Howard W. Wright Family Collection of Photographs: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Sue Tyson.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
Photo Archives
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2191
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Overview of the Collection

Title: Howard W. Wright Family Collection of Photographs

Dates (inclusive): approximately 1878-1930

Bulk dates: 1896-1917

Collection Number: photCL 222

Creator: Wright family.

Extent: approximately 1520 photographs in 11 volumes comprising 4 journals and 7 photograph albums in 4 boxes: chiefly gelatin silver prints; journals 21 x 38 cm (8 x 15 in.) and 21 x 26 cm (8 x 10 in.), photograph albums various sizes, 29 x 38 cm (11 x 15 in.) and smaller, prints various sizes, 21 x 24 cm (8 x 9 in.) and smaller, chiefly 17 x 12 cm (7 x 5 in.) and smaller

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Abstract: The Howard W. Wright Family Collection of Photographs contains approximately 1520 photographs in eleven volumes, comprising four journal accounts written by Walter S. Wright from 1899-1901 and illustrated using photographs, and seven photograph albums compiled by Walter S. Wright and his son, Howard Walter Wright, with photographs dating from approximately 1878-1930 (chiefly 1896-1917). The photographers are chiefly unidentified, though it is assumed that most were taken by members of the Wright family, chiefly Walter S. Wright and Howard Walter Wright. The text in the journals, which contain approximately 210 photographs, concerns family life in Pasadena; Walter S. Wright's travels to Sonora, Mexico with business partners in order to gain a railroad concession for the Los Pintos Mines; and a cruise taken by the Wright family to the Channel Islands, in which Howard W. Wright engaged in bird collecting and observation, and photography. The photograph albums, which contain approximately 1310 photographs, document the Wright family's life in Pasadena; its travels to Mount Wilson in the San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Catalina Island, and other areas of California; trips aboard the Wright family yachts Seabird and Siwash to the Channel Islands and to various sites in Mexico, including for birding expeditions; Howard W. Wright's years as a student at Stanford University (from 1911-1915); his travels in Japan, China, and the Philippines; and his service in the United States Navy during World War I.

Language: English.

Access

The collection is open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, please visit the Huntington's website: www.huntington.org.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Howard W. Wright Family Collection of Photographs, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance


Biographical Note

The family of Howard Walter Wright (1892-1977) included his father, Walter Savage Wright (1854-1915); his mother, Bernice Long (1861-1931); and his sisters, Adaline Wright (1888-1935) and Catherine Wright (1895-1942).

Walter Savage Wright was City Attorney for Pasadena, California. In 1898 and 1899, Wright and business partners, including J. H. Holmes (sometimes known as James or John H. Holmes), who was then manager of the Hotel Green in Pasadena, traveled to Mexico in order to secure concessions from the Mexican government for a railroad in Western Mexico, proposed for the purpose of developing the property of the Los Pintos Gold Mining Company. Other partners in this venture included Pasadena business leader William R. Staats, who was a developer and owner of the Mount Wilson Toll Road, along with Holmes and Walter S. Wright; Colonel C. P. Morehouse of Pasadena; and J. D. Thompson of Los Angeles, manager of the Bonanza mine at Quitovaca in Sonora, Mexico.
Howard Walter Wright was a bird collector and observer, writer, lawyer, and lifelong Pasadena resident. A graduate of Throop Polytechnic Institute and Stanford University, Howard W. Wright began observing and collecting birds while still in high school, traveling primarily to the Channel Islands, initially on his sailboat, Seabird, and then on the yacht that his father gave him in 1911, the Siwash. Howard W. Wright undertook many birding expeditions with friends and family from 1908-1916, at times accompanied by ornithologists. He gathered bald eagle eggs on Santa Catalina Island in 1909; cruised around the Channel Islands with a friend from Stanford in 1912, visiting Santa Barbara, Anacapa, Santa Cruz, San Miguel, and Prince Islands; and in 1913 went on a birding expedition to San Martin Island in Mexico on the Siwash. From 1908-1913, he wrote six articles about his exploits, published in The Condor: A Magazine of Western Ornithology, some illustrated with his photographs.

