
Rancho Sespe Collection: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Gerardo Licon, February 25, 2009.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

The Huntington Library

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2191

Email: reference@huntington.org

URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Rancho Sespe Collection

Dates (inclusive): 1829-1944

Collection Number: mssRancho Sespe

Extent: 412 items in 1 flat-top box.

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: This collection includes 412 items related to the history of Rancho Sespe, near modern day Fillmore, California, dating from 1829 to 1944, and including a manuscript of the history of the Rancho by E.M. Sheridan, as well as research notes, correspondence with historians, and copies of some legal documents of the Rancho's first owner, Carlos Antonio Carrillo, dating from 1829-1854.

Language: English.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Rancho Sespe Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Gift of Keith Spalding, January 1944.

Processing/Project Information

Finding aid prepared by Gerardo Licon, February 25, 2009. Original finding aid converted into PDF document by B. Black, 2011-12-10. In 2016, Diann Benti replaced the HDL version and published an EAD-encoded version of the finding aid in the Online Archive of California.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

Historical Note

Sespe is the name given to the area in the Santa Clara Valley of Ventura County near modern day Fillmore, California by indigenous inhabitants, allegedly by a tribe of that name. The first land owner of European descent was Carlos Antonio Carrillo. Carrillo gained ownership of the ranch after undergoing the Mexican Land Grant process from 1828 to 1834. Carrillo passed away in 1852 and for two years thereafter his brother Jose Antonio Carrillo underwent the process of proving to the State of California that Carlos Antonio was the legal owner of the Sespe Ranch. Thomas Wallace More bought the Sespe Ranch from the Probate court of Santa Barbara in 1854.

That year More set off to defend his land claim on two fronts. The first was a legal battle that began in 1854 and continued for decades in which More tried to prove that the Sespe Ranch consisted of six leagues of land and not two. The second front was with a series of American squatters that sought land to claim as their own; they argued that the four leagues in dispute were government property. The legal battle was not settled until 1877 when the U.S. government decided against More. The conflict with the squatters concluded with the murder of More that same year. Aside from the missions on the coast, the Sespe Ranch was one of the largest settlements inland until it was overshadowed by the growth of the neighboring town of Fillmore in the 1880s. The ranch was purchased by M.B. Hull in 1888 and was inherited in 1895 by his son and daughter Eudora Hull Spalding, wife of Keith Spalding.

Individuals related to this collection include:

Carlos Antonio Carrillo (Carlos Antonio de Jesus Carrillo) (1783-1852), first owner of Rancho Sespe. Governor of (Mexican) Alta California 1837-1838. He was the son of Jose Raimundo Carrillo (1749-1809), father of Juan Jose Carrillo (1842-1916), brother of Jose Antonio Carrillo (1796-1862), and great grandfather of actor Leo Carrillo (1880-1961).

Jose Antonio Carrillo (Jose Antonio Ezequiel Carrillo) (1796-1862), Son of Jose Raimundo Carrillo and brother of Carlos Antonio Carrillo. He served as mayor of (Mexican) Los Angeles three non-consecutive times between 1826 and 1834.

Jose Raimundo Carrillo (1749-1809), born in Loreto Baja, California, he was part of first expedition to Alta California with Gaspar de Portola in 1769. Married by Junipero Serra in 1781 to Tomasa Ignacia Lugo. Carlos Antonio Carrillo and Jose Antonio Carrillo were among his four sons and one daughter.

Robert Glass Cleland (1885-1957) professor at Occidental College. He published a book which made use of Sheridan's manuscript *The Place Called Sespe: The History of a California Ranch, 1940*, and was provided with research notes by Keith Spalding and Howard F. Pressey.

Scope and Content

The collection includes 412 items which include one manuscript on the history of Rancho Sespe, correspondence from historians, interview notes, a small number of drawings and pictures, miscellaneous notes, and copies of legal documents submitted to the California Land Commission by Carlos Antonio Carrillo in 1854 to prove his ownership of Rancho Sespe. Most of this collection is the creation of E.M. Sheridan, Keith Spalding and Howard F. Pressey. E. M. Sheridan is the author of the unpublished manuscript and was also a curator for the Pioneer Museum in Ventura, a predecessor of the Museum of Ventura County. Pressey was a historian and manager of Rancho Sespe. He also conducted most of the interviews and authored many of the interview notes in this collection. Spalding was also a historian of Rancho Sespe who assisted Pressey with interviews and had a secretary type his summary dictations.

Indexed Subjects

Carrillo, Carlos Antonio, 1783-1852

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Subject in "Correspondence" (1927-1939). 45 items. Box 1 (3).

