Guide to the West on Videotape, 1974-1978

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The Bancroft Library,
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California, 94720-6000
Phone: (510) 642-6481
Fax: (510) 642-7589
Email: bancref@library.berkeley.edu
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Guide to the West on videotape, 1974-1978

Collection number: Motion Picture 350 D

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Processed by:
The Bancroft Library staff
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Encoded by:
James Lake

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Collection Summary
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Acquisition Information
The West on Videotape collection was a gift of Steve Fisher in March 1979.

Scope and Content
"The West on Videotape" documents 40 interviewees who have been significantly involved in the history and folk culture of the Western United States. The intention of this collection is to demonstrate the value of videotape in preserving local history. The recent advent of high quality, portable video equipment makes it possible to record historical information in the most remote and rugged areas of the West.

The collection consists of unedited, original master videotapes, most of which are in color. Thirty-five tapes are included, with a total playing time of seventeen hours. These videotapes were originally shot as interview and visual material for historical and social documentary television programs.

A broad range of topics is covered, including water politics, cowboys, winemaking, and electric trains. The collection reflects the innovative technological themes so characteristic of the West. Alden Oliver explains an Archimedian screw pump windmill used in salt production; Bud Garin talks about his father's old patented tomato planting machine; master nurseryman Toichi Domoto shows a new trailing azalea he is developing.

Many of the interviewees speak of disappearing life styles and folk cultures of the West. Five of the speakers were born in the late 1800s; the oldest is Emma Garrod, born in 1882. Most of the other interviewees can recall the early years of this century. Their stories tell of a rural West undergoing rapid technological change.

A number of the videotapes make full use of the visual potential of oral history television. Whenever possible, historic locales, machines, and processes are documented. Old cowhand Frank Castro is seen participating in a Livermore Valley round-up; the disappearing ghost town of Drawbridge is seen from various visual perspectives. The intention is to convey a sense of place, a feeling for the geographical and technological factors which help determine historic changes.

The collection is designed for archival use, and a primary concern is providing the researcher with both supplementary written documentation and rapid retrieval techniques. Videocassettes are easy to handle and store (the entire collection could be carried in an orange crate), making them ideal for archival use. Quick retrieval of an indexed portion of a videotape may be accomplished using a variety of techniques, several of which are demonstrated in the collection. These techniques can utilize videotape recorder tape counters, elapsed time visually superimposed over the picture, or digital computer codes.

[Reproduced from Steve Fisher's notes, March 1979. Notes and index forms shelved as Motion Picture 350 D Notes.]

videotape 1

"Ghost Town"

Brenda Catanich: Drawbridge, The Bay Area's Sinking Ghost Town
Interviewed 1974 by Steve Fisher.

Physical Description: 25 minutes, 3/4" videocassette copy

Additional Note

Recollections of life in an Old West resort, once accessible only by boat or train. This notorious town near San Jose was built on an island. Today, the houses still stand, but vandalism and seeping mud from San Francisco Bay are taking their toll.

Sponsor: Steve Fisher
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<td>videotape 2</td>
<td>&quot;Paiute Medicine Man&quot;</td>
<td>Ray Stone: Water, the Land, and Paiute Religion</td>
<td>40 minutes, 3/4&quot; videocassette original (3 tapes)</td>
<td>A spiritual leader of the Owens Valley Paiutes tells of his peoples concern over the removal of Owens Valley water by the City of Los Angeles. From a vantage point at 8000' in the Eastern High Sierra, he reminisces about the changing landscape around him. Videotaped in a volcanic area used by Mr. Stone as his place of prayer, and once known as &quot;Panatu&quot; by the Paiutes. Sponsor: California Public Broadcasting Commission / KTEH</td>
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<td>videotape 3</td>
<td>&quot;The Age of the Electric Train&quot;</td>
<td>Charles Savage: Central California Electric Railroads</td>
<td>60 minutes, 3/4&quot; videocassette</td>
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<td>videotape 4</td>
<td>&quot;California Winemaker&quot;</td>
<td>Ernest Wente: Livermore Valley Wine Grower</td>
<td>40 minutes, 3/4&quot; videocassette original (3 tapes)</td>
<td>Well-known vineyardist Ernest Wente tours the Wente holdings in Livermore Valley, and recalls early Wente history. Includes scenes of El Mocho Winery of sauterne fame, purchased by Wente from Louis Mel in the 1930s. Sponsor: Chabot College</td>
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<td>videotape 5</td>
<td>&quot;Japanese Horticulturist&quot;</td>
<td>Toichi Domoto: Sixty Years of Innovative Plant Development</td>
<td>40 minutes, 1/2&quot; reel-to-reel (2 tapes)</td>
<td>One of California's leading nurseymen is interviewed at his sprawling Hayward nursery. Toichi Domoto recalls historic contributions of the Domoto family to West Coast horticulture, and discusses his years in Hayward, including the difficult World War II Japanese relocation period. Mr. Domoto shows a trailing azalea hybrid he is developing at the present time. Sponsor: Hayward Bicentennial Committee</td>
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videotape 6
"Solar Salt Industry"
Alden Oliver: The Last Salt Maker
Interviewed April 14, 1978 by Steve Fisher.

