Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives
Title: Charles Weeks Collection
Creator: Weeks, Charles, 1873-1964
Identifier/Call Number: URB.CW
Extent: 0.42 linear feet
Date (inclusive): 1923-1982
Abstract: In 1909 Charles Weeks pioneered what was then a new method of raising poultry, by concentrating birds into coops. In 1923 he established a small farming community in Owensmouth known as the Weeks Poultry Colony. This collection is comprised of various publications which document the activities and lifestyle of Charles Weeks and the farming community he helped create in the San Fernando Valley.

Language of Material: English
Biographical Information:
Charles Weeks was a visionary in the world of poultry and communal farming. Born on an Indiana farm in 1873, Mr. Weeks grew up with a thorough understanding of farming and farm life. In 1904, Mr. Weeks moved to Los Altos, California with a plan to raise poultry on a ten-acre farm he had purchased there. Unfortunately, due to inadequate water supply, Mr. Weeks' Los Altos farm was doomed to failure. In 1909, Mr. Weeks moved to a five-acre farm on the outskirts of Palo Alto, California. It was here that he established new methods of raising poultry, concentrating birds into coops. Previous to this time, it was a commonly accepted farming practice to raise chickens in large, space consuming, chicken runs. The "Weeks Poultry Method" of raising poultry in compact houses became so successful that visitors from all over the world began arriving at Mr. Weeks' farm to study and learn his method. William E. Smythe, a socialist utopian, promoted his vision of independently-owned farming communities after visiting. Weeks in turn adopted these ideals and established his own version of a utopian farming community.

In 1916, Mr. Weeks established the "Weeks Poultry Colony," also known as Runnymead, on land near his Palo Alto farm. With a heavily promoted motto of "one acre and independence," Mr. Week's experimental utopian community grew quickly, housing 400 families by 1922. Adding to the success of the colony was his monthly magazine publication called Intensive Little Farm which attracted new buyers to the area and kept the area thriving for years, peaking at over 1,000 citizens by the mid-1920s.

In 1923, Weeks moved out of Northern California and engaged himself in actively promoting a new colony in Owensmouth. He had been invited to the San Fernando Valley by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce in 1920 to establish a series of one-acre farms in the area that would emulate the success of his Los Altos "poultry colony." The colony Mr. Weeks created eventually developed into a small farming community, which actively engaged in uplifting the spirit of its members, and aided in the social, intellectual and artistic enlightenment of the region.

Unfortunately, the Great Depression and the dramatic downturn of the Los Angeles economy drastically affected both the Owensmouth and Runnymead communities. By 1932, many of the farms faced bankruptcy and Mr. Weeks himself lost almost everything. With the failure of the poultry colonies, Mr. Weeks relocated to Florida, where he lived out the remainder of his life growing papayas, raising fishing worms and skin diving. Charles Weeks died in Florida in 1964 but the impact of his communal experiment can still be seen in some areas of both Palo Alto and Winnetka.

Scope and Contents
The Charles Weeks Collection is comprised of various publications which document the activities and lifestyle of Charles Weeks and the farming community he helped create in the San Fernando Valley. While the earlier publications trace the beginnings of the Weeks Poultry Colony and Weeks' fondness for nature, the later published materials (particularly newspaper clippings) stress his allegiance to health and fitness. Also highlighted in these publications are the histories of Owensmouth and Winnetka, California as they developed under the influences of the Weeks family farming plan. The files are arranged in alphabetical order by title and chronologically within.

Electronic Format:
Digital reproductions of selected items in this collection are available electronically as a part of the San Fernando Valley History Digital Library.

Related Material
Kraemer-Milligan Family Collection

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Immediate Source of Acquisition
Carolyn L. Ryan, 10/1980
For information about citing items in this collection consult the appropriate style manual, or see the Citing Archival Materials guide.

Processing Information:
Robert G. Marshall, November 1985
Jennifer M. Grimsley, October 2004

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Documents

Box 1, Folder 1  Chant-It-Clear Newsletters, March 1927, September 1927, January 1928
Box 1, Folder 2  Florida Outdoors Pamphlet, April 1953
Box 1, Folder 3  Intensive Little Farms Magazine, September 1923
Box 1, Folder 4  Intensive Little Farms Magazine, February 1924
Box 1, Folder 5  Intensive Little Farms Magazine, April 1924
Box 1, Folder 6  Intensive Little Farms Magazine, December 1924
Box 1, Folder 7  Intensive Little Farms Magazine, July 1925
Box 1, Folder 8  Intensive Little Farms Magazine, December 1925
Box 1, Folder 9  Newspaper Clippings, ca. 1920-ca. 1929, 1941, ca. 1953, ca. 1955, 1960
Box 1, Folder 10  Organic Pamphlet, July 1959
Box 1, Folder 11  Weeks Poultry Ranch Pamphlet
Box 1, Folder 12  Winnetka's Heritage Pamphlet, 1977