
Historical Society of Southern California Collection -- Frank Rolfe Collection of Negatives and Photographs: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Sue Luftschein.

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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URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Historical Society of Southern California Collection – Frank Rolfe Collection of Negatives and Photographs

Dates (inclusive): 1899-1959

Bulk dates: 1905-1907, 1925-1932

Collection Number: photCL 400 volume 12

Creator: Rolfe, Frank, 1874-

Extent: 8 boxes

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Photo Archives

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Abstract: The Rolfe collection consists of 325 photographs (the majority of which are housed in two photograph albums), 574 negatives, one book, and ephemera, created and collected by Los Angeles civil engineer and local history enthusiast Frank Rolfe between 1899 and 1959 that depict locations throughout California and the Western United States. Many of these were locations where Rolfe worked on various surveys, including the Los Angeles aqueduct survey. The collection comprised on portion of the Historical Society of Southern California Collection, donated to the Huntington Library in 1992.

Language: English.

Access

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

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Historical Society of Southern California Collection – Frank Rolfe Collection of Negatives and Photographs. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Donated to the Huntington Library by the Historical Society of Southern California, 1992.

The collection, identified by Huntington Library catalogers as "Volume 12," was received as part of the Historical Society of Southern California Collection.

Processing Information

Prior to 2006, volunteers rehoused the negatives and the majority of the photographs. In March 2006, Sue Luftschein completed the rehousing and created this finding aid. Some items have been photocopied for preservation purposes.

Related materials in the Huntington Library

The sub-collections of the Historical Society of Southern California Collection (photCL 400) are individually cataloged in the [Huntington Online Catalog](#).

Biographical Note of Frank Rolfe

Frank Rolfe was born in Gold Hill, Nevada, in 1874, where his father was working as a miner on the Comstock Lode. In 1881, the family settled on a ranch in the Temescal Valley in Riverside County, California, near what is now Corona, and in 1890, in order to further her children's education, Rolfe's mother moved herself and the children to Los Angeles; they spent winters in the city and summers on the family ranch. Rolfe graduated from Los Angeles High School in 1894, and earned a degree in geology from Stanford University in 1898. He worked on the Los Angeles aqueduct survey, and possibly on the construction of the Ludlow and Southern Railway. He was a long-time member of the Historical Society of Southern California, and authored articles on California history and geology that appeared in Historical Society publications and the *Los Angeles Times* in the 1930s; he was also the author of *Commercial Geography of southern California*, published by Biola Press, c.1915. Rolfe died in January 1967.

Historical Note of HSSC

Founded in 1883, the Historical Society of Southern California (HSSC) is the oldest historical society in California. As part of its mission to collect and preserve Southern California's history, the HSSC amassed a photo archive over many decades. The HSSC shifted its emphasis to programs and publications in the 1980s and, in 1992, the organization donated its photo archive to The Huntington Library.

The Historical Society of Southern California Collection contains approximately 15,000 photographs and negatives focused on Southern California from approximately 1870 to 1980. As such, it is an important visual record of the growth and history of the region. The collection represents a variety of donations made to the Society over many years. It is organized into discrete sub-collections (each with a unique "volume" number) within the overall collection, which is identified by call number photCL 400.

Scope and Content

The Rolfe collection consists of 325 photographs (the majority of which are housed in two photograph albums), 574 negatives, one book, and ephemera, created and collected by Los Angeles civil engineer and local history enthusiast Frank Rolfe between 1899 and 1959 that depict locations throughout California and the Western United States. Many of these were locations where Rolfe worked on various surveys, including the Los Angeles aqueduct survey. The majority of the photographs appear to have been taken by Rolfe, but there are a few, in the photograph album in Box 2, credited to Charles J. Prudhomme.

The collection begins with Rolfe's photographs of the initial Los Angeles aqueduct survey, the majority of which are housed in an album. These photographs depict Owens Valley and Black Rock Springs. The collection also contains a published work on the aqueduct.

