Finding Aid to the John Clifford Cowles Collection MS.1956.004

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2014
Title: John Clifford Cowles Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MS.1956.004
Contributing Institution: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.2 Linear feet 1 box and 1 bound volume
Date (inclusive): 1861-1951
Abstract: Photographs and textual materials generated by artist and writer John Clifford Cowles, documenting his time in Montana and his career in southern California.
Location of Materials: This collection is stored at the Clark Library.
creator: Bennett, Mary L.
creator: Cowles, John Clifford

Biographical Note
John Clifford Cowles was born in 1861 in Freeport, Illinois and studied in New York City with Albert Bierstadt and others. He made a career as a painter and photographer in the American west during the 1880s and 1890s, before going to Paris to study with Albert Besnard and Jean-Charles Cazin. In his writing, some of which is collected here, Cowles asserts that Senator William Andrews Clark was his patron in the 1890s and that he aided in the growth of Clark's art collection, but the extent to which this may be true is unclear. Cowles returned to the US in the late 1890s and lived primarily in Los Angeles until his death in 1951. In 1932, he wrote The whispering buddha, a mystical mystery novel.

Access
Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
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Scope and Contents
This collection consists mainly of a scrapbook and loose photographs from the estate of John Clifford Cowles. The scrapbook was not compiled by Cowles himself, but by a woman named Mary L. Bennett, who purchased some of his papers and photographs after his death in 1951. In a note at the end of the volume, Bennett recounts that after purchasing some photographs from the Cowles estate at a local store, she went to his former house and rescued more documents and photographs from destruction, including the manuscript of a fictionalized memoir. The scrapbook she assembled from Cowles' original materials includes photographs, prints, newspaper clippings, typescripts, and other material like pressed eucalyptus leaves. Many passages from the memoir are pasted into the album and even more are transcribed in Bennett's hand; it is unclear if they are assembled here in the correct order or if all of the passages come from the same work by Cowles. The loose photographs largely document Cowles work as a photographer for hire in Montana and elsewhere in the west and include images of mining operations.

Provenance
This collection was purchased by the Clark Library from Mary L. Bennett, who acquired the material from booksellers and from Cowles' landlord after Cowles' death in 1951.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], John Clifford Cowles Collection, MS.1956.004, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Authors, American--20th century
Black-and-white photographs
Scrapbooks--United States--20th century

Books MS.2011.004
Scrapbook assembled by Mary L. Bennett 1861-1951
Photographs 1885-1900?
Box 1, Folder 1  Photograph of unidentified woman, possibly by J.C. Cowles, ca 1890s
Caption
On verso in hand of Mary L. Bennett: "Neighbor who modeled for John Clifford Cowles - artist - on Waterlook St. LA 1890's -- John C. Cowles died in his 80's -- when a very young man he was a protege of Sen. Wm A Clark & toured Europe with him -- helping him purchase the fabulous art collection later in the Cochoran [sic] Art Gallery in Wash. D.C. The scrapbk diary was purchased by the Clark Libr. -- some years back -- 1950s."
In another hand: "Miller gift."

Box 1, Folder 2  Photograph of Egbert Cowles, by J.A. Brush, Minneapolis,
Caption
On verso, in hand of Mary L. Bennett: Egbert Cowles, manager of Flour City Bank.

Box 1, Folder 3  Photograph of J.C. Cowles painting in a grove of trees, ca 1890s
Note
Caption on verso in hand of Mary L. Bennett: "J. Clifford Cowles -- in his 30's 1890s -- noted scenic artist -- NY - Montana & Calif - A Protege of Senator Wm A Clarke -- Take on camping trip in Sierras -- 1890s -- died in L.A. in his 80s -- in 1951?"

Box 1, Folder 4  Photograph of David C. Dodge in his Denver greenhause, ca. 1896
Note
Caption on verso in J.C. Cowles' hand: "Conservatory, D.C. Dodge." Other notes in a different, later hand (possibly Mary L. Bennett).

Box Clarkive Pre-1934 10, Folder 4  Copper smelter, Butte, Montana ca. 1889
Note
Captions on verso of photograph: "Copper smelter, Butte, Montana" and "From John Clifford Cowles Collection" in hand of Mary L. Bennett.

Box Clarkive Pre-1934 10, Folder 5  Unknown smelter, Montana ca. 1890
Note
No caption or title on image and no provenance information. Unclear if this is an image by Cowles or if it is unrelated to him.

Box Clarkive Pre-1934 10, Folder 6  Anaconda Copper Mining Co., Montana 18--?
Note
Title taken from caption written in pencil on verso of photograph; no provenance information. Unclear if this is an image by Cowles or if it is unrelated to him.

Box Clarkive Pre-1934 11, Folder 3  Deer Lodge, Montana ca. 1880s
Note
No provenance information. Unclear if this image was taken by Cowles or if it is unrelated to him.

Box Clarkive Pre-1934 11, Folder 4  Phillipsburg, Montana ca. 1880s
Note
No provenance information. Unclear if this image was taken by Cowles or if it is unrelated to him.
**Textual materials**

creator: Cowles, John Clifford

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Mining claim--United States--19th century
Photographs--California--20th century
Photographs--United States--19th century
Scrapbooks--United States--20th century

Box 1, Folder 5  
**News clipping, manuscript material and mining contracts, 1894-1909**

Box 1, Folder 6  
**Acquisition correspondence, 1956**