Overview of the Collection

Title: Wrightwood Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1922-1929

Collection Number: mssHM 73800-73829

Extent: 30 items in 1 box

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

1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
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URL: http://www.huntington.org

Abstract: This collection contains 30 items dealing with the development of Wrightwood, California, in the San Gabriel Mountains, from a cattle ranch and apple orchard into a vacation destination by Sumner B. Wright (1858-1944) and his business associates.

Language: 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]. Wrightwood Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Gift of Homer D. Crotty, January 1961.

Historical Note

Sumner Banks Wright (1858-1944) began buying up land in the Swarthout Valley of the San Gabriel Mountains at the turn of the 20th century; by the 1920s he had turned his considerable holdings in the valley into the Circle Mountain Cattle Company, which was both cattle ranch and apple orchard. During the 1920s Wright faced financial problems that led him to try and develop the ranch more profitably as a vacation destination for the greater Los Angeles area. By the end of the decade Wright had sold or lost much of the land as a result of his financial problems; despite this, his vision of the Wright ranch becoming a tourist destination was ultimately fulfilled. The completion of the Angeles Crest highway in 1956 coincided with Los Angeles' postwar boom, and brought a new generation of vacation-seeking LA suburbanites to the new tourist-ranches, hiking trails, and ski slopes of Wrightwood.

Scope and Content

This collection contains 30 items dealing with the development of Wrightwood, California, in the San Gabriel Mountains, by Sumner B. Wright (1858-1944) and his business associates. The collection is divided into three main series, all arranged chronologically. All three sections deal with Wright's financially troubled years of the mid-late 1920s, when he and his business associates were taking steps to turn the cattle and apple operation into a vacation destination. The one exception is the first document in the container, which is the earliest and only document dating to 1922 and which deals with water-rights issues that affected the ranch's agricultural pursuits.

The first part of the collection is composed of correspondence between Sumner B. Wright and his business associates in the development of Wrightwood: Los Angeles banker A. J. (Arthur J.) Wheeler and San Francisco attorney James M. Oliver. Also included are letters from specialists hired as consultants to report on the history, climate, and geography of the area as part of the development's progress. Topics include: the environment and geography of the San Gabriel Mountains, water and riparian rights, bills and investments, business negotiations, the National Forest Service, and the development of roads.

The second part of the collection is composed of the legal and business documents or agreements made by and between Wright, Wheeler, and Oliver. These include acknowledgements of trusteeship, negotiation of investment-ownership in the land, and right to sell agreements.
The third part of the collection is composed of documents that describe or report on the Wright ranch, none of which appear to have been published. Some are the reports filed by the specialists and consultants on the meteorological, geological, and environmental conditions of the Wright ranch land, including reports by Ford A. Carpenter and Southern California Edison Company; others are documents that broadly survey and describe the ranch’s history, location, water rights, and development potential - usually in a favorable light. One of these reports contains photographs of the landscape and environment.

Arrangement
Correspondence arranged chronologically, followed by two memoranda of agreement.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library’s Online Catalog.

Subjects
United States. Forest Service.
Ranches -- California -- Los Angeles County.
Water rights -- California -- Los Angeles.
California -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.
Los Angeles (Calif.)
San Gabriel Mountains (Calif.) -- Recreational use.
Wrightwood (Calif.)

Forms/Genres
Business records -- California -- 20th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- California -- 20th century.
Reports -- California -- 20th century.

Additional Contributors
Carpenter, Ford A. (Ford Ashman), b. 1868.
Oliver, James M.
Wheeler, A. J.
Wright, Sumner B.
Southern California Edison Company.

Box 1
mssHM 73800-73829

1922, Mar. 24. Curtis, J. W. Exhibit “A” in the Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of San Bernadino. HM 73800
1923, July 20. Surr, Howard. 1 letter to George H. Cuthbert. HM 73801
1923, Sept. 24. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73802
1923, Oct. 4. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73803
1923, Oct. 31. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73804
1923, Dec. 17. Wright, Sumner B. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73805
1923, Dec. 17. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73806
1923, Dec. 20. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73807
1924, Jan. 2. Wright, Sumner B. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73808
1924, Jan. 16. Charlton, R. H. 1 letter to Charles F. Stern. HM 73809
1924, Jan 19. Wright, Sumner B. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73810
1924, Jan. 24. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73811
1924, Feb. 24. Wright, Sumner B. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73813
1924, Apr. 8. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73814
1924, May 13. [Oliver, James M.?]. 1 letter to Sumner B. Wright. HM 73815
1924, May 17. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to A. J. Wheeler. HM 73816
1924, May 17. Oliver, James M. 1 letter to William J. Stratton. HM 73817
1924, Dec. 5. Dimock, M. H. 1 letter to J. D. Carson. HM 73819

1924, July. Memorandum of Agreement. HM 73822
1926, Sep. 21. Memorandum of Agreement. HM 73823
1929, July 9. Wrightwood: Conditions of Sale. HM 73824
1923, Sep. "Wright Ranch": [report]. HM 73825

1924, Apr. 5. Carpenter, Ford Ashman. Meteorological Report. HM 73827
1929, July 12. [Southern California Edison Company]. “Electrical Infrastructure”: [report]. HM 73828

[Between 1923 and 1930]. “Value of Wrightwood based upon the workout of the first 240 acres”: [report]. HM 73829