



FINDING AID

MERLE JANICE SCHROEDER PAPERS

1936-1939

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Yellowstone National Park Archives
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Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168

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HISTORY

Merle Janice Schroeder was born in North Dakota March 7, 1912, and deceased on January 19, 1982, in Salem, Oregon. In the Oregon Death Index she is referred to as Jan and the Social Security Index has her listed as Jani. According to the 1920 United States Federal Census, her father, H. E. (Henry) Schroeder was born in Minnesota and worked as a bank cashier. Henry's father was from Crimea and mother from Russia and they both spoke Belarusian, an eastern Slavic language, while Henry spoke English. Merle's mother, Laura Schroeder, was born in 1884, in Wisconsin, where her parents were also born. According to the 1925 North Dakota Census, the family lived in New England, North Dakota and Merle's brother, Joel, was five years old at the time.

Merle was a very outgoing and musically inclined person. From a newspaper article found in the 1937 album it appears Merle worked as a music teacher in Winship Elementary School in Grand Forks County North Dakota prior to her work and possibly in the winters between working summers at Yellowstone National Park for the Yellowstone Park Company. Merle worked as a Lodge Maid or "Pillow Puncher" at Canyon Lodge during the summers from 1936-1939. She was also active in the talent shows and attending the orchestra. Her daughter describes her as an avid soprano singer. Merle used blank Yellowstone journals to create remembrances of each summer by adding photographs and having her friends sign them. During 1936, she must have met to-be President Gerald Ford while he was working as an NPS ranger greeting VIP's. In her 1936 album he signed it, Gerry Ford, with an affectionate message. The donor correspondence mentions Merle's brother having worked at Yellowstone as well, but no name or dates were included. In the 1939 album, several entries mention her leaving to go to Juneau, Alaska to teach music. After leaving Yellowstone in 1939 and moving to Alaska, she married Jack Pitts and they had two children. Rolfe Forrest Pitts was born in Juneau, Alaska on July 20, 1943. Their daughter Pamela Gay Pitts (Pamela Duvall) was born in Fairbanks, Alaska on August 21, 1947. Pamela now lives in Oregon.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

MERLE JANICE SCHROEDER PAPERS 1936-1939 (bulk dates: 1936-1939)

CATALOG NUMBER YELL 133749

VOLUME 0.75 LF

DESCRIPTION This manuscript collection consists of documentation collected by Merle Janice Schroeder during the summers of 1936-1939 while working as a "Pillow Puncher" for the Yellowstone Park Company. The main body of the collection consists of 4 scrapbooks designed and created to function as yearbooks. Each contains original and published photographic black and white prints. Also included in the books are handwritten sentiments by her friends and coworkers. The writers signed their names along with their hometown and state. Often, part of the signature describes their job position. For instance, "Savages" or "Pack Rat" provides more information about the specific staff members that knew Schroeder. Other memorabilia include a 1938 contract with the Yellowstone Park Company, YPC handouts, Gene Quaw sheet music, staff photographs, loose photographs of Schroeder and coworkers (possibly from albums and some of which are labeled with names), one Haynes postcard written to "Pillow Puncher" from Dick, and published prints of Grand Teton National Park. Images include identified locales such as: Lower Falls Viewpoint, Artist Point, Canyon area buildings, Chittenden Bridge and surrounding area, Golden Gate, Grand Teton National Park. Other themes include: employees in costumes, YPC Canyon staff, possibly a talent show in Canyon Lodge, employee plays and parades, Canyon Orchestra, 4 prints appear to be of Gerald Ford in uniform in the 1936 album, other rangers in uniform, two men rope climbing and summiting a peak, and bears near trash cans.

ORGANIZATION Arranged by document type and then chronologically in ascending order.

PROVENANCE Materials were donated to Yellowstone National Park by Pamela Duvall in 1997.

RESTRICTIONS NO

ASSOCIATED MATERIALS GENE QUAW Sheet Music: "Yellowstone" 1937 (YELL 126828 & YELL 126829),
Yellowstone National Park Museum Collections

Gene Quaw Canyon concert program 1938
(Call #: ART-MUSIC(QUAW)),
Yellowstone National Park Research Library

CONTAINER LIST

File Unit Nbr	Title
Box 1	
1	1936 Album
2	1937 Album
3	1938 Album
4	1939 Album
Box 2	
5	Correspondence and Memorabilia
6	Prints, Negative, and Postcard