Descriptive Summary

Title: William Hancock Wilke Panama-Pacific International Exposition Photograph Album

Dates: 1915

Collection Number: SFP 119

Creator/Collector:

Extent: 1 photograph album (57 photographic prints); album 29 cm x 21.5 cm, prints 21 cm x 11 cm

Repository: San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco History Center
San Francisco, California 94102

Abstract: The hand-bound album with the inscription "William H. Wilke" consists of 57 various sized photographic prints of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, California, 1915.

Language of Material: English

Access
The collection is available for use during Photo Desk hours.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish from photographs must be submitted in writing to the Photo Curator. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the San Francisco Public Library as the owner of the physical items.

Preferred Citation
William Hancock Wilke Panama-Pacific International Exposition Photograph Album. San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco History Center

Acquisition Information
Gift.

Biography/Administrative History
William Hancock Wilke was born on June 1, 1880 to John Henry Wilke and Adeline Koerner Wilke in San Francisco, California. Wilke grew up in the Mission District and attended the California School of Design. Wilke married Nettie Maida McConnell in May 1903 in London, England and lived in Berkeley, California with their two daughters and one son. Wilke was a well-known San Francisco etcher artist, jewelry designer, illustrator and bookplate designer. Wilke was the chief illustrator for the fine printer John Henry Nash and jewelry designer for Shreve and Co. He produced hundreds of his own works of art. Among Wilke’s many honors and exhibitions was a gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. He was a member of the California Society for Etchers and Bohemian Club. Wilke died on June 18, 1958 in Palo Alto, California.

Scope and Content of Collection
The hand-bound album with the inscription "William H. Wilke" consists of 57 various sized gelatin silver photographic prints of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, California, 1915. There are a number of Fair boulevards and buildings, several pictures of specific pavilions (including the Palace of Fine Arts), and many photographs of statuary throughout the Fair. An unusual aspect of the album is the absence of people in most of the photographs. Notable exceptions are a man posed in front of a building and a woman feeding pigeons. There is one dramatic night view. There are three categories of photographs in the album: six – 8 x 6 inches (or the reverse) brown-toned photographs which appear to be professionally photographed; seven – 8x6 inches black and white gelatin silver prints which do not seem to be professionally photographed; forty-four – smaller prints all approx. 4.5 x 3.5 inches (or the reverse), also not appearing to be professionally photographed. The black and white silver prints are on a matte paper. While probably not professionally photographed as noted above, these pictures are nonetheless beautifully composed likely by a photographer with some technical expertise, as most buildings pictured have perspective correction so vertical lines are parallel to the edges of the frame. There is one loose mini-panorama measuring 3.5 x 9.5 inches. The album pages are thick paper stock and appear to be hand-made. They are bound as uncut leaves in alternating colors of brown and tan, with the outside edges irregular and untrimmed. Photographs are mounted to the recto only of each page. Inside the front cover the name “William H. Wilke” is handwritten in cursive script. It is unknown if Wilke was the photographer or creator of the photograph album. There are no captions on any of the photographs.