Biography

Idah Sidonia Ambuhl Pratt Foster was born in Farina, IL in 1884. Early on, as a young woman, Pratt lived in New Orleans and Dallas. Very little is known of her early life until she moved to San Francisco at age 24, with two small sons and her first husband, Charles F. Pratt Sr.

After she divorced Charles, Pratt began to publish and edit a small paper in Redondo Beach, CA, called the Redondo Breeze around 1915. She also wrote for the San Francisco Times on occasion. After an article appears in a local paper, the Examiner featured a photo of her working at her printing press and mentioned her ownership of the newspaper; she became a local celebrity, receiving 30 marriage proposals. Also in 1915, Pratt was in charge of the model kitchen and laundry exhibition installed in the Home Economy Building at the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego.

Idah Pratt was always involved in women’s rights. She became active in the referendum drive to win the vote for women in California and the referendum was finally passed in 1916, the year she met and married Carol Howe Foster who was an English instructor at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. They were married in Alexandria, VA after she had come to DC to take a course at the National Service School for Women through the Red Cross.

Eventually, her husband became consul in Vienna, Austria in 1919. He also served as U.S. Consul General in Brazil and South Africa. In the mid-1940s, always the activist, Pratt worked for passage of legislation benefiting consular officers’ widows for whom, at that point, there were no annuity arrangements. Her husband died in 1957, but she still remained active in her community.

At 81, she became a member of the National Women’s party and was elected to the National Council in 1965. She eventually became the National Finance Chairman. Idah Pratt died at age 83 in 1967 in Maryland.

Chronology

1884  Idah Sidonia Ambuhl Pratt Foster was born in Farina, IL.

c. 1908  Moves to San Francisco with two small sons and her first husband, Charles F. Pratt Sr.

c. 1915  Pratt begins to publish and edit a small paper called the Redondo Breeze.

1915  Pratt is in charge of the model kitchen and laundry exhibition installed in the Home Economy Building at the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego.

1916  Active in women’s rights, referendum to win the vote for women in California was passed.
Went to DC to take a course at the National Service School for Women through the Red Cross.

Met and Married Carol Howe Foster; he was an English Instructor at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

**Mid-1940s** Pratt worked for passage of legislation benefiting consular officers’ widows for whom, at that point, there were no annuity arrangements.

**1957** Carol Howe Foster dies.

**1965** Pratt became a member of the National Women’s party and was elected to the National Council.

**1967** Pratt dies in Maryland at age of 83.

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**Scope and Content**

This collection is composed of the contents of one scrapbook. Constructed by Idah Sidonia Pratt Foster out of a folder sample book, the scrapbook contains a wide variety of material. There are photographs from the Panama-California Exposition in 1915, showing buildings and people, as well as articles mentioning Pratt’s involvement with the expo. Correspondence and articles are also included in the scrapbook. The scrapbook spans the dates 1912-1916. Also in the collection is a copy of Pratt’s obituary laminated on a prayer card and copies of her newspaper, Redondo Breeze.

The collection is divided into four series:

- **Series 1: Scrapbook, c.1912- c. 1916**
- **Series 2: Redondo Breeze, 1915**
- **Series 3: Loose Clippings, 1915-1916**
- **Series 4: Obituary on Prayer Card, 1967**

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**Provenance**

Unknown.

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**Series Descriptions**

**Series I: Scrapbook, c.1912-c.1916**

This series consists of the scrapbook which contains photographs of buildings and people, an article mentioning Pratt’s involvement with the expo, correspondence, and articles.

**Series II: Redondo Breeze, 1915**

This series contains copies of Pratt’s newspaper, Redondo Breeze, from 1915, in chronological order.

**Series III: Loose Clippings, 1915-1916**

This series includes loose clippings in mylar sleeves, arranged chronologically.

**Series IV: Obituary on Prayer Card, 1967**

This series is a prayer card with Idah Pratt’s obituary laminated on the back.
**Processing**

The collection is contained in one box, located in the Library and Research Center. In 2003 a finding aid was written. Loose material was placed in mylar sleeves and a majority of the scrapbook has been interleaved. Reprocessed in 2006, the collection was separated into four series (Scrapbook, Redondo Breeze, Loose Clippings, and Obituary on Prayer Card.) and re-housed in acid-free folders as well as a larger box to minimize damage while handling. The finding aid was formatted to DACS standard.

**Related Materials**

No Entry.

**Box Inventory**

**SERIES I: CORRESPONDENCE, 1900-1959**

Box 1
Scrapbook.

**SERIES II: REDONDO BREEZE, 1915**

Folder 1
August 14, 1915 edition.

**SERIES III: LOOSE CLIPPINGS, 1915-1916**

Folder 2
“Modem Laundry Sanitary Kitchen Planned for 1915.”
“30 Propose to Beach Girl All Due to Examiner Story.”
Two sheets of Welles, Pratt & Co. stationary with Idah S. Pratt listed as Sec’y-Treas.

**SERIES IV: OBITUARY ON PRAYER CARD, 1967**

Folder 3
Prayer card with Obituary laminated on the back.