

City of Arts & Innovation

Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE:** FEBRUARY 4, 2026

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION TO ACCESSION INTO THE PERMANENT COLLECTION
ARCHIVAL ITEMS INCLUDING ONE (1) RUBY'S DRIVE-IN MATCHBOOK
COVER, TWO (2) DOUBLE-SIDED BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTEST SIGNS,
AND TEN (10) ITEMS RELATING TO RIVERSIDE COUNTY SUPERIOR
COURT JUDGE WILLIAM ELLIS

ISSUE:

To recommend to the City Council to approve accession into the permanent collection of archival items including one (1) Ruby's Drive-In matchbook cover, two (2) double-sided Black Lives Matter protest signs, and ten (10) items relating to Riverside County Superior Court Judge William Ellis.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommends that the City Council approves accession into the permanent collection of archival items including one (1) Ruby's Drive-In matchbook cover, two (2) double-sided Black Lives Matter protest signs, and ten (10) items relating to Riverside County Superior Court Judge William Ellis.

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting on November 12, 2025, the Museum of Riverside's Collection Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum of Riverside Board forward the recommendation regarding the Ruby's Drive-In matchbook cover to the City Council.

At its meeting on January 14, 2026, the Museum of Riverside's Collection Committee voted unanimously in support of recommending that the Museum of Riverside Board forward the recommendations regarding the two (2) double-sided Black Lives Matter protest signs and the ten (10) items relating to Riverside County Superior Court Judge William Ellis to the City Council.

DISCUSSION:

To “accession” an object is the process of including it formally in a museum’s permanent collection, which is the category of collection for which the greatest effort will be made to preserve the object in perpetuity and document it fully.

LOT 1: One (1) Ruby’s Drive-In matchbook cover

The matchbook was marketing material for Ruby’s Drive-In restaurant on 13th and Market Streets in Riverside. The local eatery was a community gathering place for years. Ruby’s was the first drive-in restaurant in Riverside, opening in 1939, one year before the McDonald brothers opened their restaurant in nearby San Bernardino. Ruby’s closed in the 1960s.

The Museum’s holdings do not include many items from the mid- to late twentieth century, especially compared to other periods of Riverside’s history. Specifically, there is little representing the fast-food industry, which in some respects originated in southern California. This item represents Riverside business and commerce during a period of rapid change and economic growth, when many businesses were budding and opening. This object is already slated for exhibition in one of the Museum’s reopening exhibitions. It was purchased online and is in excellent condition.

LOT 2: Two (3) double-sided Black Lives Matter protest signs

These signs were used by the donor and his friend in the summer of 2020 to protest police brutality experienced by Black people across the United States. In correspondence, the donor referred to it as the “George Floyd summer.” This is in reference to the murder of George Floyd by former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, which triggered international protests including several in the City of Riverside. The protests took place at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic with one protest taking place on June 1, 2020. The signs were used at local protests during the summer of 2020.

The Museum lacks much material from this important historical moment, primarily because physical materials specific to this time were ephemeral, used, and discarded. These two signs represent the local reaction to an international movement that has had a lasting impact far beyond Riverside. This donation reflects Riverside’s role and supports the Museum’s mission to preserve the local history of this City. The objects are in good, stable condition.

LOT 3: Ten (10) items relating to Riverside County Superior Court Judge William Ellis

The materials comprise one (1) scrapbook of correspondence, one (1) leather-bound funeral book, and eight (8) black-and-white photographs. All materials were donated by Judge Ellis’s great-grandson. William Ellis was a Riverside County Superior Court Judge in the 1920s, working out of the Riverside County Courthouse. The scrapbook of correspondence includes items relating to his work in the area of child labor law, a major focus of his. The eight photographs are professional shots of Judge Ellis, many of which include him in his office, at the courthouse; some are of his funeral. He passed away in 1928 and had a large funeral at Evergreen Memorial Historic Cemetery. The leatherbound book was distributed at his funeral.

