Fair Oaks Ranch Photographs: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Lisa Janssen.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
Photo Archives
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: Fair Oaks Ranch Photographs
Dates (inclusive): approximately 1878–approximately 1900
Bulk dates: approximately 1889
Collection Number: photCL 6
Collector: James F. Crank Family
Extent: 96 photographs (including duplicates) in 1 box : prints
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Photo Archives

Abstract: This collection contains one photograph album and thirty-five loose photographs depicting the Fair Oaks Ranch, in Altadena, California, during the late 19th century. The ranch, owned by businessman and rancher James F. Crank, encompassed a vineyard, winery, and citrus orchards, along with a lavish residence and grounds. Subjects include interior and exterior views of the residence; the Crank family; Chinese agricultural workers and ranch hands in the vineyard; winery operations; fruit orchards; and trees and plant life on the property. Photographs in the album are cyanotype prints; the loose photographs include cyanotypes, cabinet cards, and stereographs.

Language: English.

Note:

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], Fair Oaks Ranch Photographs, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Historical Note
The Fair Oaks Ranch property (now in modern day Pasadena and Altadena, California) was originally part of the Rancho San Pasqual. Eliza Griffin Johnston purchased the property in 1862 from her brother Dr. John S. Griffin, who had large land holdings in the Los Angeles area. Eliza Johnston named the ranch “Fair Oaks” after her hometown in West Virginia, but left California after only two years following the death of her son, Albert S. Johnston II. In 1877, Benjamin S. Eaton took over the property, subdivided the ranch, and sold the northern parcel to businessman James F. Crank (1842-1935) in 1877. Crank had recently moved to Los Angeles, California, from the East Coast with his wife, Mary Agnes Crank (1846-1932), and son, Albert F. Crank (1870-1933). Crank proceeded to plant vineyards and fruit orchards and built a Victorian mansion on the property in 1882. In 1885, he constructed a winery and the next year started the Sierra Madre Vintage Company. Crank was also president of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad. He hit financial hard times and sold the ranch around 1905.

Scope and Content
This collection consists of one photograph album with 48 photographs and 35 loose photographs (as well as some duplicates), with images depicting the Fair Oaks Ranch in Altadena, California. The photographs in the album are cyanotype prints dating from around 1889; the loose photographs include cyanotypes, cabinet cards, and stereographs that date from the late 1870s to about 1900. The last page of the album contains a travel sketch in pencil, followed by sketches of a room interior and floor plan on two pages laid in. Subjects include interior and exterior views of the residence, landscaped grounds, trees, and plant life; members of the Crank family; ranch workers, including Chinese laborers, working in the...
orchards and vineyard, harvesting and packing fruit, drying apricots, and loading fruit onto horse-drawn carts; workers' quarters; the operations of the winery and distillery; and also a handful of sweeping views of the San Gabriel Mountains and the Altadena and Pasadena areas taken from vantage points on the property.

The photographer of the album is unknown, but Item 46 shows a wood hutch with a mirror in which the photographer and camera are reflected. Some of the cabinet cards and stereographs have imprints from area photographers: C. McMurtrey (Item 80), C.B. Ripley (Items 73-74), and A.C. Varela (Items 76-78).

Titles have been transcribed from captions on album pages and photo-mounts when present; titles devised by the cataloger are enclosed in square brackets. Additional information was gathered from notes on the backs of some photographs. Approximate dates for the collection were devised by the cataloger based on years noted on certain items, the general history of the property and Crank family, and also on a year visible on a calendar in Item 46. Thirteen photographs have duplicates in the collection, which are noted in the inventory below.

- Papers of James Filmore Crank (mssCrank papers).

**Alternative Form of Materials Available**

Visit the Huntington Digital Library: Photographs to view digitized images from this collection.

**Arrangement**

The collection is arranged with the album first, followed by the loose photographs in order of image number.

**Indexing Terms**

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

**Subjects**

Crank, James F. -- Photographs.
Crank Family -- Photographs.
Agricultural laborers -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Agriculture -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Chinese Americans -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Dwellings -- California -- Altadena -- Photographs.
Gardens -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Orchards -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Ranch houses -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Ranches -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Trees -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Upper class families -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Vineyards -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Wine and wine making -- California, Southern -- Photographs.
Altadena (Calif.) -- Photographs
California, Southern -- Photographs
Pasadena (Calif.) -- Photographs
San Gabriel Mountains (Calif.) -- Photographs
San Gabriel River Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs

**Forms/Genres**

Photographs.
Cabinet photographs.
Cyanotypes.
Stereographs.
Photograph albums.

