



Guide to the Gifford Collection Documentary Materials, 1897-1996

Title

Gifford Collection Documentary Materials (P 218-SG 7)

Dates

1897-1996 (inclusive)

1926-1957 (bulk)

Creator

Gifford family.

Summary

The Gifford Collection Documentary Materials consist of paper records, artifacts, and ephemera documenting the Gifford Family's activities as photographers in Oregon. The Gifford Family included four notable Oregon photographers spanning three generations: Benjamin A. Gifford; his son, Ralph, and Ralph's wife, Wanda; and Ralph and Wanda's son Ben L. Gifford.

Quantity

3.7 cubic feet (8 boxes, including 3 oversize boxes)

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Oregon State University Libraries, University Archives

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Biographical Note

The Gifford Family is considered Oregon's first family of photography. Beginning in 1888, when Benjamin A. Gifford emigrated to Portland from Kansas, they began a photographic tradition that lasted into the 1950s and spanned three generations. Benjamin A. Gifford worked as photographer in Portland and The Dalles, Oregon, from the late 1880s until about 1920, when his son Ralph took over his studio in Portland. In 1936, Ralph became the first photographer of the newly established Travel and Information Department of the Oregon State Highway Department, a position he held until his death in 1947. After her husband's death, Wanda Muir Gifford took over the family's photography business and continued to take and sell photographs through the mid-1950s. Ben L. Gifford, the son of Ralph I. and Wanda Gifford, joined his mother in the family's business in early 1950s and also worked for a Salem photography studio from 1951 until 1955. Three generations of Gifford photography began to come to a close when Ben took an engineering job with the State Highway Commission in 1955.

Arrangement

The Gifford Collection Documentary Materials are arranged in 9 series: I. Gifford Family Biographical Information, 1897-1996; II. Business Records, 1926-1957; III. Fred Archer School of Photography Information Booklet, circa 1950; IV. Publications with Gifford Photographs, 1902-1987; V. Technical Manuals and Equipment Catalogs, circa 1937 - circa 1953; VI. Signs, circa 1940; VII. Oil Portrait of Ralph I. Gifford, circa 1940; VIII. Ephemera, circa 1905 - 1964; and IX. Artifacts, circa 1936-1947.

Content Description

The Gifford Collection Documentary Materials consist of paper records, artifacts, and ephemera documenting the Gifford Family's activities as photographers in Oregon. The documentary materials include biographical information on each photographer and other family members, business records, publications that include Gifford photographs, technical manuals and catalogs for photographic and motion picture equipment, artifacts, and ephemeral materials created for the Giffords' photography business. The ephemeral items include envelopes, invoices and order forms, business cards, and labels. The bulk of the business records is correspondence with magazines, other publications, and stock houses regarding purchase and use of Gifford images. A descriptive booklet about the Fred Archer School of Photography in Los Angeles is also included.

Preferred Citation

Gifford Collection Documentary Materials (P 218-SG 7), Oregon State University Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

Custodial History

The materials were donated to the Oregon State University Horner Museum in 1986 by Ben L. and Beth Gifford.

Acquisition Information

The materials were transferred from the Oregon State University Horner Museum to the University Archives in July 1996.

Additional Reference Guides

[Finding aid available online.](#)

[Finding aid available online in the Northwest Digital Archives \(NWDIA\).](#)

Related Material

This is one component of the Gifford Photographic Collection (P 218) held by the OSU Archives. Other components are: [Benjamin A. Gifford Photographs \(P 218-SG 1\)](#); [Ralph I. Gifford Photographs \(P 218-SG 2\)](#); [Ralph I. Gifford Motion Pictures \(P 218-SG 3\)](#); [Wanda Gifford Photographs \(P 218-SG 4\)](#); [Ben L. Gifford Photographs \(P 218-SG 5\)](#); and [Gifford Collection Photographs by Unknown or Other Photographers \(P 218-SG 6\)](#).

The Archives holdings include several collections documenting photography instruction at Oregon State, including the [Robert E. McDole Papers](#) and the John Garman Photographic Collections (P 095).

Subjects

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the OSU Libraries Catalog. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog (<http://oasis.oregonstate.edu>) using these headings.

Organizations**Topics**

Landscape photography--Oregon.
Photographers--Oregon.
Photography--Equipment and supplies.
Photography--Oregon.
Photography--Processing.
Photography--Studios and dark rooms.
Photography--Study and teaching--California--Los Angeles.
Portrait photography--Oregon.
Selling--Photographs.

Geographical Names

Oregon--Description and travel.

