
Photograph Album from Charles F. Lummis to Susanita Del Valle, 1888

Huntington Library. Photo Archives

Huntington Library. Photo Archives

Photograph Collections, 1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

(626) 405-2129

echase@huntington.org

<http://www.huntington.org/huntingtonlibrary.aspx?id=558>

2013

Descriptive Summary

Title: Photograph Album from Charles F. Lummis to Susanita Del Valle, 1888

Dates: 1888

Collection Number: photCL 504

Creator/Collector: Lummis, Charles Fletcher, 1859-1928

Extent: 83 cyanotype photographs in 1 album; album 13 x 21.5 cm. (5.25 x 8.5 in.). See itemized list under "Additional collection guides."

Online items available  <http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15150coll2/id/5930/rec/1>

Repository: Huntington Library. Photo Archives

San Marino, California 91108

Abstract: An album of 83 cyanotype photographs by Charles F. Lummis was a gift from Lummis to Susanita Del Valle in 1888. The majority of photographs depict Rancho Camulos in Ventura County, California, as well as members of the Del Valle family, who owned the rancho. Lummis included several self-portraits as well as scenes that evoke a romantic view of 19th century California ranch life. In addition, there are two original poems inscribed by Lummis to Susanita Del Valle. To view digital images of the photograph album, please use this link:

<http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15150coll2/id/5930/rec/1>

Language of Material: English

Access

The album has been scanned and digital reproductions are available in the Huntington Digital Library:

<http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15150coll2/id/5930/rec/1>. Due to the fragility of the album, access to the original item is granted only by permission of The Curator of Photographs.

Publication Rights

All requests for permission to publish photographs must be submitted in writing to the Curator of Photographs. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the Huntington as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained.

Preferred Citation

Photograph Album from Charles F. Lummis to Susanita Del Valle, 1888. Huntington Library. Photo Archives

Acquisition Information

Purchased in 2011 from heirs of the Del Valle family with funds provided by the Studier family in memory of Carol Jackson Cook and Donald Wrentmore Cook.

Biography/Administrative History

In 1884, Charles Fletcher Lummis (1859-1928) walked from Cincinnati, Ohio to Los Angeles, California in a public relations gambit to announce his new job as city editor of the Los Angeles Times. The provocative New Englander went on to become an outspoken and influential promoter of California and the American Southwest. Lummis wore many hats during his illustrious forty-year career: incendiary journalist; editor of *Out West* magazine; Los Angeles city librarian; presidential advisor; patron of artists and writers; and cultural preservationist. In addition, Lummis was a talented photographer, producing thousands of photographs between 1885 and 1920. Lummis started making photographs in 1885, soon after his arrival in Los Angeles. He favored the cyanotype process which was popular among amateur photographers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The cyanotype, notable for its blue tone, is made by bringing sensitized paper into contact with a negative in direct sunlight. The print is then washed in a solution of distilled water. The album, "Views of Camulos," which Lummis gave to Susanita Del Valle, is one of the earliest and most comprehensive albums produced by Lummis. In "American Character: The Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery of the Southwest" (Arcade Publishing, 2001), the author explores Lummis's relationship with the Del Valle family that led to the creation of the gift album, noting that "Lummis had paid his first visit to Camulos soon after reaching Los Angeles and had fallen in love with the place. The Del Valles became lifelong friends" (Thompson, 123). The album makes clear Lummis's infatuation with life at Camulos in its many photographs of the landscape, daily activities, and the Del Valle family. An inveterate womanizer, the married Lummis developed a romantic attraction to the sixteen-year-old Susanita. Between 1887 and 1888, Lummis wrote numerous letters to Susanita which discussed, among other things, his plans for a divorce that would enable him to marry her. Apart from his interest in Susanita, Lummis may also have seen commercial potential for his Rancho Camulos photographs. Helen Hunt Jackson visited Camulos in 1882 and including observations about ranch life in her bestselling novel "Ramona" (1884). Lummis's publication of "The Home of Ramona: Photographs of Camulos, the fine old Spanish Estate described by Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson as the Home of 'Ramona'" (1888) was the first publication to link Rancho

Camulos to the Helen Hunt Jackson novel. The gift album provides a unique and expanded set of photographs that Lummis used to champion Camulos as the original home of the fictional character Ramona. Sources used in the creation of this finding aid include: Autry National Center. Braun Research Library. Accessed February 2013.

<http://theautry.org/research/braun-research-library>. / Dawson, Michael. "Appraisal Report Prepared by Michael Dawson for The Huntington Library," July 2011. / Thompson, Mark. "American Character: The Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery of the Southwest." New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001.

Scope and Content of Collection

The photograph album chronicles Charles F. Lummis's time with the Del Valle family at Rancho Camulos in Ventura County, California from 1887 to 1888. There are many photographs of the Del Valle family, particularly the Del Valle daughters, with whom Lummis is shown playfully interacting. Family gatherings include a local Catholic priest, couples dancing, and young women playing instruments. Views of Rancho Camulos, the surrounding landscape, and architectural features such as the placita, the chapel, and the south veranda, are also prominently featured. The front cover of the photograph album bears the embossed title of "Susanita Del Valle," while the spine's title says, "Views of Camulos." An inscription on the third page reads: "Susanita Del Valle, with the best wishes of Chas. F. Lummis—Feb. 3, 1888." Some of the pictures appear in "The Home of Ramona: photographs of Camulos, the fine old Spanish estate described by Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson, as the home of 'Ramona,'" by Charles F. Lummis, published in Los Angeles in 1888. The Huntington Library holds a copy of this book (RB 35644) as well as a second edition (RB 252770). Both copies are illustrated with original cyanotypes by Lummis, many of which are in "The Home of Ramona..." The Huntington Library holds two related photograph collections: Lummis family photographs showing the construction of El Alisal (photCL 72) and portrait photographs used as Christmas greeting cards (photCL 90).

Indexing Terms

Adobe houses—California—Ventura County

Dance—California—1880-1890

Indians of North America--Fiction

Ranches--California--1880-1890

Rancho Camulos (Ventura County, Calif.)

Lummis, Charles Fletcher, 1859-1928

Del Valle family

Ventura County (Calif.)

Cyanotypes

Photograph albums

Photographs

Self-portraits

[List of Photographs](#)
