Guide to the Larkin House Collection

Monterey State Historic Park, Monterey, CA

Collection processed and finding aid created by Lori Lindberg, Archivist, San Francisco, CA

Edited First Draft
California State Parks
Larkin House State Historic Monument
Monterey State Historic Park
20 Custom House Plaza
Monterey, CA 93940

Note
History--California History--Central Coast HistoryGeographical (By Place)--California--Central Coast
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Monterey State Historic Park
Monterey, CA

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Larkin House State Historic Monument
Monterey State Historic Park
20 Custom House Plaza
Monterey, CA 93940
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Note
Edited First Draft
June 12, 2002

Descriptive Summary
Title: California. Department of Parks and Recreation. Larkin House (Monterey State Historic Park) Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1832 - 1957
Date (bulk): (bulk 1880 - 1920).
Collection number: 484.1
Collector: Larkin House State Historic Monument
Extent: 17.98 cubic ft. (18 boxes)
Repository: California State Parks
Monterey State Historic Park
20 Custom House Plaza
Monterey, CA 93940
831-649-7118

Abstract: The Larkin House Collection consists of material connected with the Larkin House State Historic Monument in Monterey, California. In this historic adobe, decisions were made and actions taken that shaped the early history of the State of California. The collection, while not possessing a large group of Thomas O. Larkin manuscript documents like that held by the Bancroft Library, still contains good examples of documents and photographs associated with Larkin and his descendants.

Physical location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Monterey District Museum Curator at 831-649-7118.
Language: English.

Legal Status
Public

Access
The collections are open for research by appointment only. Appointments may be made by calling 831-649-7110.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
Suggested citation of these records is: [Identification of item], Larkin House Collection, Monterey State Historic Park, 484.1, California State Parks.

Acquisition Information
The bulk of this collection was acquired by donation from Alice Larkin Toulmin (1879 - 1963), granddaughter of Thomas O. Larkin. Her father, Alfred Otis Larkin, was born at Larkin House and Mrs. Toulmin later lived in the Larkin House for 35 years.

Processing History
The collection had limited processing work done by an independent contractor in 1993. The collection was loosely organized in record series and some housing in archival containers was done at that time. No finding aid was produced. In 2002 funds were made available to complete the processing. All items were made available to complete the processing. All items were arranged in coherent record series and subseries, a processing plan was formed, and archival materials needed to complete the proper housing of materials were ordered and received. The collection has been completely housed in archival quality containers and enclosures. All photographs, regardless of size, have been sleeved in PAT-passed polyethylene sleeves. All metal fasteners such as brads and paper clips have been removed and replaced with inert plastiklips. Documents have been cleaned where needed with a document cleaning pad. All monographs have had custom phased boxes constructed by the archivist or, in the case of pamphlet-size works, in pamphlet enclosures. A family bible has been housed in a box specially ordered for it. All folders in document cases are acid-free archival folders. Every box has been labelled on the exterior with an archival quality label with inert adhesive. The collection has been completely described in a finding aid.

The collection was arranged chronologically as much as dates could be ascertained. The majority of the photographs in the collection have no dates and have been arranged according to the physical age progression of the subject.

History of the Larkin House and Thomas O. Larkin
The Larkin House is a reminder of the influence Thomas Oliver Larkin exerted not only on California’s political history but also its secular architecture during the first half of the 19th century. In 1834, Larkin constructed one of the first two-story houses to be built in Monterey and one of the earliest examples of Monterey colonial architecture. It became known as the Larkin House adobe. Larkin adapted eastern form to available materials: adobe and redwood. The Larkin House adobe is distinctive for its broad roof overhang above the second floor windows and its surrounding balcony. The roof, designed to shelter the adobe from the corroding effects of rain and wind, was stylish as well as practical and became the predominant design for adobe buildings of the period. As Larkin’s home and business place, for over five important years the adobe served as headquarters and the center of social life of the Capital. Here historic decisions regarding California’s future were made.

The earliest days of California statehood have a voice in the life of Thomas Oliver Larkin. He served as the first and only United States Consul to Mexican California, 1844-48, and, as a confidential agent of the U.S. government for two of those years, 1846-48, served to ‘create a favorable feeling’ toward the United States via an extensive propaganda campaign in favor of American acquisition of California that helped to bring about the U.S. seizure of California in the Mexican War. He served from 1847-49 as Navy agent and Naval storekeeper, and was a delegate to the state Constitutional Convention, held at Colton Hall in Monterey in 1849. California became a state in 1850 and Monterey was its first Capital.