Howard W. Wright married Ruth Casner Shelton (1893-1967) in 1916 and traveled to Japan, China, and the Philippines; during World War I, he served in the U.S. Navy. Returning home from his service, Wright gave up bird collecting to devote himself to his career as a Los Angeles-based attorney. A member of the California and American Bar Associations, he also served as commodore of the Los Angeles Yacht Club and the Trans-Pacific Yacht Club, and for 35 years held the sailing record around Santa Catalina Island. In 1956, after 45 years of sailing, he gave the Siwash to his son, Howard Walter Wright, Jr., and the boat remained in the family, passing on to Wright’s grandson, marine biologist Dr. William G. Wright. Upon Wright’s death in 1977, his ashes were scattered at sea.

**Scope and Content**

This collection contains approximately 1520 photographs in 11 volumes, comprising four journal accounts written by Walter Savage Wright from 1899-1901 and 7 photograph albums compiled by Walter S. Wright and his son, Howard Walter Wright. The journal accounts contain approximately 210 photographs and the photograph albums approximately 1310 photographs, dating from approximately 1878-1930, chiefly 1896-1917. The photographers are chiefly unidentified, though it is assumed that most were taken by members of the Wright family, chiefly Walter S. Wright and Howard Walter Wright; some photographs were taken by commercial photographers.

The journal accounts, entitled The Wrights in 1899 (Volume I); How Thompson Shows his Mines (1899, Volume II); About that Mexican Trip: How they Landed the Concession for the Railroad for Exploiting Los Pintos Mines (1900, Volume III); and A Summer Cruise (1901, Volume IV), are typewritten, with photographs pasted in to accompany the text; the titles are printed on the volumes. Topics addressed in the journals include the Wrights' family life in Pasadena; Walter S. Wright's journeys to Sonora, Mexico, with business partners to secure a railroad concession for the Los Pintos Mines; and a cruise taken by the Wright family to the Channel Islands in 1899, so that son Howard W. Wright could engage in bird collecting and photography.

The photograph albums depict the Wrights' life and residence in Pasadena; the family's travels to Mount Wilson in the San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Catalina Island, and other areas of California; trips aboard the yachts Seabird and Siwash to the Channel Islands; Baja, Mexico; and and other destinations, both for family vacations and for Howard Walter Wright's exploits as a bird collector and birder; Howard W. Wright's years as a student at Stanford University (1911-1915) and his tours in Japan, China, and the Philippines during his service in the Navy during World War I. Titles for the photograph albums were devised by the cataloger.

**Arrangement**

The volumes were organized and numbered by the cataloger by format and then in chronological order. The collection is arranged in the following two series:

**Series I. Journals, 1899-1901**

- Subseries A. The Wrights in 1899 (Volume I)
- Subseries B. How Thompson Shows His Mines (Volume II)
- Subseries C. About that Mexican Trip: How they Landed the Concession for the Railroad for Exploiting Los Pintos Mines (Volume III)
- Subseries D. A Summer Cruise (Volume IV)

**Series II. Photograph albums, approximately 1878-1930, bulk 1896-1917**

- Subseries A. The Wright Family: Home and Travels (Volume V)
- Subseries B. Pasadena, Catalina Island, San Gabriel Mountains, and Mexico (Volume VI)
- Subseries C. The Wright Family Album (Volume VII)
- Subseries D. Channel Islands and Mexico (Volume VIII)
- Subseries E. Stanford University (Volume IX)
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