A second album contains photographs taken primarily by Rolfe; these are photographs of Los Angeles (central Los Angeles and neighborhoods where Rolfe and his wife lived); the San Gabriel Valley and other locations in Los Angeles County (Devil's Gate Dam, the San Gabriel Mountains, the St. Francis Dam and San Francisquito Canyon); San Bernardino County (the San Bernardino Mountains, Big Bear Lake); Riverside County (the Coachella Valley, Tahquitz Canyon, the Temescal Valley, Riverside, the San Jacinto Mountains); Kern County; and commercially produced images of Yosemite.

Boxes 3 and 4 contain negatives depicting street scenes in central Los Angeles, including the wrecking of the Temple Block, the Amestoy Block, the Hall of Records, and Bunker Hill. Also included are views of the West Adams neighborhood; houses where Rolfe and his wife lived in the 1920s and 30s; the snowstorm of 1932; and the 1920 Inglewood earthquake. The collection also includes images of Hollywood and vicinity (including a number of photographs of the Mulholland Dam and images of Brentwood and Bel Air); Santa Monica (including the Santa Monica Mountains and Decker Canyon); Santa Catalina Island; north Los Angeles County (including the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys, the ruins of the Saint Francis Dam and San Francisquito Canyon, and the "golden spike" celebration at Lang); the San Gabriel Valley (including many views of the San Gabriel Mountains); Orange County (including Modjeska's home, Santiago Canyon, San Juan Capistrano, the Puente hills, and Santa Ana Canyon); San Diego County; San Bernardino County (including a number of photographs of mining camps, including Ivanpah and Camp Roach; construction of the Ludlow and Southern Railway; and mining operations, such as the Bagdad Chase Mine and the Bagdad Mining and Milling Company); Riverside County (including the Temescal Tin Mine, Temescal and the Temescal Valley, Hog Lake, the San Jacinto River, Mount San Jacinto, and Idyllwild); Ventura County; Kern County (images of the Kern River); Inyo County; Yosemite; northern California (including Stanford University and Susie Lake); Nevada (Truckee River dam projects); Oregon; Washington; Utah; Glacier Park, Montana; people (Rolfe, his family and friends); and miscellaneous photographs (a number of desert views, mostly Southern California).

The collection also contains commercial photographs of the Rolfe family, many in carte-de-visite format. These were produced by California photographers Bradley and Rulofson, Ellis and Son, Frank G. Schumacher, George Steckel, Carleton Watkins, Michael A. Wesner, and James D. Westervelt, as well as A.J. Beals and Sutterly and Company (Nevada), A.F. Burnham (Faribault, Minnesota), E. Balch (New York City), Charles C. Hartwell (Maine), and Hart's Arcade Photographic Gallery (Watertown, NY).

The ephemeral materials consist of a letter written in 1862 from Sutter Creek by Rolfe's father Ovid to his brother Alfred in Dorchester, Massachusetts; biographical sketches of members of the Rolfe family; clippings compiled by Rolfe; Rolfe's high school and college diplomas; card files on Rolfe family history, covered wagons in Los Angeles, and Temescal history; and negative books.

Some photographs exist in duplicate. The majority of the negatives are unprinted. Some negatives have deteriorated or are damaged. Original negatives exist for 15 of the photographs in the second album; 2 copy negatives exist of photographs in the first album.

Arrangement

The collection begins with the two photograph albums. These are followed by the negatives, which are arranged in geographic order, beginning with Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. Rolfe family photographs and the ephemeral materials can be found at the end of the collection.

The negatives were originally housed in negative books; these contain itemized lists of Rolfe's original notations and can be found in Box 8.

Index Terms

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

Persons:

Balch, E., photographer.

Beals, A. J., b. ca. 1821

Burnham, A. F., photographer.

Hartwell, Charles C., photographer.

Prudhomme, Charles J., 1854-1934.

