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Guide to the International Imperial Court System Collection

GEN MSS 1840



by Brooke McManus

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 1840

CREATOR: International Imperial Court System

TITLE: International Imperial Court System collection

DATES: 1971-2008

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.42 linear feet (4 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English (Latin script)

SUMMARY: The collection consists of programs, fliers and handbills, tickets, leaflets, certificates, medals, pins, and other ephemera and memorabilia related to the LGBTQ group the International Court System (ICS), also known as the International Imperial Court System. Materials primarily document activities of individual courts in California and the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s and 1980s, including annual Coronation Balls, drag shows, and other charitable or social events.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.internationalimperialcourt>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.internationalimperialcourt>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Langdon Manor Books, 2017, 2019.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research

Conditions Governing Use

The International Imperial Court System Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

International Imperial Court System Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections as they are acquired, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection or revisions in arrangement and description.

International Imperial Court System

The International Court System (ICS), also known as the International Imperial Court System, is one of the oldest and largest LGBTQ organizations in the world. The court system was founded in San Francisco in 1965 by José Sarria, the first openly gay candidate for public office in the United States. In 1962, Sarria and a group of gay bar owners formed the Tavern Guild in response to police harassment of their businesses. In 1963, the Guild held the Beaux Arts Costume Ball, the first large public drag ball in San Francisco; several years later Sarria was crowned Queen of the Ball, and after he declared himself Empress, the coronation became tradition and the court system developed. As of 2022, the ICS consists of a network of more than 65 individual charitable nonprofit organizations in North America, with the Imperial Council of San Francisco considered the "Mother Court." Each court, or chapter, conducts fundraising events throughout the year to support LGBTQ and other causes, the most notable being their annual Coronation Balls. Courts generally crown two monarchs during Coronation Balls who serve for a year and help stage charity events that often feature drag performers. Most courts are known as empires, although some are designated baronies or ducal courts; the latter is used when a chapter's geographical territory overlaps with an established court, such as the Ducal Court of San Francisco.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of programs, fliers and handbills, tickets, leaflets, certificates, medals, pins, and other ephemera and memorabilia related to the LGBTQ group the International Court System (ICS), also

known as the International Imperial Court System. Materials primarily document activities of individual courts in California and the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s and 1980s, including annual Coronation Balls, drag shows, and other charitable or social events. Among the courts represented are the Imperial Council of San Francisco, Grand Ducal Council of San Francisco, Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Oregon, and the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree Empire (Washington). Files for the Rose Court include a guide to Portland's court system by Rose Emperor VI Tom Terrific. Raintree Empire records contain handwritten speeches by Empress III Ronni Bee and Emperor III Jim, as well as copies of the group's articles of incorporation and bylaws, bank records, circular letters, mailing lists, and a miniature leather vest. The collection further contains programs for the Tavern Guild of San Francisco's Beaux Arts Ball and events of other organizations affiliated with the ICS, including the gay motorcycle clubs Barbary Coasters and Inter-Club Fund of San Francisco, and the Black LGBTQ groups United Ebony Council of Seattle and United Ebony Kingdom (Portland, Oregon). Also present are certificates and medals given to winners of the Billy DeFrank Camp Awards; general ephemera such as a pamphlet on venereal disease issued by the Gay Community Center of Seattle and a National Gay Task Force Women's Caucus brochure; and newspapers serving LGBTQ communities, including the *NW Fountain* and *Gay Times*.

Arrangement

Organized into two series: I. Ephemera and Papers, 1971-2008. II. Pins and Medals, 1973-2003.

Collection Contents

Series I: Ephemera and Papers, 1971–2008

2.42 linear feet (3 boxes)

This series primarily contains programs for annual Coronation Balls held by chapters of the International Court System, in addition to related fliers, handbills, leaflets, tickets, and other ephemera. Programs typically feature messages from current monarchs, campaign ads by candidates running for monarch, photographs of drag performers and other balls or parties, and gay and gay-friendly business advertising. Included are a small amount of administrative and financial papers of the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree Empire and handwritten speeches by Empress Ronni Bee and Emperor Jim. The series also contains materials related to events and organizations such as the San Francisco Beaux Arts Ball, Closet Ball, Billy DeFrank Camp Awards, Barbary Coasters, Inter-Club Fund of San Francisco, United Ebony Council of Seattle, and United Ebony Kingdom. Also present are general ephemera concerning the LGBTQ community.

Arranged by state or country and court, with materials not identified with a particular ICS chapter filed at the end of the sequence.