Born in Charlestown, Massachusetts in 1802, Thomas O. Larkin was an orphan by the age of sixteen. Of notable Anglo-American descent- one ancestor, Richard Warren, came to America on the Mayflower, and his Grandfather Ebenezer Larkin fought at Bunker Hill- Larkin was forced to make his way in life early, and struggled for a while. He pursued his earliest business ventures in Massachusetts but in 1821 left to try his luck in North Carolina. His efforts met with little success and the young Larkin, encouraged by the adventures of his sailor half-brother, hoped for a better location to build a successful venture. While he preferred to remain in the east, Larkin decided that California was to be his land of venture. He went to California to join his half-brother, John B. R. Cooper, a merchant sea captain and another American destined to importance in early California. He sailed from Boston to Monterey in 1832, and during the voyage had an affair with a married woman, Rachel Hobson Holmes, who was traveling to California to join her own sea captain husband. Not long after her arrival in California, Rachel received word of her husband’s death. She and Larkin married in 1833, and the couple (together with a child who had been born to them out of wedlock) took up residence in Monterey. Rachel became the first Anglo-American woman to settle in Alta (Upper) California. Larkin settled in Monterey and opened a store, conducting trade with Mexico and the Sandwich Islands, unquestionably taking advantage of his half-brother’s success as a merchant seaman.
As the political and economic capital of Alta California, Monterey was well suited to Larkin's business activities. Not content to work in the employ of his half-brother, Larkin soon embarked upon a successful career as a financier and merchant. After the U.S. conquest, Larkin turned his attention to real estate development and he and a partner, Semple, created the community of Benicia, the first California town to be founded by promoters. He eventually held extensive tracts of land from the Monterey area north, including in San Francisco and the Feather River Valley. Larkin was an unapologetic social climber, and he fostered personal relationships with the influential -- both Californios (Spanish-speaking Californians) and Anglo-Americans -- whom he thought might advance his business interests. Unlike many Anglo-American settlers in Mexican California, Larkin does not seem to have harbored feelings of racism toward the Californios. He also distinguished himself from most of his compatriots who had arrived in California during the 1830s by remaining as staunchly Protestant as he was patriotic, and he never converted to Catholicism or became a Mexican citizen.

While perhaps overshadowed by his role as a businessman, Larkin also engaged in diplomatic activities which facilitated California's transition from Mexican to U.S. control. In 1844, he was appointed U.S. Consul at Monterey and was the only individual to hold that position. As Consul, Larkin promoted U.S. economic interests and protected the civil rights of Anglo-American immigrants. In 1845, President James K. Polk appointed him as a confidential agent. Larkin used that position to further what he had earlier advocated in a series of letters published in several eastern newspapers, namely, the peaceful acquisition of California, initiated by the Californios themselves, by the United States. However, Larkin's plans for this peaceful union were shortly to be dashed by the outbreak of war between the United States and Mexico.

At the time of his death in San Francisco on October 27, 1858, Larkin was one of the richest and most highly respected men in California.

1832 Thomas Oliver Larkin and his soon-to-be wife, Rachel Hobson, arrive in Monterey to join his half-brother John B. Rogers Cooper.

1834 Larkin begins construction of his home at the corner of Calle Principal and Jefferson Streets in Monterey.

1844 Larkin is appointed U.S. Consul to Alta California. The adobe serves as the consulate.

1845 President James K. Polk enlists Larkin's special help in promoting U.S. interests in California.

1850 California admitted to the Union as the 31st state. Business concerns prompt Larkin's move to New York.

1853 Larkin returns to California, settling in San Francisco.

1857 Larkin's granddaughter donates the historic adobe and its contents to the State of California as a memorial to her grandfather.

Scope and Content

The Larkin House Collection consists of records, photographs, and memorabilia connected with the Larkin House State Historic Monument in Monterey, California. In this historic adobe, decisions were made and actions taken that shaped the early history of the State of California. The collection, while not possessing a large group of Thomas Larkin manuscript documents like that of the Bancroft Library, still contains good examples of documents and photographs associated with Larkin and his descendants, particularly his son Oliver, Oliver's wife Mary Ball and the Ball family, and Larkin's granddaughter, Alice Sistare Larkin. An item of note is the original 1852 paper on linen Map and Deed of the Flugge Rancho on the Feather River, Northern California, property of Thomas O. Larkin, enclosed in a leather case. Additional items of note are the well-preserved photograph albums of Alice S. Larkin, which, over a range of thirty years, 1890 to 1920, contain a visual record of her extensive international travels and supplies a wealth of images from a host of cultures around the world at the turn of the 19th to the 20th centuries.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in a library's online public access catalog:

Library of Congress Subject Headings

Personal Names:
Cooper, John B. Rogers, 1791 - 1872.
Larkin, Thomas Oliver, 1802 - 1858.

