Venezuelan vistas: Spanish American life, and some notes on a year in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela, 1890

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Venezuelan vistas : Spanish American life, and some notes on a year in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela

Date (inclusive): 1890

Collection number: 94/323

Creator: York, Ervine Denison, 1853-

Physical Description: 1 v. (ca. [266] leaves) : ill., maps, ports. ; 28 cm.

Text in blue carbon typescript; interleaved with leaves of white paper containing mounted photographs, excerpts of text and illustration from published works, printed maps, business and diplomatic documents, including U.S. State Department request for safe passage for York, dated June 16, 1887, business correspondence on American Telephone Company letterhead, printed calling cards, samples of currency (Cuban bills of 5 and 10 centavos), postage stamps, hotel and steamship menus, timetables, advertising circulars for commercial establishments in Caracas and Havana, and other memorabilia.

Modern dark brown leather binding by Berger of Rio de Janeiro; ornamental gold-stamped border on upper and lower covers; gold-stamped spine title "Ervine Denison York. Venezuelan vistas. 1890;" gilt dentelles; marbled endpapers. Housed in modern beige cloth clamshell box.

Abstract: Scrapbook containing the travel account by Ervine Denison York, General Manager and Assistant Vice-President of the American Telephone Company, of his travels from Washington, D.C. to Caracas, Venezuela via Cuba, between April 24,1889 and Mar. 30, 1890, illustrated with 103 photographs (some cyanotypes), most of which were taken by York himself, printed maps and illustrations, calling cards, bank notes, postage stamps, menus, business correspondence and other memorabilia of his travels.

Language: Finding aid is written in English.

Language of the Material: Materials are in English.

Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.

Los Angeles, California 90095-1575

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

Restrictions on Access

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Preferred Citation

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Biography/History

While serving as clerk to U.S. Supreme Court justice Samuel Freeman Miller, E.D. York is appointed Local Manager of the Caracas office of The American Telephone Company on April 8, 1889, and sets sail from New York City for Caracas on April 12, 1889 aboard the steamer "Philadelphia" of the Red D Line (operated by the Atlantic and Caribbean Steam Navigation Company, successor to Dallett, Boulton and Bliss & Co.) York includes many pages of text on Venezuela and Cuba from published travel accounts, as well as maps tracing his travel route, shipboard menus, and original photographs of the steamship, and sites along the way, such as the harbor at Curaçao, harbor and city scenes of Puerto Cabello and the lighthouse and customs house and wharf at La Guaira.

Scope and Content

Photographs document the city of Caracas--Parque El Calvario, and the American Telephone Company tower, offices, switchboard, and operators. There are photos of York's home-- "Quinta Jacquin," which he and his family--wife, Margaret Magnon York, and son Everett Magnon York who join him in July 1889--occupy between July and December. In December 1889, the Yorks move to a newer house known as "La Pastora," on higher ground in the city. York's typewritten account describes the geography and customs of Caracas, the daily routine, local cuisine, and the difficulties in finding a
housekeeper. He also provides accounts of nearby hikes, and train excursions to Antimano, Las Adjuntas, Petare, El Encantado, and the bathing beaches of Macuto. York mentions seeing coffee plantations and sugar-mills along the way. On one occasion, York and his wife explore some nearby ruins, which house the silkworms of a neglected silk culture industry. York includes chapters on special topics such as "The Spanish Mother Goose," on native children's rhymes, and "Una estudiante de la medicina," on local medical treatments. There are also short paragraphs on superstitions, beggary, how to dismiss a visitor, blessing a house, and bathing customs at Macuto. York's long chapter on Caracas and its people describes local transportation, churches, social classes, status of the negro, slavery, morality, theaters, bull-fighting, "pulperías" or corner grocery stores, cleanliness, and Carnaval. York includes business correspondence, Spanish newspaper clippings of editorials on his business management of American Telephone, accompanied by English translations, and description of a lawsuit in which he was named as a defendant. In a dispute over what York considers unethical and bad management on the part of the Company, which he believes is "engaged in a game of bluffing the people and Government without a dollar in the Treasury or any material to continue the work we had promised to perform," York resigns in late March 1890, and the family begins its homeward voyage. On April 1, 1890, they board the steamer "Mendez Nuñez" in the port of La Guaira, and sail to Santiago de Cuba and then on to Havana. After a short visit to that city, where they shop, view the Cathedral, and El Moro fortress, the Yorks reach New York City. On May 1, 1890, the American Telephone Company (Consolidated) went out of business, and its property and effects sold to the American Electric and Manufacturing Company.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects
York, Ervine Denison, 1853--Travel.
York, Margaret Magnon --Travel.
York, Everett Magnon --Travel.
Castillo del Morro (Havana, Cuba) --Photographs.
American Telephone Company --History.
Atlantic and Caribbean Steam Navigation Company.
Architecture, Domestic --Venezuela --Caracas --Photographs.
Steamboats --Venezuela --Photographs.
Telephone switchboards --Photographs.
Street vendors --Venezuela --Caracas --Photographs.
Voyages and travels.
Caracas (Venezuela) --Photographs.
Caracas (Venezuela) --Buildings, structures, etc. --Photographs.
Caracas (Venezuela) --Social life and customs --19th century --Photographs.
La Guaira (Vargas, Venezuela) --Photographs.
Puerto Cabello (Venezuela : District) --Photographs.
Macuto (Venezuela) --Photographs.
Havana (Cuba) --Photographs.
Venezuela --Photographs.
Venezuela --Description and travel.
Venezuela --Social life and customs --Photographs.
Cuba --Photographs.
Cuba --Description and travel.
Cuba --Social life and customs --Photographs.
Curaçao --Photographs.

Genres and Forms of Material
Photographic prints.
Cyanotypes.
Photograph albums.
Scrapbooks.

Related Material