Journals of Sphinx Ranch

Finding aid prepared by Jennifer Martinez and Brooke M. Black.
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Journals of Sphinx Ranch
Dates: 1594-1926
Bulk dates: 1878-1918
Collection Call Number: mssSphinx ranch
Creator: Sphinx Ranch (Altadena, Calif.)
Extent: 72 items, including 46 volumes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: This collection chiefly contains ranch journals of the Sphinx Ranch, vineyard, and commercial winery in Altadena, California, purchased by William Allen in 1878, as well as some additional materials related to ranch and the Allen family. The journals primarily document the day-to-day activities of the ranch, from pruning to harvesting and irrigating the vineyards and citrus trees.

Language of Material: The records are in English.

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

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Sphinx Ranch journals, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Acquisition Information
The majority of the collection was put on loan at the Huntington Library by Walter I. Allen in 1938. The family gave it to the Library in 2002 along with some additional items.

Biography
William Allen, a native of England, purchased a 502-acre ranch in Altadena, California, in 1878 and brought his family to Southern California the following year. Named the Sphinx Ranch because Allen spent twenty-three years in Egypt as a broker before coming to Southern California, the ranch had a vineyard and small commercial winery at the time Allen purchased it. Allen had additional acres of grapes and citrus trees (mostly oranges) planted on the property. After Allen's death in 1886, his wife and children, including his son Walter I. Allen, continued to operate the ranch. In 1911 a part of the ranch was subdivided, and additional subdivisions followed in subsequent years.

Scope and Content
This collection chiefly contains ranch journals of the Sphinx Ranch, vineyard, and commercial winery in Altadena, California, purchased by William Allen in 1878, as well as some additional materials related to ranch and the Allen family.
The first section of the collection consists of 43 volumes: two William Allen diaries (1878-1879), one Harold Allen diary (1884), and 40 ranch journals from 1879 to 1918. The first volume, written by William Allen in 1878, begins in Europe and continues in Southern California later in the year. Subsequent volumes document primarily the day-to-day activities of the ranch, from pruning to harvesting and irrigating the vineyards and citrus trees. Some writing indicates that there were Chinese laborers on the ranch, and entries in later volumes may have been recorded by one of William Allen's sons, Walter I. Allen, who ran the ranch in later years.
The other items in this collection are: four miscellaneous account/financial books (including one with the sales of oranges, grapes, and lemons), a volume containing the By-Laws, meeting minutes, etc., of the William Allen Estate Company, two family diaries from the 16th and 17th centuries, document with family genealogy information, one indenture on vellum related to land in England, "Bancroft's Map of California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona" (1873), and three pieces of ephemera.
related to wine production in California (1894).
Cataloger's Note: The collection used to be called the Walter I. Allen Journals.

**Arrangement**
Volumes arranged chronologically.

**Personal Names**
Sphinx Ranch (Altadena, Calif.)

**Subjects**
Agriculture--California, Southern
Chinese--California--History--19th century--Sources
Citrus fruit industry--California, Southern
Pioneers--California--Altadena--Archive
Ranches--California--Altadena--Archives
Viticulture--California, Southern
Altadena (Calif.)--Agriculture--Citrus fruit
Altadena (Calif.)--History--Sources
Altadena (Calif.)--History--Sources
California, Southern--History--19th century--Sources
Allen, Walter I.
Allen, William, -1886

**Genre**
Journals (accounts)--California, Southern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume 1</td>
<td>Allen, William, -1886. Diary.</td>
<td>1878</td>
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<td>Volume 2</td>
<td>Allen, William, -1886. Diary.</td>
<td>1879</td>
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<td>Ranch Journal. 1879-1886</td>
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<td>Volume 30</td>
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Journals of Sphinx Ranch

Volume 31  Ranch Journal. 1906
Volume 32  Ranch Journal. 1907
Volume 33  Ranch Journal. 1908
Volume 34  Ranch Journal. 1909
Volume 35  Ranch Journal. 1910
Volume 36  Ranch Journal. 1911
Volume 37  Ranch Journal. 1912
Volume 38  Ranch Journal. 1913
Volume 39  Ranch Journal. 1914
Volume 40  Ranch Journal. 1915
Volume 41  Ranch Journal. 1916
Volume 42  Ranch Journal. 1917
Volume 43  Ranch Journal. 1918
Volume 43  Ranch Journal. 1918
Volume 44  William Allen Estate Company book. 1906-1926
Volume 45  Family Bible. 1594
Volume 46  Family Bible. 1605

Very fragile condition. Includes letter by William Fletcher to William Allen, -1886 (1870, June 8)

Box 1

Other Material.

Account Book. 1869-1896
1 item

Account Sales of Oranges, Grapes, Lemons, etc. 1880-1897
1 item

2 items. Includes a letter from the Union Bank of London to William Allen, -1886 (1878, Jan. 19)

Allen, William, -1886. Bank Book. 1879-1884
18 items. Includes 17 checks

Bancroft’s Map of California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona. 1873
1 item

Ephemera. 1894
3 items

Indenture: Absolute Assignment of Houses and Land in Rivington, Sharples and Little Bolton. James Isherwood and James Allen. [Undated]
1 item

Page of Genealogy Notes. [After 1791]
1 item. On boards