Subjects
Holmes, James H., -- Photographs.
Wright, Howard Walter, 1892-1977 -- Photographs.
Wright, Walter Savage, 1854-1915 -- Photographs.
Wright family -- Photographs.
Wright family -- Homes and haunts -- Photographs.
Catedral de México -- Photographs.
Hermosa (steamship) -- Photographs.
Mission San Gabriel Arcangel (San Gabriel, Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Jorges Bay & Eastern Railroad (Mexico).
Stanford University -- Photographs.
Stanford University -- Sports -- Photographs.
Tournament of Roses -- Photographs.
Americans -- Mexico -- Photographs.
Birds -- California -- Channel Islands (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Birds -- California -- Santa Catalina Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Birds -- Collection and preservation -- Photographs.
Birds -- Eggs -- Photographs.
Birds -- Mexico -- Photographs.
Bullfighting -- Ensenada (Baja California, Mexico) -- Photographs.
Camping -- California -- Photographs.
Camp sites, facilities, etc. -- California -- San Gabriel Mountains -- Photographs.
Children -- Photographs.
Dwellings -- California -- Pasadena -- Photographs.
Families -- Photographs.
Fires -- California -- Avalon -- Photographs.
Fishing -- California -- Santa Catalina Island -- Photographs.
Gardens -- California -- Pasadena -- Photographs.
Gold mines and mining -- Mexico -- Photographs.
Greek letter societies -- California -- Photographs.
Hiking -- California -- Photographs.
Hotels -- California -- Photographs.
Imperialism -- United States.
Indians of Mexico -- Mexico, North -- Photographs.
Leisure -- California -- Santa Catalina Island -- Photographs.
Markets -- Mexico -- Photographs.
Mines and mineral resources -- Mexico, North.
Photography -- Political aspects -- Mexico.
Railroads -- Mexico.
Ships -- California -- Photographs.
Soldiers -- Mexico -- Photographs.
Storm surges -- California -- Avalon -- Photographs.
Vacations -- Photographs.
Warships -- Photographs.
World War, 1914-1918-- Naval operations, American -- Photographs.
Yacht racing -- Photographs.
Yachting -- Photographs.
Yachts -- Photographs.
Anacapa Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Arizona -- Photographs.
Avalon (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Baja California (Mexico : Peninsula) -- Photographs.
Channel Islands (Calif.) -- Photographs.
China -- Photographs.
Coronado Islands (Mexico) -- Photographs.
Guaymas (Sonora, Mexico) -- Photographs.
Hermosillo (Mexico)-- Photographs.
Japan -- Photographs.
Macau (China) -- Photographs.
Mexico -- Photographs.
Mexico -- Foreign economic relations -- United States.
Mexico City (Mexico) -- Photographs.
Pasadena (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Philippines -- Photographs.
San Clemente Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Gabriel Mountains (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Miguel Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Barbara Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Catalina Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Cruz Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Sonora (Mexico: State) -- Photographs.
United States -- Foreign economic relations -- Mexico.
Wilson, Mount (Calif. : Mountain) -- Photographs.

**Forms/Genres**
Cyanotypes.
Journals (accounts).
Panoramas.
Photograph albums.
Photographs.
Portraits.

**Contributors**
Banning, Hancock, 1892-1982, former owner.
Ironmonger, Charles, photographer.
Kindig, W. H., photographer.
Staats, William R., 1867-1928, photographer.
Wright, Howard Walter, 1892-1977, compiler.
Wright, Howard Walter, 1892-1977, photographer.
Wright, Walter Savage, 1854-1915, author.
Wright, Walter Savage, 1854-1915, compiler.
Wright, Walter Savage, 1854-1915, photographer.
Wright family, compiler.
C. J. Crandall & Co., photographer.
C. J. D. Photo, photographer.
Park & Co., photographer.

Container List

Series I. Journals. 1899-1901.