Subject in "Interview Notes and Research Notes" (1928-1939). 63 items. Box 1 (4).

Subject in "Miscellaneous Notes" [c. 1926]. 69 items. Box 1 (5).

Chinese--California

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Clarke, Robert M.

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Del Valle, Reginaldo F. (Reginaldo Francisco), 1854-1938

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Garfield, James A. (James Abram), 1831-1881

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Gold mines and mining--California

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Subject in "Correspondence" (1927-1939). 45 items. Box 1 (3).

Subject in "Interview Notes and Research Notes" (1928-1939). 63 items. Box 1 (4).

Hancock, Winfield Scott, 1824-1886

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Indians of North America--California

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

More, Thomas Wallace, 1826-1877

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Subject in "Correspondence" (1927 - 1939). 45 items. Box 1 (3).

Subject in "Interview Notes and Research Notes" (1928-1939). 63 items. Box 1 (4).

Subject in "Miscellaneous Notes" [c. 1926]. 69 items. Box 1 (5).

Ortega, Ramón, 1885-1932

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Ventura County (Calif.)--History

Subject in "Carlos Antonio Carrillo Legal Documents" (1829-1854). 35 items. Box 1 (1).

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Subject in "Correspondence" (1927-1939). 45 items. Box 1 (3).

Subject in "Interview Notes and Research Notes" (1928-1939). 63 items. Box 1 (4).

Subject in "Miscellaneous Notes" [c. 1926]. 69 items. Box 1 (5).

Vigilantes--West (U.S.)

Subject in E. M. Sheridan "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] (1927). 200 items. Box 1 (2).

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

Subjects

Carrillo, Carlos Antonio, 1783-1852.

Clarke, Robert M.

Del Valle, Reginaldo F. (Reginaldo Francisco), 1854-1938.

Garfield, James A. (James Abram), 1831-1881.

Hancock, Winfield Scott, 1824-1886.

More, Thomas Wallace, 1826-1877.

Ortega, Ramón, 1885-1932.

Chinese -- California.

Gold mines and mining -- California.

Indians of North America -- California.

Ranches -- California -- Ventura County -- History -- Sources.

Vigilantes -- West (U.S.)

California, Southern -- History -- Sources.

Sespe (Calif. : Ranch) -- History -- Sources.

Ventura County (Calif.) -- History -- Sources.

Forms/Genres

Letters (correspondence) -- California, Southern.

Manuscripts -- California, Southern.

Research notes -- California, Southern.

Additional Contributors

Cleland, Robert Glass, 1885-1957, correspondent.

Pressey, Howard F, correspondent.

Sheridan, E. M., correspondent.

Spalding, Keith, correspondent.

Box 1

Legal Documents, Manuscript, Notes, and Correspondence

- Folder 1 **Carlos Antonio Carrillo Legal Documents. 1829-1854**
Physical Description: 35 items
Folder one contains copies of legal documents such as the 1854 California Land Commission documents which include a transcription of the Mexican Land grant of Rancho Sespe to Carlos Antonio Carrillo from 1829; and an English translation of the land grant transcriptions. Overall, these documents attest to the process of attaining a Mexican and Grant during the Mexican period of California history.
- Folder 2 **Sheridan, E.M. "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] 1927**
Physical Description: 200 items
Folder two contains the manuscript "The Sespe: Early-Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians," written by E. M. Sheridan in 1927 (the manuscript appears to be unpublished). The most important catalyst of Sespe history has to do with the ownership debate of Sespe Ranch. The land dispute is discussed in detail in Chapter Six of this manuscript.
- Folder 3 **Sheridan, E.M. "The Sespe: Early -Day History Dating from the Time of the Indians:" [unpublished manuscript] 1927-1939**
Physical Description: 45 items
Folder three is mostly correspondence associated with the collecting of information relating to the Sespe Ranch. There are also some newspaper clippings and two pictures of Thomas Wallace More, the first Anglo-American owner of the Ranch.
- Folder 4 **Correspondence. 1928-1939**
Physical Description: 63 items
Folder four consists of mostly interview and research notes but also includes a translated transcription of the will of Carlos Antonio Carrillo, the first owner of Rancho Sespe, and a short biography of Carrillo.
- Folder 5 **Miscellaneous Notes. approximately 1926**
Physical Description: 69 items
Folder five consists of several dozen miscellaneous handwritten interview and research notes that are undated. The folder also includes an oversized envelope, a newspaper clipping, and a hand-drawn map of Rancho Santa Paula/Saticoy that includes the border of Rancho Sespe.