Guide to the El Cajon Horticultural Society Records MS 254

Finding aid prepared by Lauren Rasmussen
Collection processed as part of grant project supported by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) with generous funding from The Andrew Mellon Foundation.
San Diego History Center Document Collection
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San Diego, CA, 92101
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February 2, 2012
Title: El Cajon Horticultural Society Records
Identifier/Call Number: MS 254
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.5 Linear feet (1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1889 July 10-1909 November 13
Abstract: The collection contains a ledger of the El Cajon Horticultural Society from July 10, 1889 through November 13, 1909.
creator: El Cajon Horticultural Society.

Biographical / Historical Notes
The El Cajon Horticultural Society was formed in July of 1889. The original 18 members met in the El Cajon school house and were comprised of local ranchers and farmers. G.H. Bowers was the temporary secretary for the Society’s first meetings, with George M. Hawley adopting the role officially. W.H. Somers served as president, C.B. Richards as vice-president, and H. Culbertson as treasurer. The goal of the society was to unite the growing community of farmers to discuss agricultural topics and methods.

In the late 1800s, El Cajon was a thriving agrarian community, though like the rest of San Diego County, the city lacked a consistent water supply. In 1889, the San Diego Flume Company completed a 33.5 mile aqueduct that ran from the Cuyamaca Mountains down through the El Cajon Valley with the intent to help irrigate San Diego as a whole. The Horticultural Society took great interest in the construction of the irrigation system and even met with representatives from the San Diego Flume Co. to discuss the city’s interests and negotiate water rights. The society changed their name to the El Cajon Valley Improvement Association in 1909.

Arrangement
Pages of bound ledger are arranged chronologically.

Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials. SDHC Library regulations do apply.

Processing Information
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Preferred Citation
El Cajon Horticultural Society Records, MS 254, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Some pages are torn. Others are partially or completely detached from binding. Edge of ledger is warped.

Scope and Content
The ledger contains records of the El Cajon Horticultural Society from July 10, 1889 through November 13, 1909, including a constitution, by-laws, elected officers, members, and meeting minutes. The ledger records meeting minutes from July 10, 1889 to December 27, 1902, with no entries from 1903 through 1908; this 5 year hiatus is left unexplained. Meeting minutes record the date as a heading above the meeting notes and are signed at the end by the secretary or the secretary pro tem. In most cases, the meetings consist of a call to order, a reading of the last meeting minutes, reports of the officers and committee members, unfinished business, new business, open discussion, and meeting adjournment, though the detail of each record differs from meeting to meeting.

The meetings are concerned primarily with the discussion of different agriculture techniques and what can be done to improve conditions in the valley community. Horticultural methods like grafting and budding are discussed in detail. Society members debate specific cultivating methods of citrus trees, grapes, flowers, and fruit. Several of the meetings are primarily concerned with water development and what can be done to increase water efficiency in their farming endeavors. An entire meeting is devoted to the topic of fertilizer and another on the topic dairy farming. One meeting notes different methods for deterring rabbits and squirrels.

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The Society also notes their concern regarding the well-being of their community as a whole. On occasion they divert from agriculture topics to societal issues, such as how to diminish the number of drinking and gambling establishments in town. It appears they desired to establish an agricultural library, which would have been the first of its kind in San Diego County. It is unclear if this library was ever actually established.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

- Bowers, G. H.
- Chase, Levi
- Culbertson, H.
- El Cajon Horticultural Society.
- El Cajon Valley Improvement Association.
- Furber, Harry E.
- Hawley, George M.
- San Diego Flume Company.
- Shepherd, George C.
- Somers, W. H.
- Agriculture -- California
- California -- History, Local
- Clubs
- El Cajon (Calif.)
- Farm produce
- Horticulture
- Local history
- San Diego (Calif.)
- Societies
- Societies -- History, organization, etc.
- Water rights -- California
Box 1  

**El Cajon Horticultural Society Records (ledger), 1889 July 10-1909 November 13**

Entries of interest:

July 10, 1889: First meeting of the Society, includes constitution, bylaws, election of officers, and “List of Members.”

November 23, 1889: Negotiates with the San Diego Flume Company about the construction of artesian wells and water rates.

January 2, 1897: Meeting discussion includes methods for deterring squirrels and rabbits from gardens.

February 2, 1898: Meeting discussion regarding dairy farming methods.

April 2, 1898: Meeting devoted to discussion of fertilizer.

May 12, 1900: Meeting discussion discusses the gardening method of budding and grafting. Members also discuss the need to diminish the number of drinking and gambling establishments in El Cajon.

June 9, 1900: Discussion on budding and grafting continues. Members also discuss citrus gardening methods.

April 14, 1909: In depth discussion of water development and forest preservation.

August 14, 1909: The Society renames itself the “El Cajon Valley Improvement Association.” A typewritten copy of the newly adopted by-laws and constitution is attached to pages 96-98. Society indicates their new goal is “the improvement of horticulture and agriculture, the highways, home adornment and the mutual interested of its members.” In article 7, section 2 of the new constitution (page 97), the members indicate their desire to establish an agricultural library.

November 13, 1909: Last recorded meeting. The Society discusses the possibility of increasing trade with other California cities, such as San Francisco. It is agreed by the society members that cooperating with other buyers from throughout the state will help improve local market conditions.