
ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

949 East Second Street
Tucson, AZ 85719

Library and Archives
(520) 617-1157

ahsref@azhs.gov

MS 1198
Fenster School Collection
1932-1983

DESCRIPTION

The collection contains correspondence, publications, scrapbooks and photographs from three Tucson private boarding schools that were located in the Sabino Canyon area during the mid-20th century. The bulk of the material is from Southern Arizona School for Boys, and, to a lesser extent, materials from Fenster Ranch School and Valley School for Girls.

7 boxes, 5 linear ft.

RELATED MATERIAL

Ephemera file: Places—Arizona—Tucson—Schools—Fenster

ACQUISITION

Donated by Don Saffer of Fenster School in 1994

ACCESS

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

COPYRIGHT

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society - Tucson, Archives Department.

PROCESSING

The collection was processed by Aubrey Carrier, intern, June – July 2001. (Box rearrangement in May 2009.)

ARRANGEMENT

The collection is arranged into five series: 1/Correspondence and alumni materials, 1954-1978. 2/Newsclippings and other publicity, ca. 1950s-1980s. 3/Publications and newsletters, ca. 1930s-1970s. 4/Scrapbooks and albums, ca. 1930s-1970s. 5/Photographs, ca. 1930s-1970s.

HISTORICAL NOTE

George and Kitty Fenster came to Tucson from New York with their two children, Kenneth and Beverly, in 1941 in search of a more accommodating climate for George's rheumatoid arthritis. George held a job as a civilian accountant, while Kitty worked as a substitute teacher for Tucson Unified School District. In 1944 the two established their own private, coeducational boarding school for children with health problems.

Although only one student attended the inaugural year, Fenster Ranch School grew until it was accepting students from all over the nation and the world. Southwestern artist Ted DeGrazia painted murals and taught art there before he became well-known. In 1965 the Fensters relinquished ownership of the school and it became a non-profit corporation, although the Fenster family continued their involvement as members of the Board of Directors. The school's title was shortened to "Fenster School," as the "Ranch" designation no longer applied due to urban sprawl. In 1974 the school relocated its headquarters to the former site of another private boarding school, Southern Arizona School for Boys (S.A.S.), which had closed the previous year. Fenster incorporated students from S.A.S. and the nearby Valley School for Girls.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Although the collection is associated by name with the Fenster School, most of the materials it contains are from the Southern Arizona School for Boys, which closed in 1973 after a fire. Much of the alumni and correspondence is addressed to Mrs. John Walsh, the S.A.S. alumni secretary. Notable S.A.S. figures include Captain and Mrs. Faigrieve, the headmaster of S.A.S. and his wife; S.A.S. teachers such as Mr. Felty, Mr. Ormsby, and Mr. Everitt; and Mr. Whitcombe, headmaster of the neighboring Valley School for Girls.

The collection contains many news clippings related to S.A.S., Fenster, Valley School, and the numerous other private schools that flourished in Tucson during the 1930s-1950s. Also present are several student-run publications from S.A.S., as well as nearly every issue of "The Spur," the school's official newsletter, from 1939-1970.

The scrapbooks contain mostly news clippings and S.A.S. sample applications, report cards, etc. Most of the photographs and albums are undated, although Album 1 contains S.A.S. graduation photos from 1932-1971. The remainder of the photographs depict S.A.S. students both on and off campus, hiking and exploring the Sabino Canyon area, and numerous equestrian and polo scenes.

In addition to the S.A.S. materials, news articles and advertisements for Fenster School and Valley School for Girls are also included, as well as other Tucson area private schools such as Brandes, Treehaven, and Arizona Sunshine School.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box 1

Series 1: Correspondence and Alumni Materials

- f. 1-2 S.A.S. Alumni correspondence, 1965-1978
- f. 3 S.A.S. Reunion information, 1978-1980
- f. 4 S.A.S. Faculty correspondence, 1970-1978
- f. 5 S.A.S. Student and Faculty lists, 1954-1963
- f. 6 S.A.S. Alumnus Richard G. O'Connor materials, ca. 1950s-1970s
- f. 7 Valley School for Girls materials, ca. 1950s
- f. 8 Correspondence between Mrs. Walsh and Mrs. Whitcombe, 1977-1978
- f. 9 Valley School Alumnae information and correspondence, 1973-1977
- f. 10 Valley School information cards, ca. 1960s