**Contributors**

McMurtrey, C., photographer.
Ripley, C. B., photographer.
Varela, A. C. (Alexander C.), 1839-1915, photographer.
Box 1  Photographs

Volume 1

**Fair Oaks Rancho Photograph Album, approximately 1889-approximately 1891**

Physical Description: 48 photographs in 1 volume: cyanotype prints; images various sizes 12.5 x 20 cm and smaller, album 22.5 x 29 cm + 3 drawings

Scope and Content

This photograph album contains cyanotype prints dating from about 1889. The title “Fair Oaks Rancho San Gabriel Valley, California” is hand drawn on the cover. Images are of interior and exterior views of the Crank residence; Chinese agricultural workers and ranch hands in the vineyard and fruit orchards; winery operations; and trees and plant life on the property. The last few pages of album feature three pencil sketches by an unknown artist of a rowboat scene on Lake Keuka, a room interior, and a floor plan.

Album date range supplied by cataloger based on 1889 year visible on a calendar in Item 46 and the 1891 date in the title for the sketch of rowboats (Drawing 1).

Item 1  [Front lawn of Crank residence.]
Item 2  [Upper level of Crank Residence.]
   Note
   Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 3  [Three-quarters view of back of Crank residence.]
   Note
   Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 4  [Exterior view of front of Crank residence.]
Item 5  [Exterior view of back of Crank residence.]
Item 6  [Three-quarters exterior view of front of Crank residence.]
Item 7  [Porch of Crank residence.]
Item 8  [Interior of Crank residence.]
Item 9  [Road through orchard.]
Item 10  [Road through shade trees.]
Item 11  [Two cabbage trees.]
Item 12  [Roof of water tank.]
Item 13  [Worker's quarters.]
Item 14  Reservoir.
   Note
   Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 15  [Fruit harvest.]
   Note
   Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 16  [Dirt road through trees.]
   Note
   Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 17  [Workers in orchard.]
Item 18  [San Gabriel Mountains.]
Item 19  [Citrus grove.]
Item 20  [Fruit tree.]
Item 21  [Orchard and San Gabriel Mountains.]
Item 22  [Scenic view of mountains.]
Item 23  [Orchard path.]
Item 24  Ripe persimmons.
Item 25  In the vineyards.
Item 26  In the vineyards.
Item 27  In the vineyards.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 28  In the vineyards.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 29  In the vineyards.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 30  In the vineyards.
Item 31  Pickers filling the boxes.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 32  Pickers filling the boxes.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 33  Ready for the wagon.
Item 34  Loading the wagon.
Item 35  Loading the wagon.
Item 36  Ready for the wagon.
Item 37  [Harvested grapes.]
Item 38  Hauling to the wine press.
Item 39  On the endless belt going to the crusher.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 40  On the scales.

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 41  3700 pounds.
Item 42  Still house.
Item 43  Bottling port.
Item 44  A row in the wine cellar.
Item 45  Making brandy.
Item 46  Sample room.
Item 47  Exterior of James F. Crank house.
Item 48  Chinese vineyard workers.
Drawing 1  Going to the corn roast, Lake Keuka [pencil sketch], Sept. 1, 1891.
Drawing 2  [Pencil drawing of a front room interior with fireplace].
Drawing 3  [Pencil drawing of a house floorplan.]
Loose Photographs, approximately 1880-approximately 1900

Physical Description: 35 photographs : prints ; images various sizes.

Scope and Content

These loose photographs include cyanotypes, cabinet cards, and stereographs. Images are of the Crank residence, the Crank family, horses, and workers harvesting grapes and citrus fruit from the vineyard and orchards on the property. One photograph shows a man painting in the "plein air" manner that was popular at the time (Item 60).

Item 49
Main house.

Item 50
Ranch house.  

Item 51
East porch and garden.  

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 52
Garden.  

Item 53
Cactus plants and oak tree.  

Item 54
Hall and staircase.  

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 55
Interior.  

Item 56
Interior -- group playing cards.  

Item 57
Three unidentified women.  

Item 58
Woman in garden.  

Item 59
Unidentified woman.  

Item 60
[Elderly woman under huge live-oak tree.  

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 61
Garden.  

Item 62
Cactus plants and oak tree.  

Item 63
Hall and staircase.  

Note
Duplicate loose print in collection.

Item 64
White carriage house outside stable.  

Item 65
Group of horses including Bert Ranks "Inyo."  

Item 66
Ranch house group.  

Item 67
Reservoir and house.  

Item 68
Drying apricots in the sun.  

Item 69
Drying apricots.  

Item 70
Bert drying apricots.  

Item 71
Chinese picking grapes.  

Item 72
Chinese picking grapes.  

Item 73
House surrounded by young grape vines.  Stereograph by C.B. Ripley.

Item 74
Driveway to house.  Stereograph by C.B. Ripley.

Item 75
Harvesting grapes.  

Item 76
The vineyards of Fair Oaks Ranch.  Stereograph by A.C. Varela.
| Item 77 | Mexican help before adobe.  
| Item 78 | Crank family.  
| Item 79 | Pampas grass (18 feet) and umbrella tree.  
| Item 80 | Grape picking, Cranks' ranch.  
| Item 81 | Grape vine -- Cranks' ranch.  
| Item 82 | Gathering oranges, Mr. Crank at left.  
| Item 83 | East porch and garden.  |