Physical Description: approximately 210 photographs in 4 volumes in 1 box

Box 1, Volume I

Subseries A. The Wrights in 1899. 1899

Physical Description: approximately 80 photographs, text 39 pages

This volume describes a vacation taken by the Wright family and friends on Santa Catalina Island, where they stayed at a friend’s cottage. Photographs depict the steamer on which the family traveled, the S.S. Hermosa; birds-eye views of Avalon Bay; interior and exterior views of the cottage; beach scenes and fishing trips; people including Walter S., Bernice, Howard, Catherine, and Adaline Wright and friends; Sugar Loaf; camping excursions, including a trip by Howard W. Wright with a group to Eagles’ Nest Canyon; and Howard and Adaline Wright in a cave. The volume also includes a photograph of Walter S. Wright at work in his study and a few photographs of family trips to Santa Anita Canyon and Mount Wilson in the San Gabriel Mountains; some of the photographs were taken by commercial photographers. Additionally, at the end of the volume is a two-page letter from a young Howard to Walter S. Wright describing a trip collecting birds’ eggs and a children’s drawing by an unidentified person.

Box 1, Volume II

Subseries B. How Thompson Shows His Mines. 1899

Physical Description: 26 photographs, text 21 pages

This volume recounts events from the summer of 1898, in which Walter S. Wright and associates including James H. Holmes, described as someone who “runs a tavern in Pasadena”; H. C. Steele of San Bernardino; C. P. Morehouse; and William R. Staats journeyed to Mexico in order to work with J. D. Thompson to build a railroad from San Jorge Bay in the Gulf of California in Sonora to the Los Pintos Mines. In a handwritten note to wife Bernice dated June, 1899, Wright states that “our Mexican trip was a hurried one,” and that the volume “was arranged to illustrate the haste and some other features of the trip”; in the body of the account, he describes himself as someone who “runs a law office in the same town” as Holmes.

The photographs depict portions of the journey to Mexico via Arizona, with images of Ajo, Arizona including a woman who is shown baring her breast and a saloon in a tent house; exterior and interior views of a silver mine and pumping station at an unidentified location in the state and of a Tohono O’odham feast house; a mill in Quitovac in Sonora, Mexico; and mines and Mexican miners at the Los Pintos mines, with mention of mines named “Dolores” and “Bonanza.” Photographs also include portraits of various business partners and images of them engaged in various activities, such as cooking and preparing for visits to mines.
Subseries C. About that Mexican Trip: How they Landed the Concession for the Railroad for Exploiting Los Pintos Mines. 1900

Physical Description: approximately 80 photographs, text 69 pages

This volume describes the efforts of Walter S. Wright, J. H. Holmes (here referred to as John H. Holmes), and their partners to secure the concession to build the San Jorge Bay and Eastern Railroad to the Los Pintos Mines, detailing a meeting with Judge Ygnacio Sepúlveda, former judge of the Superior Court of the County of Los Angeles, who facilitated American capital investment in Porfirian Mexico. The volume contains an appendix, Memoranda of the Concession, that outlines the terms granted to Holmes and partners "to construct and exploit a railroad on public domain from Sierra Pinta to San Jorge Bay in Sonora, Mexico." The journal account includes a business card from the Mexican Herald and describes a story in that newspaper claiming that Wright and Holmes were in Mexico in order to persuade President Porfirio Díaz to overthrow the current government of El Salvador and restore deposed President Carlos Ezeta to office.

Photographs in the volume include depictions of Walter S. Wright; J. H. Holmes, including an image with Ezeta; President Díaz entering a carriage; Judge Sepúlveda; and several thumbnail portraits of various business partners. Photographs also show pilgrims on the way to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe; indigenous people with their children and selling goods; people and street scenes in Mexico City, including some taken from the Hotel Iturbide, where the business partners stayed; the American Club and Cathedral of Mexico; palace guards and Mexican soldiers; markets, including the Flower Market; the floating gardens and Viga Canal; a bullfight; the Paseo de la Reforma; and images from a train journey, some taken from within the train and some on stops, of fruit sellers and residents of villages. One photograph features the daughter of the Reverend E. L. Conger and her husband, Mr. Vose, on their honeymoon; she is described as "a fair Pasadena" (page 25).