Physical Description: 80 minutes, 3/4" videocassette original (4 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 2 videocassettes each.

Additional Note
Using every form of natural energy from sun power to wind power, Bay Area salt makers have become world famous. But the days of the family-run salt company are drawing to a close, and the multi-million dollar corporations are taking over. Four generations of Olivers have pioneered in the development of the West Coast solar evaporation salt industry. Alden Oliver--third generation--recalls the industry’s rise to prominence. Videotape shows harvesting operation, machinery and lay-out of plant, and site of first salt operation by San Francisco Bay. Sponsor: Chabot College

videotape 7
"Life in a Victorian Mansion"
Gladys Volkmann: Growing Up on the Meek Estate

Physical Description: 30 minutes, 1/2" reel-to-reel copy

Additional Note
Recollections of childhood in an 1869 Bracketed-Italianate villa. Mrs. Volkmann is the granddaughter of pioneer orchardist William Meek, who brought the first grafted trees to the Pacific Coast. The villa is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Videotape includes interior shots of the house.
Sponsor: Hayward Bicentennial Committee

videotape 8
"Pioneering in the Santa Cruz Mountains"
Emma Garrod: Roots of the Sunsweet Cooperative
Interviewed 1978 by Steve Fisher.

Physical Description: 60 minutes, 3/4" copy of 16 mm. film

Additional Note
Emma Garrod--in her 93rd year--recalls the events which led to her involvement in the founding and development of the Sunsweet dried fruit tree cooperative. Considerable information on the social life of the rugged pioneering community which farmed in the eastern Santa Cruz Mountains.
Sponsor: University of California

videotape 9
"Water War (Owens Valley vs. Los Angeles)"
Aubrey Lyon: The Transformation of Owens Valley
Interviewed November 1977 by Tara Hudson.

Physical Description: 30 minutes, 3/4" videocassette original (2 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 1 videocassette each.

Additional Note
A long-time resident of Owens Valley reminisces about the valley's struggle to maintain its water rights and protect the local environment. Mr. Lyon recalls the transformation of Owens Valley from an agricultural economy to a tourist economy. Videotaped east of Bishop, California, at the site of a former ranch.
Sponsor: California Public Broadcasting Commission / KTEH
videotape 10  "Disappearing Agricultural Communities and Rising Suburbs"
Lorin Eden and Irene Munster: From Farm to Shopping Center
Interviewed 1976 by Tara Hudson.

Physical Description: 90 minutes, 1/2" reel-to-reel original (3 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 2 videocassettes each.