	Alaska	
b. 1, f. 1	Imperial Court of All Alaska	1976–2004
	California	
b. 1, f. 2	Court of Wine and Roses (Sonoma County)	1978–1979
b. 1, f. 3	Empire of Santa Monica	1985–1987
b. 1, f. 4	Grand Cypress Empire de Monterey	1978
	Grand Ducal Council of San Francisco	
b. 1, f. 5	Cinder Fella Ball program	1972
b. 1, f. 6-7	Coronation Ball programs	1974–1997
b. 1, f. 8	Fliers	1980-1988, undated
b. 1, f. 9	"The history of the Grand Ducal Council de San Francisco," typed supplement to Grand Ducal Ball program	1984
b. 1, f. 10	Imperial Casa de San Jose Empire	1978–2004
	Imperial Council of San Francisco	
b. 1, f. 11	"Royal Scandals" programs	1972–1973
b. 1, f. 12-18	Coronation Ball programs	1972–2008
b. 1, f. 19	Fliers and tickets	1973–2007
b. 1, f. 20	Coronation week booklets	1975–1980
b. 1, f. 21	"A Christmas Special" (Benefit: Toys for Kids)	1976

California > Imperial Council of San Francisco (continued)

b. 1, f. 22	Souvenirs of Emperor Hector's Tribute to Emperor Norton	1977
b. 1, f. 23	40th anniversary program	2005
b. 1, f. 24	Imperial Court de San Diego	1973-1984
b. 1, f. 25	Imperial Court of Los Angeles and Hollywood	1978-1984
b. 1, f. 26	Imperial Court of Sacramento (Court of the Great Northwest Imperial Empire)	1979-1980
	Imperial Dove Court de Fresno	
b. 1, f. 27	Coronation Ball programs	1978-1986
b. 1, f. 28	Fliers and tickets	1978-2004
b. 2, f. 29	Imperial High Court of the Peninsula	1971
b. 2, f. 30	Imperial Star Empire	1987
b. 2, f. 31	International Imperial Court of Long Beach	1973, 1988
b. 2, f. 32	Orange County Imperial Court	1999-2004
	Owl Empire of Stanislaus County	
b. 2, f. 33	Coronation Ball programs	1977-1989
b. 2, f. 34	Fliers, booklet, and tickets	1977-1979, undated
	Canada	
	Dogwood Monarchist Society	
b. 2, f. 35	Coronation Ball programs	1974-2001
b. 2, f. 36	"A Fellini Fantasy" - Coronation Ball program, schedule, and tickets	1978
b. 2, f. 37	Imperial Barony of Winnipeg and All of Manitoba	1997
b. 2, f. 38	Imperial Sovereign Court of the Chinook Arch	1979
	Colorado	
b. 2, f. 39-40	Imperial Court of the Rocky Mountain Empire	1978-2004
	Hawaii	
b. 2, f. 41	Imperial Sovereign Court of Hawai'i	1984, 2002
	Nevada	
b. 2, f. 42	Imperial Royal Sovereign Court of the Desert Empire	2007
	Silver Dollar Court	
b. 2, f. 43	Coronation Ball programs	1977-1983

Nevada > Silver Dollar Court (continued)

b. 2, f. 44	Leaflets, certificates, fliers, and tickets	1985–2007
Oregon		
Imperial Sovereign Court of the Emerald Empire		
b. 2, f. 45-46	Coronation Ball programs	1976–1982
b. 2, f. 47	Fliers and tickets	1977–1982
Imperial Sovereign Court of the Willamette Empire		
b. 2, f. 48	Coronation Ball programs	1978–1982
b. 2, f. 49	Fliers and tickets	1978–1982
Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Oregon		
b. 2, f. 50-51	Coronation Ball programs	1973–1997
b. 2, f. 52	"I Love Portland: A Guide to the Portland Court System and its Organization" by Tom Terrific	circa 1975
b. 2, f. 53	Leaflets, fliers, and tickets	1976–2004
b. 2, f. 54	"I Am...I Said," campaign brochure by Tom Terrific (Rose Emperor VI)	circa 1979
Utah		
b. 2, f. 55	Royal Court of the Golden Spike Empire	2004
Washington		
b. 2, f. 56	Imperial Sovereign Court of the Evergreen Empire	1985
Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree Empire		
b. 2, f. 57	Articles of incorporation and bylaws	circa 1975-1976
b. 2, f. 58	Certificates Awards and recognition granted to and by Raintree monarchs including Ronni Bee, Gart, and Summer Breeze.	1977–1980
b. 2, f. 59	Fliers, tickets, program supplements, and circular letters	1977–1980
b. 2, f. 60	Invitations and circulars from other courts	1977–1978
b. 2, f. 61	U.S. and Canada mailing lists	circa 1977-1978
b. 2, f. 62	Coronation Ball programs	1978–1983
b. 2, f. 63	H.I.M. Tree Empress III Ronni Bee and H.I.M. Rain Emperor III Jim: autograph manuscript speeches, business card, typed letter by Ronni Bee, order of events for Coronation Ball	1978
b. 2, f. 64	Peoples National Bank account	1978