This collection has a direct connection to Riverside and offers a unique perspective into the formation of certain laws during the 1920s, from the perspective of one man in the legal

profession. The materials would also add a story of another Riversider to the Museum's archives that reflects both a single person's life and social realities of his time.

The items are comparatively small and place minimal demands on storage space. They are in stable condition although the Judge William Ellis scrapbook is assembled with poor quality paper and may be submitted for a conservator's analysis and recommendation.

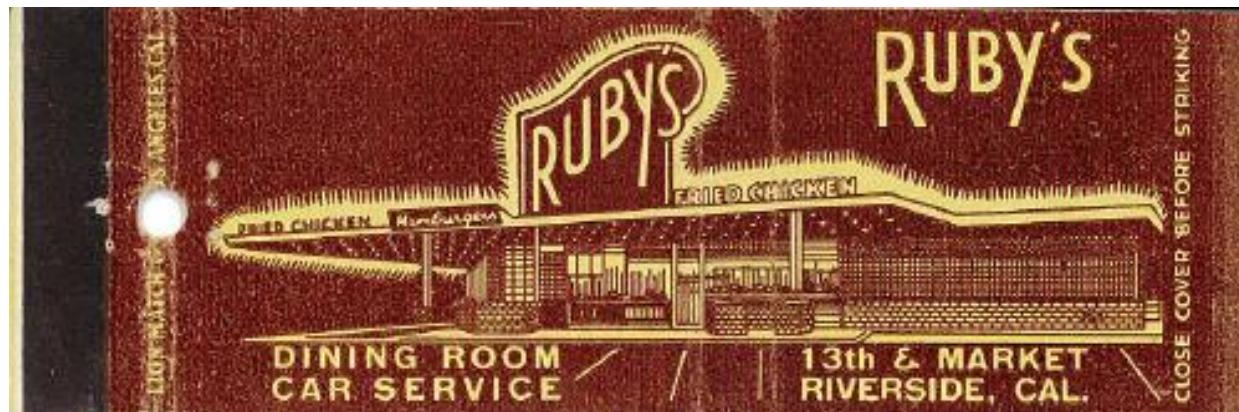
The illustrations below reflect only a selection from the materials relating to Judge Ellis.

FISCAL IMPACT:

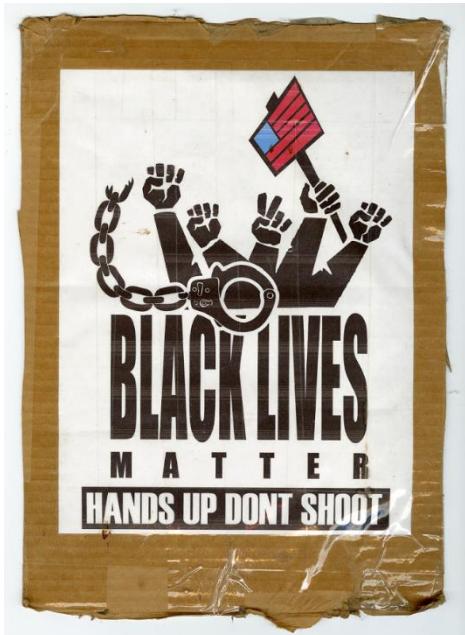
There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Robyn G. Peterson, Museum Director
Reviewed by: Ann Lovell, Manager of Operations

LOT 1:



LOT 2:



