del Valle Family Papers

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2019
Descriptive Summary
Title: del Valle Family Papers
Dates: 1847-1924
Collection Number: Consult repository
Creator/Collector:
Extent: 10 archives boxes
Repository: Rancho Camulos Museum
Piru, California 93040
Abstract: This collection offers a snapshot of life at a busy and prosperous Southern California rancho from the mid-1800s to 1924 when members of the del Valle family sold Rancho Camulos to August and Mary Rubel. The collection includes a variety of personal papers and ephemera belonging to the del Valle family and documents collected by August Rubel during his tenure at Rancho Camulos. This collection is useful to those conducting research on the history of 19th and early 20th century Southern California agriculture, rancho life, laborers, the del Valle and Rubel families.
Language of Material: English
Access
Collection open for research. Contact the Museum's Executive Director for an appointment.
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
del Valle Family Papers. Rancho Camulos Museum
Acquisition Information
Created by August Rubel between 1925 - early 1940s.
Biography/Administrative History
August and Mary Rubel moved to Rancho Camulos in 1925, having purchased the ranch the previous year. August Rubel, the son of Swiss immigrants, grew up in New York City. He came to Ventura County in 1922, after graduation from Harvard at the age of twenty-three and shortly after he married Mary Colgate McIssac, a Boston native. The Rubels first lived in Aliso Canyon near Santa Paula, having established the Billiwhack Dairy there in 1924. The Rubels raised five children at Camulos Ranch. August Rubel served in the American Field Service in France between 1917 and 1919 as an ambulance driver. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French government for his service. He later returned to ambulance service during World War II and was killed in Tunisia in 1943 when an ambulance he was driving hit a German land mine. August and Mary Rubel took great pride in preserving the architecture and historic legacy associated with Rancho Camulos as a Mexican land grant and as the source of inspiration for Helen Hunt Jackson’s bestselling novel Ramona. During August Rubel’s tenure between 1924 and his death in 1943, he dedicated himself to preserving many of the agricultural artifacts, financial papers, ledgers, maps and letters left behind by the del Valle family. For several years, many of these items were displayed in a small museum on the second floor of the winery building that the Rubels opened to the community. In 2015, while working to safely relocate the remnants of Rubel’s museum, staff and volunteers discovered a battered trunk containing a variety of valuable archival papers, including 19th-century religious music, popular sheet music, personal del Valle family letters, 19th-century ranch and winery business records, and an early 1920s guest book, among other treasures. Remarkably, the majority of documents were found in good condition. This collection is comprised of the items found in the trunk filled by August Rubel nearly a century ago.
Scope and Content of Collection
Highlights of this collection include handwritten 19th-century hymns and popular sheet music, including several editions of “Ramona,” 19th-century Los Angeles Spanish language newspapers, personal del Valle family letters, 19th-century ranch and winery business records, early 20th-century Camulos labor records, Rancho Camulos fruit crate labels, Rancho Camulos financial and mortgage records, wine labels, calling cards, a 1922-1924 guest book, and meal records of laborers and guests between 1920 to 1922 . Financial records indicate that while the del Valle owners took out a number of loans in the late 1800s and early 1900s, by the time the property was sold, the ranch was profitable and family members earned healthy dividends. Documents indicate that Josefa del Valle Forster, Ygnacio and Ysabel’s oldest daughter, played a pivotal role in helping her mother manage the ranch after her father’s death in 1880. Indeed, Josefa’s name appears as “President” of the del Valle Corporation as noted on company letterhead from the early 1900s. This collection is also useful to those conducting research on the laborers who worked Camulos land and provided household services to the del Valle family.