Additional Note
Two former residents of Mt. Eden, California, recall the agricultural era when local hops and sugar beets were world famous. The era ended for the speakers when the West's largest shopping centers (Southland) and most notorious freeways (the Nimitz) were built on their land. A study in the changes brought about by the post-World War II suburban explosion.
Sponsor: Chabot College

videotape 11  "The Ancient Landscape"
Wesley Gordon: The Boy Paleontologists of Hayward

Physical Description: 45 minutes, 1/2" reel-to-reel

Additional Note
Few fossil sites have contributed more to our knowledge of the ancient Valley of San Francisco Bay than the Irvington deposits. In the 1940s Wesley Gordon and his boys' club achieved national attention by collecting fossils. The geologic history of the lower Pleistocene was enriched by the mammals--from camels to mammoths--found by Mr. Gordon and the boys. Today, the fossil site is covered by a freeway. Videotape includes copy of 16 mm. film of Irvington deposits.
Sponsor: Hayward Bicentennial Committee

videotape 12  "The Roots of a Regional Park"
Bud Garin and Janet (Garin) Settle: Life on the Garin Ranch
Interviewed 1976 by Don Morris.

Physical Description: 30 minutes, 1/2" reel-to-reel

Additional Note
A pick-up truck tour of the Garin Ranch, now one of the parks in the East Bay Regional Park system. The speakers explain old machinery still scattered around the ranch, and recall various dry farm crops once planted.
Sponsor: Hayward Bicentennial Committee

videotape 13  "Cowboys and Rodeos"
Frank Castro: The Skills of a Cowboy
Interviewed 1978 by Steve Fisher.

Physical Description: 60 minutes, 3/4" videocassette original (4 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 2 videocassettes each.

Additional Note
One of the last of the old-time cowboys reminiscences about his experiences as cowhand, line rider, twenty-mule team driver, and rodeo team roper. He discusses acquaintances like Tom Mix, Will Rogers, and black rodeo stars Bill Pickett and Jessie Stahl. Videotape includes demonstration of Mr. Castro's skills as a roper at a Livermore Valley round-up.
Sponsor: Chabot College
videotape 14  
"Little Shul"
John Zucker: The Oldest Remaining Synagogue in California
Physical Description: 30 minutes, 1/2" reel-to-reel
Additional Note
Religion, history, and architecture meet in this contemporary tour of a restored synagogue in San Leandro. The structure, dubbed "Little Shul" ("little school"), dates back to 1889, and the congregation itself had its roots in the 1850s. The tour guide is Rabbi John J. Zucker, who retired in 1978 after 31 years as leader of Temple Beth Sholom. Included are interior shots of ceremonial objects in this structure which is still used weekly.
Sponsor: Chabot College

videotape 15  
"Drought"
Ronald Robie: The Future of California Water
Interviewed 1977 by Tara Hudson.
Physical Description: 35 minutes, 3/4" videocassette original (2 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 1 videocassette each.
Additional Note
This interview with the Director of the California Department of Water Resources was held at the peak of the 1976-77 drought. Robie comments on his changing views about the proposed Peripheral Canal, the relationship between the state and the federal Bureau of Reclamation, population growth in California, and his personal view on long-term natural resource planning. The interview was held near the California Aqueduct north of Tracy, California.
Sponsor: California Public Broadcasting Commission / KTEH

videotape 16  
"Water War II (Owens Valley vs. Los Angeles)"
Buck Gibbons and Duane Georgson: Owens Valley / Los Angeles Water Controversy and Litigation
Interviewed 1977 by Tara Hudson.
Physical Description: 60 minutes, 3/4" videocassette original (3 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 1 videocassette each.
Additional Note
Two key protagonists in Owens Valley / Los Angeles water controversy discuss their respective sides in the light of related historic court actions from 1973-1977; also discuss drought of 1977.
Sponsor: California Public Broadcasting Commission / KTEH

videotape 17  
"Hot Springs"
Paiute-Shoshone Elders Council: The Struggle for Access to Cultural Resources
Interviewed December 1978 by Steve Fisher.
Physical Description: 40 minutes, 3/4" videocassette (2 tapes)
Copies 2 and 3 on 1 videocassette each.
Additional Note
Coso Hot Springs has long been a cultural resource for various California Native Americans. The area is used for ceremonial and healing purposes. The problem is that since World War II, the area has been within the boundary of the China Lake Naval Weapons Center. Access has been difficult for the Native Americans. In this tape, the hot springs area is shown, and the Paiute-Shoshones discuss historical and religious aspects of this sacred area.
Sponsor: California Council for the Humanities in Public Policy