Washington > Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree Empire (continued)

b. 2, f. 65	Miniature white leather vest "Raintree Empire" is handwritten in ink on front lapels. The back of the vest features a drawing of half an evergreen or spruce tree, with 1978/79 written vertically down one side, and "98660" on the other side. "Van, Wash" is written below.	circa 1978-1979
b. 2, f. 66	Imperial Sovereign Court of Spokane	1978
Imperial Sovereign Court of Seattle & the Olympic and Rainier Empire		
b. 2, f. 67-68	Coronation Ball programs	1976-1983
b. 2, f. 69	Fliers, leaflets, and tickets	1977-1982
b. 3, f. 70	AIC&O General Meeting notes Includes references to multiple California courts, coronations, and LGBTQ charitable events. AIC&O may have been an umbrella organization affiliated with the ICS; Billy DeFrank was president.	1978-1979
b. 3, f. 71-72	Barbary Coasters "Academy Awards" programs	1971-1977
b. 3, f. 73	Beaux Arts Ball programs	1977-1984
b. 3, f. 74	Billy DeFrank Camp Awards	1978
b. 3, f. 75	Closet Ball programs	1976, 1996
b. 3, f. 76	The Crown Princess Presentation Ball program	1972
b. 3, f. 77	"Don't Give Him Anything But Love: What You Should Know About VD," pamphlet created by the Gay Community Center, Seattle	circa 1974-1975
b. 3, f. 78	The Dorian Group brochure	1976
b. 3, f. 79	<i>Gay Times</i>	1987
b. 3, f. 80	Inter-Club Fund of San Francisco "Casualty Capers" and "On the Town" programs	1973-1984
b. 3, f. 81	"The Maltese Cross," monthly publication of the Knights of Malta - Jet Chapter, Seattle	1978
b. 3, f. 82	<i>NW Fountain</i>	1978
b. 3, f. 85	<i>Reno Tahoe Outlands</i>	2002
b. 3, f. 83	United Ebony Council of Seattle Celebration '79 program	1979
b. 3, f. 84	United Ebony Kingdom (Portland) Installation programs	1977-1979
b. 3, f. 86	Various fliers and leaflets, some unidentified Includes a copy of the Metropolis <i>Gayzette</i> and flier for a Nina Hagen concert.	1979-2004
b. 3, f. 87	Various tickets and cards, some unidentified	1978-1979
b. 3, f. 88	Women's Caucus of the National Gay Task Force brochure	undated

Series II: Pins and Medals, 1973–2003*1 linear foot (1 box)*

This series consists of pinback buttons and medals commemorating Coronation Balls and campaigns for monarchs of the International Court System and the United Ebony Kingdom, as well as the Billy DeFrank Camp Awards Ball. Among the courts represented are the Imperial Council of San Francisco, Imperial Court de San Diego, Owl Empire of Stanislaus County, Imperial Dove Court de Fresno, Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree Empire, Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Oregon, Silver Dollar Court, Royal Court of the Golden Spike Empire, and Imperial Sovereign Court of the Chinook Arch. A few pieces are made of enamel or glass and designed in shapes such as a heart or pair of red lips.

b. 3, f. 89	Inkjet printout of photographs showing selected pins and medals	undated
b. 4	Pins and medals	1973–2003

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Genres / Formats

Buttons (information artifacts)
Medals
Memorabilia
Printed ephemera
Souvenir programs

Subjects

African American sexual minorities
Balls (Parties)
Drag balls
Drag balls -- California
Drag balls -- Oregon
Drag balls -- Washington
Drag queens
Drag queens -- California
Drag queens -- Oregon
Drag queens -- Washington
Drag shows
Drag shows -- California
Drag shows -- Oregon
Drag shows -- Washington
Female impersonators
Gay activists
Gay clubs
Gay community -- California
Gay community -- Oregon
Gay community -- Societies and clubs
Gay community -- Washington
Gay culture
Gay culture -- California
Gay culture -- Oregon
Gay culture -- Washington
Gay liberation movement -- United States
Gay motorcycle clubs
Gender expression
Gender nonconformity
LGBTQ resource
Nonprofit organizations
Sexual minorities
Sexual minorities -- Societies and clubs
Sexual minority culture

Gay Community Center (Seattle, Wash.)
Grand Ducal Council of San Francisco
Imperial Council of San Francisco
Imperial Sovereign Court of the Raintree
Empire
Imperial Sovereign Rose Court of Oregon
Inter-Club Fund of San Francisco
International Court System
International Imperial Court System
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (U.S.)
Tavern Guild of San Francisco
United Ebony Council of Seattle
United Ebony Kingdom (Portland, Ore.)

Names

Bee, Roni
DeFrank, Billy
Lien, Jim (James R.)
Terrific, Tom

Corporate Bodies

Barbary Coasters Motorcycle Club