Guide to the Mission Valley Nursery Records MS 57

Finding aid prepared by Samantha Mills
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
1649 El Prado, Suite 3
San Diego, CA, 92101
619-232-6203
March 18, 2013
Title: Mission Valley Nursery Records
Identifier/Call Number: MS 57
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.5 Linear feet (2 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1892-1947
Abstract: This collection contains business records for the Mission Valley Nursery, run by the Benard family from 1888 to 1945.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English and French.
creator: Mission Valley Nursery.
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The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials.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
Mission Valley Nursery Records, MS 57, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.
Biographical / Historical Notes
Ernest Benard was born in Orleans, France in 1859. He came to San Diego in 1887 as a foreman for the California Nursery Company in charge of landscaping at the Hotel Del Coronado. In 1888 he began to develop the Mission Valley Nursery, the first nursery in San Diego. On August 11, 1891, he married Margaretha Herkert. Margaretha was born September 17, 1868 in Calhoun County, Illinois, and came to San Diego in 1889. They lived at 732 Cerro Gordo Ave. and ran the nursery sales yard at Sixth and D Streets. Ernest died in 1928. Margaretha continued to run the business until her retirement due to ill health in 1945. She died November 24, 1947. They had two daughters: Mrs. Rosa B. Becker and Mrs. Lily C. Colt.
The Mission Valley Nursery was responsible for introducing many varieties of roses and olive trees to San Diego. The Benards provided ornamental planting throughout the City of San Diego, Point Loma, and Balboa Park. They worked with many notable local figures including Madame Katherine Tingley of the Theosophical Society, Kate Sessions, and George Marston.
Scope and Content
This collection contains business records for the Mission Valley Nursery, run by the Benard family from 1888 till 1945. Business records include a daily account books kept by Ernest Benard, receipts and invoices detailing regular expenses for stock and gardening supplies, and correspondence regarding several landscaping projects. Additionally there are nurseryman licenses, a horticultural census form, and brochures listing available merchandise from the Mission Valley Nursery and other companies.
Arrangement
Collection is arranged by subject.
Comments
Original landscaping plans for the A.H. Sweet Residence project are located in the Sweet Family Collection.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Accession number 971217.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Benard, Ernest
Benard, Margaretha Herkert
City Park Commission (San Diego, Calif.).
Marston, George White, 1850-1946
Mission Valley Nursery.
Sessions, Kate Olivia, 1857-1940
Box-folder 1:1  Administrative records, 1919 June 16-1937 August 1 and undated
   Includes:
   Business card
   Nurseryman licenses
   Letter from the Nurseryman Association
   Horticultural census

Box-folder 1:2  Daily accounts (diary), 1907 January 1-1908 January 14
   Scope and Content
   This is a pocket-sized daily account diary maintained by Ernest Benard. Entries focus on
   items sold at the nursery, stock received, accounts paid, errands run, jobs completed, and
   notations on the weather. Entries regarding sales include the customer’s name, their city or
   neighborhood, and the plants purchased. Entries occasionally mention more personal
   activities, including family outings and parties.
   Entries of interest:
   January 2, 1907: Miss Ellen Scripps of La Jolla appears here and throughout.
   January 3, 1907: Beginning here, Kate Sessions buys cut flowers every several days
   throughout the year. Additionally Mr. A.G. Spaulding appears here and throughout.
   January 6, 1907: The Isis Theatre Estate appears here and throughout.
   January 7, 1907: Folsom Brothers appear here and throughout.
   January 9, 1907: Coronado Beach Co. appears here and throughout.
   January 21, 1907: Lyman Gage of Point Loma appears here and throughout.
   February 4, 1907: Pt. Loma Homestead appears here and throughout.
   February 8, 1907: George W. Marston appears here and throughout.
   June 3, 1907: Parks of San Diego appear here and throughout.
   August 15, 1907: “Maman and children went to spend 1 week Coronado Tent City.”
   October 17, 1907: “Start to work on petition protesting against the Establishment of pest
   house at Jones Ranch.”

Box-folder 1:3  Daily accounts (diary) (copy 1 of 2), 1907 January 1-June 30

Box-folder 1:4  Daily accounts (diary) (copy 2 of 2), 1907 July 1-1908 January 14
Daily accounts (ledger), 1917 January 1-1925 March

Scope and Content
This is a daily account ledger kept in the same format as the daily account diary. Two sheets at the front of the book list total sales by month for 1917-1924. Entries include the customer’s name, their city or address, and the plants purchased. Frequent customers include W.H. Sallmon, Kate Sessions, Dr. Woodside, J. Morley for Balboa Park, the Scripps family, the Point Loma Homestead, and multiple city governments in San Diego County. Entries may also note errands, stock received, or accounts paid (including wages paid to Angelo Stassis). Some entries highlight activities of a more personal nature, including outings with family and friends, birthdays and anniversaries, or comments on local and national politics.