Schumacher, Frank G., b. 1861

Steckel, Geo. (George), b. 1864

Watkins, Carleton E., 1829-1916.

Wesner, Michael A., photographer.

Westervelt, James D., b. 1844

Organizations:

Bagdad Mining and Milling Co. (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Bradley and Rulofson.

Ellis and Son (Los Angeles, Calif.), photographer.

Hart's Arcade Photographic Gallery (Watertown, N.Y.), photographer.

Ludlow and Southern Railway -- Photographs.

Mission San Juan Capistrano -- Photographs.

Stanford University -- Photographs.

Sutterly and Co. (Virginia City, Nev.), photographers.

Places:

Bel Air (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.

Big Bear Lake (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Black Rock Springs (Humboldt County, Nev.) -- Photographs.

Brentwood (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.

Bunker Hill (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.

Camp Roach (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Coachella Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Decker Canyon (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Devil's Gate Dam (Pasadena, Calif.) -- Photographs.

Glacier National Park (Mont.) -- Photographs.

Hollywood (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.

Idyllwild (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Inyo County (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Ivanpah (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Kern County (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Kern River (Calif.) -- Photographs.

La Puente (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Los Angeles (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Los Angeles aqueduct (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Modjeska Ranch (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Mulholland Dam (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.
Orange County (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Oregon -- Photographs.
Owens Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Riverside (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Riverside County (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Saint Francis Dam (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Bernardino County (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Bernardino Mountains (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Diego County (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Fernando Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Francisquito Canyon (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Gabriel Mountains (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Gabriel River Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Jacinto Mountains (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Jacinto Peak (Calif.) -- Photographs.
San Jacinto River (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Ana Canyon (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Catalina Island (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Clarita Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Monica (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santa Monica Mountains (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Santiago Canyon (Orange County, Calif.) -- Photographs.
Susie Lake (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Tahquitz Canyon (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Temescal Valley (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Truckee River Watershed (Calif. and Nev.) -- Photographs.
Utah -- Photographs.
Ventura County (Calif.) -- Photographs.
Washington (State) -- Photographs.
West Adams (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Photographs.
Yosemite National Park (Calif.) -- Photographs.

Subjects:

Cityscapes -- California -- Los Angeles -- Photographs.
Earthquakes -- California -- Photographs.
Inglewood Earthquake, Calif., 1920 -- Photographs.
Mines -- California -- Bagdad -- Photographs.
Surveying -- California -- Photographs.
Winter storms -- California -- Los Angeles -- Photographs.

Document Types:

Photographs.
Photograph albums.
Portraits.
Cartes-de-visite.
Clippings.
Books.
Manuscripts.

Photographs and Photograph Albums

Box 1, Item 1-116

Los Angeles aqueduct survey photographs, 1906-1907

Physical Description: [1 photograph album and loose photographs.]

Note

[Includes fragment of an envelope addressed to Rolfe.]

Box 2, Item 117

**"Pictorial History of the Aqueduct," text by Allen Kelly; photos by Bledsoe; compiled and produced by Times-Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1913
Photograph album containing landscape views of Los Angeles and surrounding counties, and city views of Los Angeles, 1926-1928**

Box 2,

Item 118-271

Note

[Central Los Angeles; San Gabriel Valley; San Bernardino County; Riverside County; Kern County; and Yosemite.]

Negatives

Access

Advance arrangements for viewing the negatives must be made with the Curator of Photographs.

Box 3

Box 3,

Item 272-338

Negatives 272-658

Los Angeles. Central Los Angeles and vicinity, miscellaneous buildings, 1920-1932, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[The wrecking of the Temple Block, the Amestoy Block, the Hall of Records, and Bunker Hill; West Adams; Houses where Rolfe and his wife lived in the 1920s and 30s; Snowstorm of 1932; 1920 Inglewood earthquake.]