Forms of Materials in the Collection

Ephemera.
Oil paintings (visual works)

Other Creators

Fred Archer School of Photography (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Gifford, Benjamin A.
Gifford, Ben L.
Gifford, Ralph I.
Gifford, Wanda.

Series Outline

Series I. Gifford Family Biographical Information, 1897-1996

Series II. Business Records, 1926-1957

Series III. Fred Archer School of Photography Information Booklet, circa 1950

Series IV. Publications with Gifford Photographs, 1902-1987

Series V. Technical Manuals and Equipment Catalogs, circa 1937 - circa 1953

Series VI. Signs, circa 1940

Series VII. Oil Portrait of Ralph I. Gifford, circa 1940

Series VIII. Ephemera, circa 1905 - 1964

Series IX. Artifacts, circa 1936-1947

Detailed Description of the Collection

Box

Series I. Gifford Family Biographical Information, 1897-1996

Series I includes biographical information for Gifford Family members and consists primarily of photocopies that were provided by the family when the photographs were donated to Oregon State University. The documents include obituaries as well as news articles and other compilations of biographical information.

- 72 Benjamin A. Gifford, 1929-1993
- 72 Rachel M. Gifford, 1973
- 72 Ralph I. Gifford, 1946-1947
- 72 Wanda M. Gifford, 1989
- 72 Ben L. Gifford, 1944-1996
- 72 Excerpts, "History and Genealogy of the Gifford Family in America (1626-1953)", 1984
- 72 *My Story of the Last Indian War in the Northwest*, 1954
- 72 Gifford Family Scrapbook , 1897 - circa 1968
- 71 News clippings about Ralph I. Gifford and Ben L. Gifford, 1944-1947

Series II. Business Records, 1926-1957

Series II consists primarily of correspondence documenting the Gifford Family photography business during the 1930s-1950s, especially the purchase of photographs by various publications.

Correspondence, 1926-1957

- 72 Letter to Benjamin A. Gifford from W.T. Jordan of Maryhill, Washington, regarding information about one of Gifford's Native American photographs taken in the area, September 1926
- Letter to Ralph Gifford from Universal Pictures Corporation regarding motion picture assignment at Mt. Hood, September 1934
- 72 Letters of recommendation for Ralph Gifford working at the State Highway Commission, July 1936
- 72 Letter and photograph to Ralph Gifford from Sgt. F.L. Boulrier, Sept. 1944
- 72 Letter of condolence to Wanda Gifford from State Parks Superintendent S.H. Boardman regarding Ralph Gifford's death, June 1947
- 72 Letter to State Highway Dept. from Ben L. Gifford regarding state photographer tests, January 1957
- 72 Correspondence with magazines, other publications, and stock houses, 1936-1956
- 72 *American Fruit Grower Magazine*, 1950-1956
- 72 A-D
- 72 E-L
- 72 M-Z and unclassified
- 72 Customer consent slips, 1949
- 72 Exhibition records for *The New Oregon Trail* motion picture, 1942
- 72 Image log, Ralph Gifford and Ben L. Gifford [Includes original and photocopy.]
- 72 Ralph Gifford expense log, 1940-1947
- 72 Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association meeting program, June 1947
- 72 Lists of magazines using freelance photographs, undated
- 72 Jersey Spring Show program, May 1951

Box**72 Series III. Fred Archer School of Photography Information Booklet, circa 1950**

Series III consists of a booklet with information about the Fred Archer School of Photography in Los Angeles, California, including facilities, faculty, the 2-year course of study, and admissions requirements. Ben L. Gifford attended the Fred Archer School in 1950-1951.

Box**Series IV. Publications with Gifford Photographs, 1902-1987**

Series IV consists of publications that include photographs by the Gifford Family photographers, primarily in the 1940s and 1950s; several of the publications featured Gifford photographs as the cover images.

- 72 *Snap Shots on the Columbia*, 1902 [Photocopy; see Benjamin A. Gifford Photographs (P 218-SG 1) for original.]
- 72 *Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain: The Most Beautiful Spot on the Pacific Coast*, by Lewis M. Head, 1910
- 72 Events Illustrated, March, June & August 1938 [March, June Published by Beaver Engraving Co.]
- 72 *The Exhaust*, December 1938
- 72 *The Oregon State Employee*, August-September 1944 [Cover photos by Ralph I. Gifford.]
- 72 Oregon Tuberculosis Association annual report, 1946
- 72 *The Oregon State Employee*; Salem Cherry Festival program, May-June 1947 [Cover photos by Ralph I. Gifford.]
- 72 *Along the Union Pacific Railroad*, July 1947
- 72 International Evergreen Empire; tourist brochure on Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, circa 1947
- 72 *The County Officer* magazine, June 1949
- 72 *Public Works* magazine, December 1950
- 72 *Oregon Jersey Review*, Winter 1951
- 72 The Northwest Calendar for Engagements, 1954
- 72 *Oregon: Cool green vacation land*, tourist brochure, undated
- 72 Snogo snow removal ad, undated
- 72 Undated tear sheets from *Pacific Pathways*, *National Geographic* and unidentified publication, undated
- 78 Newspapers with Gifford photographs, 1938-1984
- 71 OSU Foundation 1986-87 annual report, 1987