Subseries D. A Summer Cruise. 1901

Physical Description: 23 photographs, text 26 pages

This volume, a reprint given to Howard W. Wright by Hancock Banning, Jr., describes a three-week cruise on the yacht La Paloma taken by Captain Hancock Banning, First Mate N. W. Bell, Second Mate William R. Staats, Steward Paul Bolin, passenger George S. Patton, and two seamen, identified only as John and Hanse. Photographs show people on board the yacht and on board another yacht, the Ramona out of San Francisco, which accompanied them as they sailed towards Point Loma and San Diego and then back again to the Channel Islands; interior views of La Paloma; views of Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara Islands; Avalon Bay; and Sugar Loaf.

Series II. Photograph albums. approximately 1878-1930, 1896-1917

Physical Description: approximately 1310 photographs in 7 volumes in 3 boxes
Subseries A. The Wright Family: Home and Travels. approximately 1896-1910

Physical Description: approximately 350 photographs, album 102 pages
Photographs depict the Wright family home on North Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena; winter and summer views of Mount Wilson, including images of members of the Wright family and of Charles Dewey, Mrs. William R. Staats, James H. Holmes, W. L. Wotkynes, members of the Bart Club, and others; trips to Avalon Bay and the city of Avalon on Santa Catalina Island, with images of fish drying on racks, children dressing up as Indians, and people on boats, including the Seabird and other yachts; a pack trip on Santa Catalina Island in 1900; birds and bird collecting, including during the Wright family's trip to the Channel Islands in 1909; the Tournament of Roses in 1906; a tour of Mexico in 1907 including Puebla, Oaxaca, Ocatlan, and Mitla, with images of markets and street scenes; journeys on the Seabird to San Clemente Island in 1908 and to the Coronados Islands in Mexico in 1908 and 1910, with images of birds, boats, and seascapes; the Catalina Island race in 1910; and a pack trip to the High Sierras. Photographs also include depictions of Haley's Comet, taken with a telephoto lens; Andrew Carnegie and Dr. George Ellery Hale on Mount Wilson in 1910; and a nighttime view from Mount Wilson of Pasadena, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Palos Verdes, San Pedro, and Santa Catalina Island.

Subseries B. Pasadena, Santa Catalina Island, San Gabriel Mountains, and Mexico. approximately 1899-1906

Physical Description: approximately 250 photographs, 94 pages
Photographs depict family trips to Santa Catalina Island, with views of the island and of Avalon; hiking, fishing, camping, and scenes from a house party; interior and exterior views of the family's Pasadena residence and of people, including an African American man sitting with a boy by a garden plot and children playing outside; the Tournament of Roses parade in 1902; and trips to Mount Wilson and the San Gabriel Mountains, including images of parties at Martin's Camp and Henninger Flats, the Mount Wilson Hotel and cottages, and people on trails. Some of the photographs of Mount Wilson, including a view of the Mount Wilson Hotel with Walter S. Wright and James H. Holmes, were taken by William R. Staats. Photographs of Mexico depict a train and a town new San Jorges Bay; people, including women washing clothes in a river; the construction of a state prison; people boarding a train to Guaymas; views of Guaymas and Guaymas Bay; and scenes from a trip to Hermosillo taken by Walter S. Wright and William R. Staats, with views of the Palacio, the mayor's home, street scenes, and ruins of a church. A few photographs of the Palacio evidence conflict with Yaqui Indians, including one image showing Yaqui arms in a courtyard and others of soldiers. Several photographs depict indigenous people, including one image of Walter S. Wright looking at women sitting on a street corner, captioned "Street."

