Flood Control and Landslides (1914-2009), Weather Conditions (1917-2011), and Wildfires (1919-2009).

Series I, Earthquakes, documents damage to buildings, houses, highways, and other infrastructure during some of the major earthquakes to strike the Glendale and Los Angeles area. This includes the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, the 1971 San Fernando (or Sylmar) Earthquake, and the 1994 Northridge earthquake. All documentation is in the form of photographic material and newspaper clippings except for a small series of postcards from the Long Beach event. Although primarily a record of earthquake damage, a few photographs show reconstruction efforts. Folders are arranged alphabetically by subject.

Series II, Floods, Flood Control, and Landslides, documents flood, debris, and rockslide damage to houses, residential and commercial streets, canyons, dams, and bridges in Glendale and the surrounding communities of the La Crescenta Valley and Los Angeles. Photographs and newspaper clippings not only illustrate damage, but also recovery efforts as the community salvaged vehicles, removed debris from houses and streets, and worked on flood control projects.

The series includes several original manuscripts, and some are accompanied by a copy of the published newspaper piece. A few personal papers of Glendale News-Press reporter, Mary Darrow are present, and the manuscripts may also have originated with her. The series also includes a few papers and correspondence of community organizations involved with flood control planning, and since Darrow was known to be active in the community, these may have originally been in her possession as well. One noteworthy document is a three-page telegram to Franklin Roosevelt from Congressmen W. E. Evans written nine months after the 1934 New Year's Eve tragedy urgently requesting the release of a flood control and reconstruction appropriation before the next rainy season. Also of interest are souvenir booklets of the New Year's Eve flood published in recognition of its anniversary. The series also contains original teletypes reporting on the 1978 flood to the international news agency, United Press International (UPI). A 1965 tract map of the Pickens Canyon Channel is also included. Folders are arranged alphabetically by subject.

Series III, Weather Conditions, contains items documenting the impact of unusual or extreme weather conditions. A set of photographs shows an unexpected snowfall in Glendale, and newspaper clippings report on the impact of draught conditions, record-breaking rainfall, and damage from windstorms. Folders are arranged alphabetically by subject.

Series IV, Wildfires, documents, some of the major wildfires affecting the Glendale area and surrounding foothill communities. Fires documented by most photographic material and newspaper clippings include those originating from the Angeles National Forest in 1975, 1977, and 2009, and fires with more of an immediate impact on Glendale during 1964, 1977, and 1999. Some photographs show firefighters in action and equipment staging areas. Folders are arranged alphabetically by subject.

Due to deteriorated condition and concerns for the preservation of associated materials, many newspaper clippings have been photocopied and the originals discarded.

Subjects/Access Terms

Personal Names:

Darrow, Mary

Topical Terms:

Drought -- California, Southern

Floods -- California -- Los Angeles

Northridge Earthquake, Calif., 1994

San Fernando Earthquake, Calif., 1971

Storms -- California, Southern

Weather -- California -- Glendale

Wildfires -- California -- Los Angeles

Geographic Name(s):

Glendale (Calif.)

Los Angeles County (Calif.)

Northridge (Calif.)

Long Beach (Calif.)
La Cañada (Calif.)
La Crescenta (Calif.)
San Fernando (Calif.)
San Gabriel Mountains (Calif.)

Administrative Information

Processing Information: Jacqueline Zak, 2019

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Conditions Governing Access: The collection is open for research use.

Preferred Citation: Glendale Weather and Natural Disasters Collection. Glendale Central Library History Room. Glendale Library, Arts & Culture.