Box**Series V. Technical Manuals and Equipment Catalogs, circa 1937 - circa 1953**

Series V consists of manuals and catalogs assembled by the Giffords for photography and motion picture film equipment and photographic processing. Information about cameras, lenses, and projectors as well as photograph films, papers, and processing are included.

- 72 Formulas notebook, undated
- 72 Temporary Strobonar Seven Instructions (electronic flash unit), circa 1953
- 72 *AnSCO Formulas on Black and White Photography*, 1946-1948
- 72 *AnSCO Photographic Papers: Their Properties, Processing and Application*, 1947
- 72 *Better Photography Made Easy (AnSCO)*, 1947
- 72 *Choosing Film for Your Camera for Black and White Photography (AnSCO)*, 1947
- 72 *Color Photography Made Easy (AnSCO)*, 1947
- 72 *Book of Formulas for Eastman Professional Films and Plates*, May 1938
- 72 Kodak Data Books
 - 72 *Formulas and Processing*, 1946 and 1952
 - 72 *Kodachrome and Kodacolor Film*, 1947
 - 72 *Kodak Lenses: Shutters and Portra Lenses*, 1948
 - 72 *Exposure and Your Camera*, C.I. Jacobson, 1948

- 72 *Salon Photography*, 1951
- 72 Photo filter information, undated
- 72 Peerless camera store catalogs, 1947-1948
- 72 Zeiss Ikon cameras catalog, undated
- 72 Stanley-Marsh picture frame tools catalog, circa 1937
- 72 Bolex motion picture film equipment catalog, circa 1941
- 72 Bell & Howell Filmosound "Master" motion picture film projector manual, circa 1939
- 72 History of the Cine-Kodak Special, undated
- 72 Eastman 8mm and 16mm home movie equipment catalog, fall 1938
- 72 *Secrets of Good Projection*, Frank E. Gunnell, undated

Box**Series VI. Signs, circa 1940**

Series VI includes two signs created and used by Ralph Gifford. One is a sign for the darkroom door reminding visitors to knock; the second is a list of postcard sets available for purchase.

- 71 Darkroom sign
- 71 Postcard list

Box**79 Series VII. Oil Portrait of Ralph I. Gifford, circa 1940**

This framed portrait was painted by Lola Schroeder.

Series VIII. Ephemera, circa 1905 - 1964

Series VIII consists of materials created for the Giffords' photography business and includes envelopes, invoice and order forms, business cards, and labels. Extra postcards and view sets created by Ralph Gifford are part of this series. Original paper sleeves that housed negatives when they were received by the Archives are included. Duplicates of a Benjamin A. Gifford advertisement include color transparencies and color photocopies made in the late 1990s.

- Benjamin A. Gifford advertisement, circa 1905
- 68 (4 frames of 120 color film transparencies)
- 71 (color photocopies)
- 72 Ralph Gifford envelope from film business, circa 1930
- 72 Ralph Gifford, circa 1940
- 72 Covers for *Scenic Oregon Album Prints*
- 72 Business cards
- 72 Labels for photoplaques
- 72 Photo order form
- 72 *Oregon in Miniature* sets envelopes
- 72 Letterhead, Travel Information Department, Oregon State Highway Commission
- 72 Ben and Beth Gifford Christmas card mock-ups, 1964 and undated
- 80 Photographic products and business forms, circa 1935-1945 [Includes extra postcards, view sets (in envelopes), blank invoice forms, business cards, and photoplaque labels.]
- 81 Original negative sleeves, circa 1920-1955 [Includes original negative sleeves for photographs made by Ralph I. Gifford, Wanda Gifford, and Ben L. Gifford.]

Box

Series IX. Artifacts, circa 1936-1947

Series IX consists of rubber stamps used by Ralph Gifford for labeling the backs of photographic prints and several signed mats separated from the accompanying photographic prints.

- 70 Ralph Gifford rubber stamps for labeling backs of photographs, circa 1936-1947
- 78 Signed Gifford mats, circa 1936-1947