Box 3,

Item 339-352

Hollywood and vicinity, 1926-1927

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[The Mulholland Dam and images of Brentwood and Bel Air.]

Box 3,

Item 353-368

Santa Monica, 1903, 1926

Note

[The Santa Monica Mountains and Decker Canyon.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 3,

Item 369-377

South Los Angeles County, 1926

Note

[Long Beach harbor; San Pedro; Palos Verdes.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 3,

Item 378-400

Santa Catalina Island, 1901-1903

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 3,
Item 401-436

North Los Angeles County, 1925-1926

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[Pacoima Canyon; Tujunga; Big Tujunga Canyon; Placentia Canyon; the Saint Francis Dam and San Francisquito Canyon; Santa Clara River; Antelope Valley; "Golden Spike" celebration at Lang.]

Box 3,
Item 437-455

San Gabriel Valley, 1926

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[The San Gabriel Mountains; Devil's Gate Lake; San Gabriel River.]

Box 3,
Item 456-495

Orange County, 1925-1926, 1930

Note

[Huntington Beach; Balboa Beach; Corona del Mar; Newport; Lake Arden; Santiago Canyon; Modjeska's home; San Juan Capistrano; Trabuco Canyon; Puente hills; Santa Ana River; Santa Ana Canyon.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 3,
Item 496-507

San Diego County, 1925-1926

Note

[San Luis Rey Mission; San Luis Rey Canyon; Henshaw Lake; Santa Margarita River; Santa Margarita Ranch.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 3,
Item 508-594

San Bernardino County, ca. 1903, 1925-1926, 1930-1931

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[Mining camps, including Ivanpah and Camp Roach; Stateline Pass; Construction of the Ludlow and Southern Railway; Bagdad Chase Mine and the Bagdad Mining and Milling Company.]

Box 3,
Item 595-658

Riverside County, 1899, 1918, 1925-1927, 1931-1932

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[Coldwater Canyon; Temescal Tin Mine, Temescal and the Temescal Valley; Ruins of the Rolfe house; Lake Elsinore; Hog Lake; San Jacinto River; Mount San Jacinto; Idyllwild; Coachella Valley; Eagle Mountain.]

Box 4
Box 4,
Item 659-670

Negatives 659-832

Ventura County, 1926, 1931

Note

[Mission San Buenaventura; Ojai; Creeks and canyons.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 671-683

Kern County, 1926, 1929-1930

Note

[The Kern River.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 684-689

Inyo County, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[Lila C Mine; Ash Meadow; Devil's Hole.]

Box 4,
Item 690-693

Yosemite, 1925

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 694-707

Northern California, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[Stanford University; Susie Lake; Fallen Leaf Lake; Crescent City.]

Box 4,
Item 708-713

Nevada, c. 1903

Note

[Truckee River dam projects.]

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 714-718

Oregon, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 719-723

Washington, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 724-729

Utah, 1931

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 730-750

Glacier Park, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Box 4,
Item 751-786

People, [Negatives.] undated

Note

[Frank Rolfe and his family and friends.]

Box 4,
Item 787-832

Miscellaneous, undated

Physical Description: [Negatives.]

Note

[Southeastern California desert views; Desert mining camps; Camp Stump Springs and ITR; Kenwood Heights tract; unidentified images.]

Rolfe family portraits

Box 5,
Item 833-859

Rolfe family portraits, 1949, 1959, undated

Ovid Rolfe photographs and ephemera

Box 5, Item 860,
eph 1-2

Ovid Rolfe photo and ephemera, undated

Clippings and publications

Container List

Clippings and publications

Box 5, eph 3-7
Box 5, eph 8-11

Biographical sketches, undated
Clippings, undated

Physical Description: [Photocopies and originals.]

Diplomas

Box 6, eph 12-15

Diplomas, 1891, 1894, 1898, 1924

Card File

Box 7, eph 16

Card file, undated

Negative Books

Box 8, eph 17-20

Negative books, 1905-1932