Entries of interest:
April 6, 1917: “United States severe political relations with Germany – look like declaration of war.”
June 1, 1917: “Rosa Benard and Peter A. Becker were married at 12 noon by Judge Lewis in Superior Court Room No. 2 Court House. They went to Los Angeles to spend few days.”
June 9, 1917: “I went to the Expo. To protest against removing J. Morley from Park (?) a large gathering in his favor. Apparently successful.”
November 27, 1917: “Vote for Municipal Ordinance ‘Bone Dry.’ Defeated by only 260 votes majority, 21000 votes cast.”
November 9, 1918: “Peter A. Becker mobilized into the army to embark for Kelly Field nr San Antonio, Texas.”
November 11, 1918: “‘Armistice.’ Stopping activities between The Allies troops in [conflict?] with Germany... Jubilation in San Diego. Parade during Day. Peter had not to go to Kelly Field until further notice. Rosa Jubilant.”
March 6, 1919: Mrs. Davidson with the Library.
March 24, 1919: Mrs. E. Fletcher at 810 Ash Street.
May 8, 1919: The head cook of the Hotel Del Coronado orders 9 dozen artichokes.
June 30, 1919: “General Prohibition to be in force July 1st. Went to town. ‘Very lively time in the night.’”
September 19, 1919: “President W. Wilson visited San Diego. 3:30 pm to 11. Fine Reception at the stadium, over 50,000 San Diegans listened to his address on the ‘League of Nations.’”
October 1919: Details a long order for the City of Coronado, divided by sections. (Page 164)
December 2, 1919: “Every Body feasting. 71 boats & Men of War in the Harbor including the New Zealand English. 27,000 tons. The Harbor busy, illuminating at night, magnificent display of Electric fireworks in the Bay.”
January 27-February 3, 1920: Maman, Lily, and E.B confined to bed with influenza. Entry details costs of physician, nurse, and help with chickens. During this week the nursery is quarantined: no sales, no delivery.
March 7, 1920: Mr. Benbough at Sheridan Ave.
April 19, 1920: “Reception given to Lily and Frank Colt in the Evening at midnight. Surprised the above by bringing Judge Lewis to marry them at the House.” Lily and Frank marry more formally the next day and then move to Barker City, Oregon.
February 1, 21921: Mr. Henry Schumann Heink in Grossmont.
May 7, 1921: “Received Telegram from Baker Oregon. Lily has a 8 lb Son – Allan Benard Colt at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Baker Oregon.”
Pages 294-296 contain a detailed list of stock bought from various companies for the start of 1922.
May 1, 1923: “First Cross Country airplane T. 2. from NY to SD. 2600 miles. 27 hours. (no stop).”
August 24, 1923: Ernest and Margaretha travel to Oregon to visit Lily, leaving Rosa and Peter in charge of the nursery. They return November 11.
February 18, 1924: “Surprised party on my 65th Birthday. Good time.”
December 23, 1924: An itemized bid for a job at Glenn Abbey Memorial Park.
Box-folder 1:5  Receipts and invoices (some in French), 1892 April 4-1901 May 12
Box-folder 1:6  Receipts and invoices, 1901 June 1-1915 October 2
Box-folder 1:7  Projects: Point Loma Homestead, 1900 June 5-1903 September 18
  Includes:
  Correspondence with Lyman Gage and Katherine Tingley
  Receipts to pay haulers

Box-folder 1:8  Projects: Park Improvement Committee, 1903 August 18-1906 January 15
  Includes:
  Correspondence from the Committee and George Marston, as well as plant orders and contract agreements.

Box-folder 1:9  Projects: A. H. Sweet Residence, 1914 June 27
  Includes:
  Photocopies of landscaping plans

Box-folder 1:10  Merchandise, 1895-1946 and undated
  Includes:
  Brochures and lists of available plant varieties from the Mission Valley Nursery, Exotic Nurseries, the California Nursery Company, and wholesaler J. Adams.

Box-folder 1:11  Benard family papers, 1917 June 9-1947 November 26 and undated
  Includes:
  Personal letter, June 9, 1917 (in French, translation attached)
  Obituary for Margaretha Benard
  Two photos sent by Ernest’s family in France