Series 2: Newsclippings and other Publicity

- f. 11 Alumni-related news clippings, 1970-1983
- f. 12 Newsclippings related to S.A.S./Sabino Canyon area, 1954-1986
- f. 13 Newsclippings on private schools in Tucson, 1949-1954
- f. 14 Newsclippings related to private schools in Tucson, ca. 1950s (undated)
- f. 15 Advertisements and publicity for Fenster Ranch School, ca. 1950s
- f. 16 Advertisements and publicity for other Tucson private schools (Brandes, Treehaven, S.A.S., etc.), ca. 1950s
- f. 17 Advertisement Analyses, ca. 1950s

Series 3: Publications and Newsletters

- f. 18 S.A.S. Alumni Poetry
"Sunshine News," S.A.S. student-run publication, 1933-1935
- f. 19 "The S.A.S. Free Press," student-run publication, 1945

Box 2

- f. 20 "The Thunderbird Report," S.A.S. student-run publication, 1955-1956
- f. 21 "The Progress," S.A.S. student-run publication, 1965
- f. 22-27 "The Spur," S.A.S. school newsletter, 1939-1970
- f. 28 "The Lariat and Spur," school newsletter for S.A.S. and Fenster School, 1975-1978

Series 4: Scrapbooks and Albums

- f. 29 S.A.S. Scrapbook, 1949-1955
- f. 30 S.A.S. Scrapbook, ca. 1950s
- f. 31 S.A.S. Scrapbook news clippings regarding alumni and other related subjects, ca. 1950s-1980s (bulk 1970s-1980s)

(See Oversize for the remainder of Series 4)

Series 5: Photographs

- f. 32 S.A.S. Photographs, identified, 1930-1979 (bulk 1930s)
- f. 33 S.A.S. Photographs, unidentified, 1934-1944 (mostly undated)

Box 3

- f. 34-37 Album 1 School Photographs of S.A.S. graduates, 1932-1971
 - Group Photos of Graduates by Year
 - Some Individual Images

Oversized Boxes

Box 4

- Album 2 S.A.S. Photographs - 1939
 - School Facilities and Staff
 - Student Activities and Classes
 - Swimming, Tennis, Horseback Riding, Classroom Scenes
 - Many Images with Captions

Box 5

- Album 3 S.A.S. Photographs
 - Some Color/Mostly Black & White Images
 - School Activities and Students
 - Some Images Labeled 1939-1940
 - Several School Pamphlets
 - Tennis, Horseback Riding, Classroom Scenes, Group Images

Box 6

- Photo Album 4 #66097 S.A.S. Photographs
 - 9 Color Photos of Facilities
 - 1931 - 1932
- Scrapbook 5 (Formally #1) S.A.S. Materials, ca. 1930s-1940s (Formally Located in Box 5)
 - Clippings, Programs, and Pamphlets for School Administrative Purposes
 - Pamphlet on Polo Field Activities and Gymkhana for 1932
- Scrapbook 6 (Formally #2) S.A.S. Materials, ca. 1930s-1940s
 - Invitation Announcements/Printed Stationary Samples
 - School Administration Forms
 - Application Form for Admission to School
 - School Program Information – 1941
 - School Brochure – 1937/1938
 - School History - 1938

Box 7

Album 7 (Formally #4) S.A.S Photographs (Formally Located in Box 6)

Student Activities and Facilities – 1934 – 1939

Some Student Photos Identified with Names

Desert Scenes

Rodeo Activities and Images

Album 8 (Formally #66098) Fenster School Photos (Formally Located in Box 6)

Color Images of Fenster Coed School – 1976

Student Classroom Activities and Social Events

Swimming, Tennis, Cooking Classes, Classroom Scenes

All Images Captioned

Box 8

Loose album pages #9, S.A.S. photographs ca. 1940s (Formally Located in Box 7)

Images from Printed Pamphlets or Brochures of School

Facility Members

Student Activities and Events

Many Students and Facility Identified by Name