Finding aid of the Charles King Collection 1887-1974

Cheryl Miller
Autry Library
Autry National Center of the American West
4700 Western Heritage Way
Los Angeles, CA 90027
Phone: (323) 667-2000 ext. 383
Email: cmiller@autrynationalcenter.org
URL: http://www.autrynationalcenter.org/institute.php/
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Collection number: MSA.2

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Los Angeles, California

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Cheryl Miller

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Cheryl Miller

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Charles King Collection 1887-1974
Dates: 1887-1974
Collection number: MSA.2
Creator: King, Charles, 1844-1933
Collection Size: .2 linear feet
Repository: Autry National Center. Institute for the Study of the American West
Los Angeles, CA 90027
Physical location: Autry Library, Autry National Center, Los Angeles, Calif.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://www.autrynationalcenter.org/research_application.php or contact library staff at (323) 667-2000.

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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
Purchased from N. Henry.

Container List
Articles and stories by Charles King (MSA.2.1)

Articles about Charles King (MSA.2.2)
Biography / Administrative History

Charles King was born October 12, 1844, in Albany, New York. The family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin one year later. Son of Rufus King, Charles followed in his father’s footsteps and joined the militia. At the age of 12, he was a “marker” for the Milwaukee Light Guard. In 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War, King received an appointment to West Point, and in his senior year, he became Cadet Adjutant. Upon graduation, he began his lengthy military career, serving in the Fifth Cavalry in Nebraska, Arizona, Kansas, and Wyoming. He retired in 1879.

Returning to Wisconsin, King taught at the University of Wisconsin, and at various military academies throughout the state. At the beginning of the Spanish American War, he was commissioned brigadier general of volunteers, served in the Philippines. He served in the National Guard during World War I, ending his career in 1929. Charles King died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1933.

King’s long military career became subject matter for his many books. He started writing articles and short stories in 1880, and soon graduated to serials. His first novel, The Colonel’s Daughter, was published in 1882; it was in print for more than 50 years. King also wrote non-fiction accounts of famous battles. His Campaigning With Crook focused on the 1876 wars against the Sioux and the Cheyenne in Kansas. King published over 60 books during his life time.

King was the only United States Army officer to write fiction from his own acquaintance with army life and Indian warfare on the plains during 1870-1880. He was a pioneer in writing realistic fiction about the western frontier at a time when the usual western novel was the dime novel. King’s depictions of life in the West, though, are sentimental, romanticized, and frequently include stereotypes of the worst kind. He is only truly effective in his descriptions of the day-to-day life of the Army soldier in the garrison on the frontier.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Charles King Collection contains 22 items ranging in date from 1887 to 1974. It is organized into four series: Articles and Stories by Charles King, Articles about Charles King, Images, and Advertisements. The bulk of the collection is the photocopies of in the Articles and Stories by Charles King series and the Articles about Charles King series. The Images series contains a single page with reproductions of seven portraits of Charles King at various dates. The Advertisements are original pages removed from Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, and include descriptions of King's novels.

Indexing Terms

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

King, Charles, 1844-1933
Authors, American -- 19th Century -- Biography
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Biography
Soldiers -- United States -- Fiction
Western stories.
Short stories.
War stories, American.