



Finding Photographs in the Historic Document Collections



A silver gelatin dry plate from the park historic document collections.

A few hours after marine photographer Wilhelm Hester made this negative of the crew of the British four-masted bark Andelana, gale winds capsized the vessel during the night drowning most of the crew and officers. P51.12.338g1

Researching Historic Photographs

This bulletin provides instructions for researching historic photographs found in our museum collections. The park has various resources for locating images. While archival research has become technically more sophisticated, the museum still has several "legacy" systems in place that pre-date computers. These overlap with newer computerized information so it may be necessary to search several systems. The bulletin reviews how to find historic images using the park's printed indexes, electronic guides and collection descriptions, visual guides, and publications.

Printed Indexes

Database Printouts

Indexes to a portion of the photograph collections are found in the blue binders on the Historic Documents Department's Finding Aid shelf. There are six indexes: I. Vessel Names, II. Vessel Types, III. Place Names, IV. Personal Names, V. Subject Headings, VI. Photographer Artist Names. Each heading in the indexes list a photo collection and photo number. For further information on a particular item consult the Photograph Accession Finding Aid located below the blue binders. Reviewing the finding aids in these binders can lead to more photographs of interest to the researcher.

Olmsted Classified Photograph Index

The Olmsted classification scheme was used by the San Francisco Maritime Museum when it first began collecting marine photographs. It designates a letter and number combination that classifies the image as to geography and subject. For further information, the research should review the Olmsted Classified Photograph Index rack card.

Hand Written Index Binders

There are 11 binders of xeroxed hand written cards organized by the following subjects then arranged alphabetically by the appropriate names and/or subject heading: Barges, Barkentines, Bark- - America, Bark- - Foreign- built, Brigs and Brigantines, Ferries, Fishing Boats, Powered, Fishing Boats, Sail, Hulks, Launch, Miscellaneous, Places- - San Francisco, Places- - Other Than San Francisco/Worldwide, Portraits, Railroads, Riverboats, Schooners, Scow Schooner, Ships (American Built), Ships (Foreign Built), Steam Schooners, Steamships, Tugboats, U.S. and other Government Owned, Whalers, Yachts.

Subject Cards

The typed cards arranged arranged alphabetically by image subjects such as vessels, people, business, location, or maritime subject. All of these cards have been entered into the ANCS+ Archives Module database. See the section on Electronic Guides and Collection Descriptions.



A daguerreotype from the park historic document collections.

Portrait of Charles Minturn photographed by Frederick Combs in San Francisco, California, 1851. P81-054



A daguerreotype from the park historic document collections.

The ferry Erastus Corning with the owner Charles Minturn standing on the piling in the foreground, San Francisco, California, 1851. Photograph attributed to Frederick Combs.

Electronic Guides and Collection Descriptions

Online Public Access

Online Archives of California (OAC)
(<http://www.oac.cdlib.org>)
Browse or search online guides to the collection finding aid descriptions from collection to item level output from the ANCS+ Archives module.

NPS Webcatalog

(<http://www.museum.nps.gov/safr/page.htm>)
Browse the ANCS+ Collection Management module archival collection level descriptions either by discipline or by selected categories of information such as object or scientific name, artist/maker or collector. You can search the collections using keyword(s) or sets of information. This search does not include series, file unit or item level descriptions such as those found in the OAC.

Restricted to Staff Access

ANCS+ Collections Management Module
NPS Staff have full access to the ANCS+ Collections Management program database and can search the collection level descriptions.

ANCS+ Archives Module

The staff have further access to new finding aids in the programs archives module directory "SAFR ARCHIVES" which contains descriptions to the series, file unit and item level similar to those found in the OAC. They can also search the directory "CLASS - - Archives (Item Level)" providing item level access to a portion of the Olmsted classified photographs.

Visual Guides

Browsing Prints

Photoprints for browsing images in the collection are located on the public reference shelves in the blue binders Vol 1- 51. These represent items mostly from the Olmsted Classified photos with only one binder of the photo accession collections.

Subject Binders

Next to the browsing prints are binders on a variety

of maritime subjects containing photo prints and xerox copies of items found in the collections.

Scrapbooks

The library has a collection of scrapbooks containing clippings, correspondence and copies of photographs relating to materials found in the Historic Documents collection. The scrapbooks are located by consulting the library card catalog.

Publications

There are several publications that have used materials from the collection to illustrate their work and some have been published with images exclusively from our collection. The following is a brief list of the more useful publications that can provide a visual aid in locating material on your subject.

Bonnett, Wayne. *A Pacific Legacy: A Century of Maritime Photography, 1850- 1950*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991.

Haller, Stephen A. *Families at Sea: An Examination of the Rich Lore of "Lady Ships" and "Hen Frigates", circa 1850- 1900*, San Francisco: National Maritime Museum Association, 1985. G 540 H29.

Kemble, John Haskell. *San Francisco Bay: A Pictorial Maritime History*. Cambridge: Cornell Maritime Press, 1957.

Maounis, John and Daniel L. Keller, compilers. *Maritime Photograph Collections: A Guide to Morrison, Hester, Morton—Waters, and Procter Collection*. San Francisco: National Maritime Museum Association, 1982.

Weinstein, Robert A. *Tall Ships on Puget Sound: The Marine Photographs of Wilhelm Hester*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978.

Sea Letter magazine published by the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association formerly known as the National Maritime Museum Association.



A detail from a cellulose nitrate negative from the Historic Documents Departments' Muhlman Collection. This is a detail from a photograph taken by Balfe D. Johnson of a photographer on Ocean Beach, San Francisco, California with the Victorian Cliff House in the background.