INVENTORY OF THE R. BRUCE URMSTON COLLECTION, 1882-1912

Finding aid prepared by Marie Beckermann
California State University, Dominguez Hills
Archives & Special Collections
University Library, Room G-145
1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, California 90747
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URL: http://www.csudh.edu/archives/csudh/index.html
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Descriptive Summary

Title: R. Bruce Urmston Collection
Dates: 1882-1912
Collection Number: Consult repository.
Creator: Urmston, R. Bruce (Robert Bruce)
Extent: 1 box, 1 folder
Repository: California State University, Dominguez Hills Archives and Special Collections

Abstract: This collection consists of two sketchbooks and eight watercolor paintings by R. (Robert) Bruce Urmston, artist. The majority of art in the two sketchbooks depicts his journey around Quebec, mainly by ship, focusing on places such as the Falls of Montmorency and Halifax, Nova Scotia. The drawings and paintings in the sketchbooks are varied in content, mostly showing the view of passing harbors, but also giving a few glimpses of people and places on the ship itself. The majority of the eight watercolor paintings illustrate places Urmston visited in California in the 1890s and 1900s, including Mount San Antonio, Chino, and Riverside. One painting from 1883 depicts the town of Douglas, Manitoba, Canada.

Language: Collection material is in English

Access
There are no access restrictions on this collection.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
[Title of item], R. BRUCE URMSTON COLLECTION, Courtesy of the Department of Archives and Special Collections. University Library. California State University, Dominguez Hills

Acquisition Information
This collection was donated by Rex Heuschkel to Archives and Special Collections at California State University, Dominguez Hills.

Processing Information
Materials were processed and arranged by Marie Beckermann in 2011.

Biography
R. (Robert) Bruce Urmston (1863-1950) was born in Hampshire, England to Henry Brabazon Urmston and Harriet Hughes Hughes, according to a family tree found on Ancestry.com. Urmston was married first to a woman named Esther and later to a woman by the name of Ella, according to that family tree. While little is known about his life back in England, we know that Urmston came to North America by the 1880s and spent a number of years traveling and documenting his travels in sketches and watercolors. In 1882, Urmston travelled by ship to the Canadian city of Quebec, a trip similar to the one he took along the St. Lawrence Seaway between 1886 and 1889. After spending some time in Douglas, Manitoba in 1893, Urmston headed to California in 1894. In March of 1894, Urmston applied for US citizenship in a Los Angeles county court. It appears that he spent a number of years in the Los Angeles/Riverside area before moving to northern California, where he passed away in 1950.

Scope and Content
This collection consists of two small sketchbooks containing sketches and watercolor paintings, as well as eight individual watercolors painted by R. Bruce Urmston during his travels to Canada and California. His sketchbook from 1882 details a voyage Urmston took by ship to Quebec, Canada. The majority of these images are of boats in bays or harbors. While there are a number of interesting images, some highlights of this sketchbook are: a two-page watercolor and pencil image looking East from Quebec at the Isle of Orleans, a full-page watercolor painting shows the Falls of Montmorency in the distance beyond some ships, a two-page panoramic watercolor illustrates a yacht
race in the Isle of Wight, and a single page watercolor of an unnamed cathedral.

The second sketchbook depicts Urmston's Canadian trip from 1886-1889. Some highlights of this sketchbook consist of: a two-page watercolor depicts the coastline of Lac Morrille, Quebec, a two-page watercolor of the harbor at Halifax, Nova Scotia, a two-page watercolor of a train wreck and fire in the snow dated March 29th, and a two-page watercolor of a winter scene where an oxen pulls logs.

The eight paintings consist of single page images that have captions and notes written on the back of each. The earliest painting (1893) is also the largest, depicting the town of Douglas, Manitoba. Captions point out places like Tom Evoy's Boarding House and Stable, Lake of the Woods Milling Co, and the Mahon and Ross General Store. These notes also mention the elevator capacities of various buildings. Two paintings labeled "No. 1" and "No. 2" illustrate areas around Riverside, looking at Mount San Antonio (Old Baldy) and the area near the Chino sugar factory in 1894. There are several paintings of Riverside showing orange groves and fields in 1903, as well as one of a train travelling through a valley captioned with "Casa Blanca Packing houses. Depot Santa Fe RR." Other paintings depict Urmston's 1910 trek to Northern California to the Mad River Valley, near Eureka in Humbolt County.

**Arrangement**

Arranged in three series:

Series I. Sketchbook 1, 1882
Series II. Sketchbook 2, 1886-1889
Series III. Watercolor Images, 1893-1912, no date

**Subjects**

Canada--In art.
Douglas (Manitoba)--In art.
Mad River Valley (Calif.)--History--Pictorial works.
Nova Scotia--In art.
Quebec--In art.
Riverside County (Calif.)--History--Pictorial works.
Saint Lawrence Seaway--In art.
Watercolors--1850-1900.
Watercolors--1890-1920.

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**Series 1. Sketchbook 1, 1882**

Physical Description: 0.25 linear feet/1/2 box

Scope and Content Note

Urmston's water voyage to Quebec. Sketchbook size: 7.25" x 5.5"

**Box 1, Folder 1**

Sketchbook1, 1882

**Series 2. Sketchbook 2, 1886-1889**

Physical Description: 0.25 linear feet/1/2 box

Scope and Content Note

More of Urmston's Canadian journeys by ship. Sketchbook size: 5.25" x 3.75"

**Box 1, Folder 2**

Sketchbook 2, 1886-1889

**Series 3. Watercolor Images, 1893-1912**

Physical Description: 1 folder

Scope and Content Note

Eight separate watercolor paintings of various sizes, mostly of Riverside.

**Oversize Folder 1**

ID Number: RBU 001

About 45 miles NE of Eureka, Humbolt County Sept. 15, 1910

Physical Description: watercolor on paper, 10.75" x 11.25"
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<td>RBU 006</td>
<td>RBU 007</td>
<td>RBU 008</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Riverside high line canal Aug. 1903</strong></td>
<td><strong>Highgrove Riverside Aug. 1903</strong></td>
<td><strong>&quot;No. 1.&quot; View of Mt. San Antonio from Riverside Aug. 1894</strong></td>
<td><strong>Casa Blanca packing houses n.d.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Looking South near Mad River, Humbolt County Sept. 1911-12</strong></td>
<td><strong>&quot;No. 2.&quot; South Riverside halfway between Ontario and Chino Aug. 1894</strong></td>
<td><strong>Douglas, Manitoba Feb. 1893</strong></td>
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<td>Physical Description: watercolor on paper, 13.25&quot; x 8.75&quot;</td>
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