Acquisition: Unknown

Related Materials: [Ruhle \(James L.\) California Earthquake Collection](#)

Collection Contents

Series I: Earthquake Damage, 1933-1994

Box 1

Folder 1: Long Beach Earthquake, Newspaper Clipping and Postcards, 1933

Folder 2: Long Beach Earthquake, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1933

Folder 3: Northridge Earthquake, Glendale Area Damage, Newspaper Clippings, 1994

Folder 4: San Fernando Earthquake, Burbank, Glendale, Sunland-Tujunga Residential Damage, Photographic Prints and Negative, 1971

Folder 5: San Fernando Earthquake, Burbank, Tujunga-La Crescenta Damage, Photographic Prints, 1971

Folder 6: San Fernando Earthquake, Freeways, Streets, Water and Power Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1971

Folder 7: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Apartment Damage, Photographic Prints, Negatives and Slides, 1971

Folder 8: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Area Storefront Damage, Photographic Prints, Negatives, and Slides, 1971

Folder 9: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Bank Building Damage, Photographic Prints, 1971

Folder 10: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Church Damage and Repair, Photographic Prints, Negatives, and Newspaper Clippings, 1971

Folder 11: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Church Damage and Repair, Photographic Prints, Negatives, and Newspaper Clippings, 1971

Folder 12: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Historic Buildings and Sites, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1971

Folder 13: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale School Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1971

Folder 14: San Fernando Earthquake, Glendale Store Interiors and Merchandise, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1971

Folder 15: San Fernando Earthquake, Olive View Hospital Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1971

Folder 16: San Fernando Earthquake, Olive View Hospital Demolition and Reconstruction, Photographic Prints, Negatives, and Newspaper Clippings, 1971-1978, 1986

Folder 17: San Fernando Earthquake, Veterans Hospital Damage, Photographic Prints, 1971

Box 2

Folder 1: San Fernando Earthquake, Landslides, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1971

Folder 2: San Fernando Earthquake, Negatives, 1971

Folder 3: San Fernando Earthquake, Newspaper Clippings, 1971

Folder 4: San Fernando Earthquake, Van Norman Dam Damage, Photographic Prints, 1971

Box 7

Folder 1: Long Beach Earthquake Damage, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, March 1933

Flat File 1

Item 1: "Feb 9 Earthquake Pictorial Review," Oversize Newspaper Clipping, 1971
February 28

Series II: Floods, Flood Control, and Landslides, 1914-2009

Box 2

Folder 5: Ballona Creek Flooding, Photographic Prints, 1927-1935

Folder 6: Darrow, Mary, Flood Control Correspondence, 1927-1938

Folder 7: Darrow, Mary, Flood Related Personal Papers, Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Print, 1934-1958

Folder 8: Darrow, Mary, Flood Story Manuscripts, ca. 1936

Folder 9: Flood Control, Community Action Correspondence, Reports, Broadsides, 1919-1984

Folder 10: Flood Control, Dunsmuir Debris Basin, Community Meeting Papers, 1978

Folder 11: Flood Control, Dunsmuir Debris Basin, Newspaper Clippings, 1976-1978

Folder 12: Flood Control Article, "History of Flood Control in the Los Angeles County Drainage Area," by Stephen R. Van Wormer, Spring 1991

Folder 13: Flood Control Article, "Storm Drain Project Will Protect Glendale, Burbank," by Ross J. Teague, 1963 June 14

Folder 14: Flood Control Projects, Newspaper Clippings, 1924-1961

Folder 15: Flood Control Projects, Newspaper Clippings, 1978-1999

Folder 16: Flood Control Projects, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1937, 1980

Folder 17: Flood History, Book Excerpt, "Floods in a Desert," by Carey McWilliams, 1983

Folder 18: Flood History, Book Excerpt, "History of Floods in Southern California," by Harold C. Troxell, 1942

Folder 19: Flood History, Newspaper Clippings, 1938-2005

Folder 20: Flood of 1927, Newspaper Clippings, 1927

Folder 21: Flood of 1927, 1931, Pacific Ave. and Los Angeles River Damage, Photographic Prints and Negative, 1927-1931

Folder 22: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, American Legion Hall and Rosemont Ave., Photographic Prints, Negatives, and Newspaper Clippings, 1934, 1967, 1972, 1977

Folder 23: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, American Red Cross Newspaper Releases and Resolutions, 1934

