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## **Guide to the Charles Weeks Collection, 1923-1982**

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**Overview of the Collection**

**Collection Title:** Charles Weeks Collection

**Dates:** 1923-1982

**Identification:** URB/CW

**Creator:** Weeks, Charles, 1873-1964

**Physical Description:** 0.42 linear feet

**Language of Materials:** English

**Repository:** Urban Archives

**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.

**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.

**Access Terms**

This collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

**Genre/Form of Material:**

Paper records

Publications

**Geographic Name:**

San Fernando Valley (Calif.) -- History

**Personal Name:**

Weeks, Charles

**Topical Term:**

Poultry industry -- California -- San Fernando Valley

**Processing Information:**

Robert G. Marshall, November 1985

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Jennifer M. Grimsley, October 2004

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**Preferred Citation:**

For information about citing items in this collection consult the appropriate style manual, or see the [Citing Archival Materials](#) guide.

[Kraemer-Milligan Family Collection](#)

**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.

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