Subjects:
California--History--To 1846.
California--History--1846-1850.
California--Pioneers.
Historic buildings--California--Monterey.
Monterey (Calif.)--History.
United States--Foreign relations--Mexico.

**Bibliography**

Additional information about Thomas O. Larkin may be found in the following publications:


**Box Boxes 1-2**

**Series I:** *Larkin Family Papers, 1850-1950*

- Physical Description: 2 document cases
- **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This series consists of various estate papers, genealogies, and other papers from the Larkin, Ball, and Sistare families, all ancestors of Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin.

**Box 1, Folder 1**

- Ball family ephemera

**Box 1, Folder 2-4**

- Ball family papers
  
  - Physical Description: (3 folders)

**Box 1, Folder 5**

- Larkin correspondence, 1860

**Box 1, Folder 6**

- Larkin family ephemera

**Box 1, Folder 7**

- Two facsimiles and one original ship’s manifest from the brig Colonel Fremont consigning goods to Larkin, 1853

**Box 2, Folder 1-3**

- Larkin family genealogies

**Box 2, Folder 4**

- Thomas O. Larkin likeness - litho plate and impressions

**Box 2, Folder 5**

- Alfred O. Larkin typescript poetry anthology, "Fancies"

**Box 2, Folder 6**

- Lucy Sistare family correspondence, 1832-1839

**Box Boxes 3-4**

**Series II:** *Henry W. and Alice S. Larkin Toulmin Papers, 1850-1950*

- Physical Description: 2 document cases
- **Scope and Content Note**
  
  This series consists of the papers of Alice Sistare Larkin Toulmin and her husband Henry W. Toulmin, including a large collection of memorabilia connected with Arbury Squib, their prize Springer Spaniel and other dogs they showed in dog shows and hunting competitions.

**Box 3, Folder 1**

- Toulin family ephemera

**Box 3, Folder 2**

- Estate valuation, Henry W. Toulmin, 1953

**Box 3, Folder 3**

- Larkin House inventory taken by Alice Larkin Toulmin

**Box 3, Folder 4**

- Manuscript writings, Alice Larkin Toulmin

**Box 3, Folder 5**

- Miscellaneous papers

**Box 4, Folder 1-5**

- Pets- photographs and related documents

**Box 4, Folder 1**

- Arbury Squib materials, in 3 subfolders

**Box 4, Folder 5**

- Registration papers, pedigree, awards, and other material

**Box 4, Folder 6**

- Photographs

**Box 4, Folder 2**

- Other dogs, papers

**Box 4, Folder 3**

- Other dogs, photographs

**Box 4, Folder 4-5**

- Show ribbons

**Box 4, Folder 6**

- Other animal-related activities: photographs
### Series III: Photographs, 1850-1950

**Box Boxes 5-13**

**Series III:** Photographs, 1850-1950

Physical Description: 4 document cases and 5 clamshell boxes

Scope and Content Note

This series consists of photographs from all series, collected together for storage and preservation reasons. Oversize photographs are housed within a separate series of oversize materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ball family photographs</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Larkin family photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Larkin, Toulmin family, unidentified, and Larkin family residences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Larkin, Sistare, and Toulmin family residences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Photograph albums (2), Asian and European locales, San Francisco Pan-Pacific International Exposition of 1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Photograph albums (2), Central America, including Panama as canal is being built, and Costa Rica into Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Photograph albums (3), Asia Minor and eastern Europe, California, North Africa, Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Photograph albums (2), Asia, Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Oversize photographs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box Boxes 14-15</th>
<th>Series IV: Oversize materials, 1850-1950</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Box 1 of 2, numerous dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Box 2 of 2, numerous dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>Series V: Separated materials, 1850-1950</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Physical Description: 2 flat newspaper boxes

Scope and Content Note

This series is mostly oversize art works and historical items including a map and deed of the Flugge Rancho on the Feather River, Northern California, property of Thomas O. Larkin, dated 1852.

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<td>Series V: Separated materials, 1850-1950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical Description: 2 document cartons and 1 custom box

Scope and Content Note

This series consists entirely of books donated to the State by Mrs. Toulmin, located in Boxes 16-18.