Folder 24: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Anniversary Souvenir Booklets and Newspaper Clippings, 1934, 1959-2007

Folder 25: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Aerial Views, Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 26: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Bridge and Culvert Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Box 3

Folder 1: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Citizens Committee, Correspondence and Resolutions, 1934

Folder 2: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Dams and Debris Basin Damage and Recovery, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Folder 3: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Flood Victims, Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Print of Eugenia Emma Scully, 1934, 1940

Folder 4: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Glenoaks Blvd. Damage, Photographic Prints (some photocopied), Negatives, and Slide, 1934

Folder 5: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Hall Beckley Wash Damage, Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 6: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Honolulu Ave. Damage, Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 7: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Landslides, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Folder 8: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Newspaper Clippings, 1934

Folder 9: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Paul Ayers Family Narrative, Correspondence, and Photographic Reproductions, 2009

Folder 10: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Photo Essay of Flood Damage and Current Structures, Photographic Reproductions, 2000 August 25

Folder 11: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Postcard Series, 1934

Folder 12: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Recovery Operations, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Folder 13: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Report, "Flood in La Cañada Valley, California, January 1, 1934," by Harold C. Troxell and John Q. Peterson, 1937

Folder 14: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Residential and Commercial Street Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Folder 15: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Residential Damage, Arden, Chevy Chase, and Geneva Streets, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Folder 16: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Residential Damage, Foothill and Ocean View Blvds., Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 17: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Residential Damage, Pickens Canyon, 1934

Folder 18: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Residential Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1934

Folder 19: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Residential Interior Damage, Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 20: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, River and Channel Damage, Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 21: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Vehicle Damage and Recovery Photographic Prints, 1934

Folder 22: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Verdugo Wash Damage, Photographic Prints, 1934

Box 4

Folder 1: Flood of 1938, Article, "When Disaster Strikes," Summer 1938

Folder 2: Flood of 1938, Cañada Bridge Damage, Photographic Prints, 1938

Folder 3: Flood of 1938, Newspaper Clippings, 1938

Folder 4: Flood of 1938, Residential and Street Damage Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1938

Folder 5: Flood of 1938, Verdugo Wash Damage and Landscapes, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1938

Folder 6: Flood of 1941, Chevy Chase Dr. and Cross Street Damage, Acetate Negatives, 1941

Folder 7: Flood of 1941, Chevy Chase Dr. and Cross Street Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1941

Folder 8: Flood of 1941, Street and Canyon Damage, Photographic Prints, 1941

Folder 9: Flood of 1952, Brand Park Damage, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1952

Folder 10: Flood of 1952, Street and Other Property Damage, Negatives, 1952

Folder 11: Flood of 1952, Street and Other Property Damage, Photographic Prints, 1952

Folder 12: Flooding and Landslides, Newspaper Clippings, 1936-2005

Folder 13: Flooding and Landslides of 1962-1964, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1962-1964

Folder 14: Flooding and Landslides of 1965-1966, Photographic Prints and Slides, 1965-1966

Box 5

Folder 1: Flooding and Landslides of 1969, Big Tujunga Canyon and Residential Area Damage, Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Prints, 1969

Folder 2: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, *Ledger* Staff Manuscripts and Newspaper Clippings, 1978

Folder 3: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Newspaper Clippings, February 1978

Folder 4: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Newspaper Clippings, 1978 March 1-8

Folder 5: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Newspaper Clippings, 1978 March 11-29

Folder 6: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Newspaper Clippings, April-September 1978

Folder 7: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Newspaper Clippings and Associated Photographic Prints, February 1978

Folder 8: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Newspaper Clippings and Associated Photographic Prints, March-September, 1978

Folder 9: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Photographic Negatives, 1978

Folder 10: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Report on Call for Volunteers, to Don Carpenter from Betty Shermer, 1978

Folder 11: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Residential Areas, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1978

Folder 12: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, Washes and Canyons, Photographic Prints, 1978