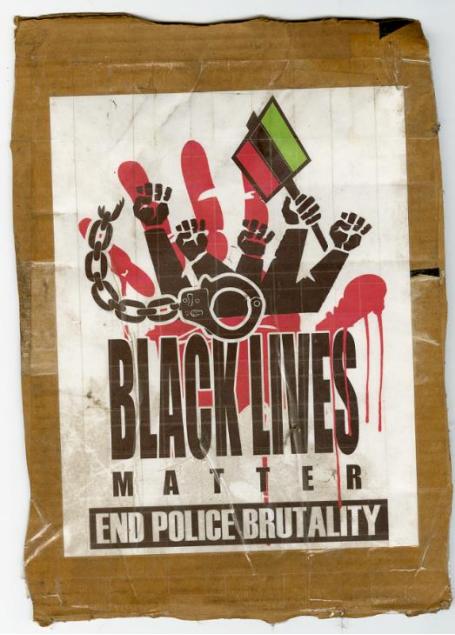
Sign 1, front



Sign 1, back

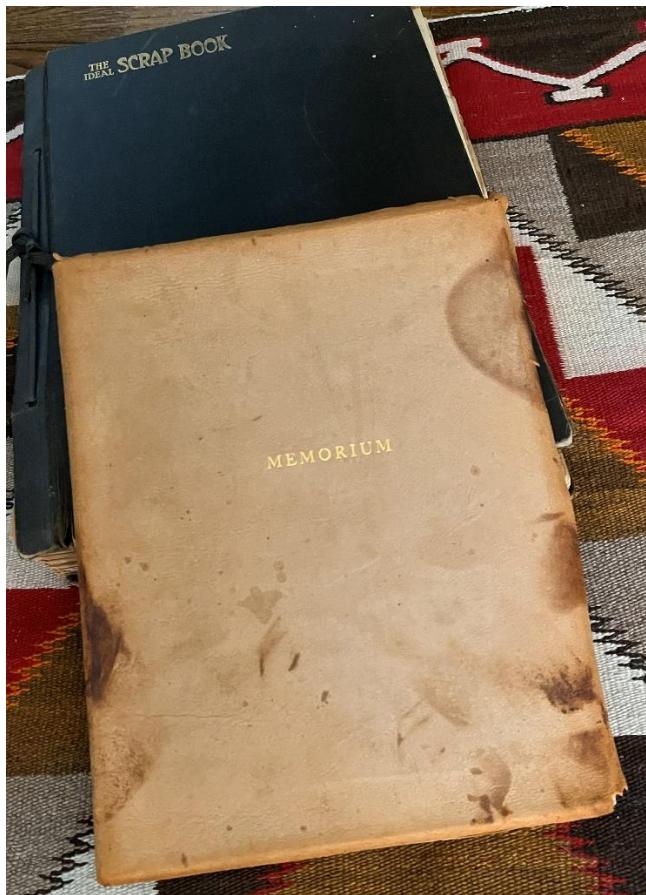


Sign 2, front

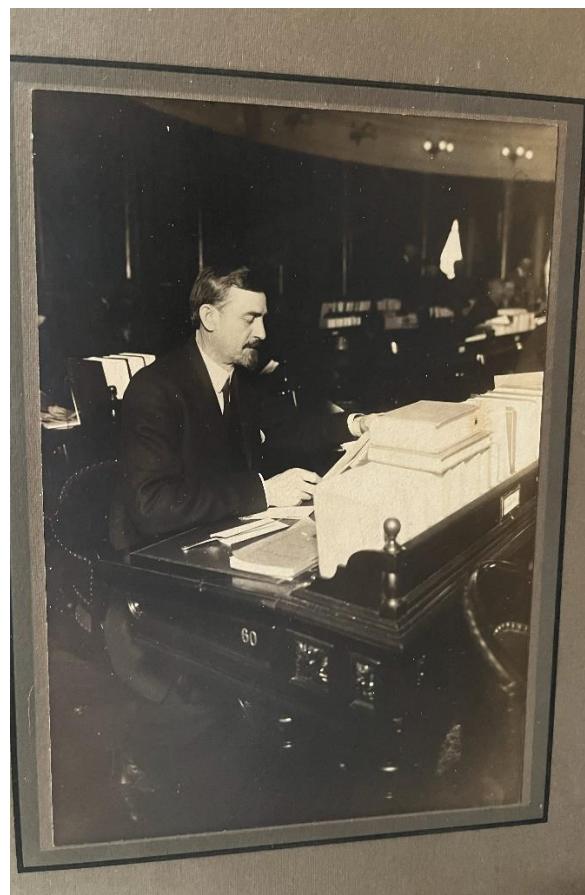


Sign 2, back

LOT 3:



The scrapbook of correspondence and funeral book



Ellis at work





Ellis's funeral in Riverside