Subseries C. The Wright Family Album. approximately 1899-1910

Physical Description: 50 photographs, 50 pages
Photographs depict the San Gabriel Mission, the San Gabriel Mountains, and the William Money octagonal adobe in San Gabriel; the Mount Lowe railway; people outside of residences; El Molino Viejo (or Old Mill) in San Marino; the Hotel La Pintoresca (or Painter Hotel) and the Tournament of Roses in Pasadena; beach scenes; and Sugar Loaf at Santa Catalina Island.
Subseries D. Channel Islands and Mexico. 1911-1912

Physical Description: approximately 260 photographs, approximately 250 pages

Photographs, many of which show Walter S. Wright and Howard W. Wright, depict cormorants, birds’ nests, and seals; the city of Avalon, including scenes from a storm and its aftermath in 1912; views of the Siwash during the Santa Barbara race in 1911, when the vessel won a prize; views from cruises to Santa Barbara Island; Anacapa, including the arch and cave; San Clemente Island; Pelican Bay; Santa Cruz Island; Tinker's Bay; Frye's Harbor; San Miguel Island, including a ranch house buried in sand and the husk of a wrecked boat; scenes from a Stanford University fraternity trip, including fishing for albacore and group portraits; and views from the Trans-Pacific Yacht Race of 1912 and the Arbitrary Handicap at Santa Barbara. The album also includes photographs of a camping trip to Mecca, California and a visit to the Salton Sea; and views of Mexico, including a bullfight in Ensenada and cormorants, pelicans, ospreys, wrens, and other birds on Saint Martin Island and at Todos Santos Bay.

Subseries E. Stanford University. 1911-1915

Physical Description: 49 photographs

Photographs depict chiefly athletes engaged in sports, especially track and rugby; portraits of teams, including the crew team, and players; and scenes from games, including with the "New England All Blacks" team. One photograph shows a crowd watching a game at night, and one depicts an audience taking in a "Plug Ugly" show, a celebration featuring hats and performances that was a Stanford ritual from 1898-1915.

Subseries F. Japan, China, and Philippines; World War I Naval Service; Baja, Mexico; and Channel Islands. approximately 1916-1930

Physical Description: approximately 340 photographs, 96 pages

Photographs chiefly depict Japan, China, and the Philippines and Howard W. Wright's military service during World War I; images also depict various islands off of Baja, California, and the Channel Islands of Santa Cruz and Santa Barbara. Photographs show the ship Tenyo Maru leaving San Francisco and scenes from on board, including a gymnastics competition; views of Honolulu, Yokohama, Kobe, Kyoto, Shanghai, Nara, and Nagasaki, including coal barges and coaling operations; houses and animals pulling wares in Manila; the bay and city of Hong Kong; river boats, street scenes, and a pagoda in Canton and a 1300-year-old pagoda on the Pearl River; boats and people in Macao; and carvings by Hidari Jinguro. Photographs depicting Howard W. Wright's Naval service include views of various ships, including a coaling ship in Acapulco and various images from on decks; Navy crews at work; portraits of Naval units; and the Miraflores lock at the Panama Canal. Views of Baja include cormorants on San Martin Island; Naval ships at sea; and boats and rocky shorelines at Todos Santos, with Punta Banda in the distance; and views of the Channel Islands include scenes of sailing at Santa Cruz Island and birds, wild boar, and images of boats at Santa Barbara Island.

Subseries G. Miscellaneous photographs. approximately 1878-1917

Physical Description: 10 loose photographs in sleeve

Photographs depict a fire in Avalon in November, 1915, including views of destruction in the city and of the Hotel Metropole before and after its chimneys were destroyed; images of destruction of the Lincoln Kindergarten and of Howard W. Wright's garage from a storm described by the caption as the "Pasadena Cyclone of 1917"; a portrait of Throop High School's class of 1910, with a listing of the students, including Howard W. Wright; and reproductions of images of Avalon from September 1888 and between 1894-1896 and of San Pedro from approximately 1878, taken by J. B. Banning, Senior. Some of the prints are reproductions of photographs owned by Hancock Banning, junior, who wrote extensive captions on versos detailing the history of the areas depicted and describing the contents of the images.