Folder 13: Flooding and Landslides of 1980, Residential Areas, Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Prints, 1980

Folder 14: Flooding and Landslides of 1980-1983, Washes and Canyons, Photographic Prints, 1980-1983

Box 7

Folder 2: Flood of 1914, Oversize Newspaper Clippings (Photocopies), February 1914

Folder 3: Flood of 1934, New Year's Eve, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1934-1984

Folder 4: Flood of 1938, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1938 March 3-13

Folder 5: Flood of 1938, Oversize Newspaper Clippings (Photocopies), 1938 March 2-9

Folder 6: Flooding and Landslides, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1943, 1960-1969

Folder 7: Flooding and Landslides, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1978-1992

Flat File 1

Item 2: Flooding and Landslides of 1978, UPI Teletypes, 1978 February 10-14

Item 3: Pickens Canyon Channel, Pickens Canyon, Tract Map, 1965 May 25

Series III. Weather Conditions, 1917-2011

Box 6

Folder 1: Drought Conditions, Oroville Dam, Photographic Prints, 1977-1978

Folder 2: Drought Conditions and Heat Waves, Newspaper Clippings, 1985-2007

Folder 3: Drought Conditions and Poetry, "A Prayer for Rain," by John Steven McGroarty, 1933

Folder 4: Drought Conditions and Rainmaking, Charles Mallory Hatfield, Newspaper

Clippings, 1924, 1958

Folder 5: Drought Conditions and Rainmaking, "Rain at the Drop of a Hatfield," *The Californians*, by June Oxford, 1988 May-June

Folder 6: Rainfall and Rainstorms, Newspaper Clippings, 1917-2000

Folder 7: Snowfall, Aerial Views, Photographic Prints and Newspaper Clipping, 1949

Folder 8: Snowfall, Calendar Page Memento, 1949

Folder 9: Snowfall, City and Residential Areas, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1949

Folder 10: Snowfall, Mountain Views, Photographic Prints, 1949, 1980, 1982

Folder 11: Snowfall, Photographic Prints, 1957

Folder 12: Snowfall and Freezing Temperatures, Newspaper Clippings, 1920-2007

Folder 13: Weather Forecasts, Newspaper Clippings, 1922-2005

Folder 14: Windstorms, Newspaper Clippings, 1936-2008

Folder 15: Windstorms, Photographic Prints, 1982

Box 7

Folder 8: Weather Conditions, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1939-2011

Flat File 1

Item 4: "El Nino Special Report," Oversize Newspaper Clipping, 1997 November 1-2

Series IV. Wildfires, 1919-2009

Box 6

Folder 16: Angeles Forest Fire, Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Prints, 1977

Folder 17: Big Tujunga Fire, Newspaper Clippings, 1975

Folder 18: Big Tujunga Fire, Photographic Prints, 1975

Folder 19: Big Tujunga Fire, Photographic Prints and Negatives, 1975

Folder 20: Big Tujunga Fire, Reporter's Notes, 1975

Folder 21: Big Tujunga Fire Regrowth, Photographic Prints, 1977

Folder 22: Chevy Chase and Whiting Woods Fires, Newspaper Clippings, 1964

Folder 23: Fire History, Notes and Newspaper Clippings, 1964-1999

Folder 24: Glendale Area Fires, Newspaper Clippings and Postcard, 1919-2001

Folder 25: "Griffith Park Fire of 1933," by Abraham Hoffman, ca. 1977

Folder 26: La Tuna Canyon Fire, Newspaper Clippings and Photographic Prints, 1977

Folder 27: San Rafael Fire, Newspaper Clippings, 1999

Folder 28: Station Fire, Correspondence to Council Members and Newspaper Clipping, 2009

Box 7

Folder 9: Big Tujunga Fire, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, November-December 1975

Folder 10: Glendale Area Fires, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1945, 1964, 1965

Folder 11: Glendale Area Fires, Oversize Newspaper Clippings, 1977-2009