

Guide to the Charles Francis Saunders Papers 1680-1954 (bulk 1800-1941)

Administrative Information

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Blaksley Library
1212 Mission Canyon Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93105
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Descriptive Summary

Extent: 13 linear feet (12 boxes)
Creator: Saunders, Charles Francis; Saunders, Elisabeth Hallowell; Saunders, Mira Culin
Acquisition information: Gift of Mira Culin Saunders in 1942
Accession number: MSS-04
Access: The collection is available for research use; however, the photograph collection is still unprocessed. Facsimiles of the autograph collection are available for use.

Biography

Charles Francis Saunders of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Pasadena, California, is best known for his articles and books on plants, gardening, travel, and the history of California and the American Southwest. He was a lifelong Quaker and interested in numerous social issues and causes, including the treatment of Native Americans. Saunders worked as a businessman in Philadelphia for many years, and his interest in plants did not occur until well into his adulthood. He developed his knowledge of the plant world by attending lectures and by botanizing in Pennsylvania and the eastern United States. He collected many plants, and his dried specimens were given to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

Saunders eventually married one of his fellow amateur botanists, Elisabeth Moore Hallowell, a prolific illustrator with whom he collaborated on many articles and several of his early books. Saunders first came to California with Elisabeth on their honeymoon, and they retired to Pasadena permanently in 1906 for Elisabeth's health. She died in 1910. In 1921 Saunders married Mira Barrett Culin, another Pasadena resident and garden writer. Most of his published works were written for general audiences in an accessible and entertaining style, reflecting his innate curiosity and keen observation, common sense, love of nature, and gently humorous view of human nature and its foibles.

Chronology

12 July 1859 Birth, Bucks Co. Pennsylvania
1888 Formed walking club with Henry Troth and Elisabeth Hallowell
1894-97 Edited and published *The United Friend*
1902 Married Elisabeth Moore Hallowell, visited California
1903 Discovered *Dalea fremontii* var. *saundersii*
1906 Moves to Pasadena, California

1910 Elisabeth Saunders dies
1921 Marries Mira Culin
1 May 1941 Dies in Pasadena at age 82

Bibliography

Apostol, Jane. Francis of the Flowers. *California History* 58(1):38-47, Spring, 1979.
Apostol, Jane. Southern California Through the Lens of Charles Francis Saunders. *Southern California Quarterly*, n.d.
Haverland, Della. Charles Francis Saunders. *Pacific Bindery Talk* 11(9):151-153, May 1939.
Robinson, John W. Charles Francis Saunders: A Quaker Botanist in Southern California. *Southern California Quarterly* 60(2):143-153, Summer 1978.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of notes, manuscripts, correspondence, published articles and books, reviews, and other materials relating to Saunders' publications; a collection of autographs and letters by famous naturalists and scientists; photographic negatives and prints of plants and various trips around Southern California; two scrapbooks of additional correspondence and articles by Saunders and his wife Elisabeth; articles by Mira Saunders and correspondence relating to her husband; and original watercolors and prints by Elisabeth Saunders.

Publication materials pertain to 14 of Saunders' 18 books. More than 60 articles of the many he wrote are also included. The majority of correspondence is from the 20th century with the bulk from the 1920s and 1930s. Saunders wrote to botanists and other experts from around North America for plant identification and nomenclatural history, Native American uses of plants, and information on the California missions. Notable correspondents include: Edward Barber, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Charles F. Lummis, Father St. John O' Sullivan, Samuel B. Parish, Marcus E. Jones, Francesco Franceschi, and Fr. Zephyrin Engelhardt. Subject files include clippings, printed matter, notes, and correspondence. Biographical material pertains to Saunders and his family. Prints and negatives are in a separate photograph collection and are not completely processed. A separate index exists for the photographic prints. Many have appeared in Saunders' books, while the bulk have not been printed and appear to be a record of his many trips through the deserts and cities of Southern California.

The letter and autograph collection contains 110 items dating back to 1680 from such notable scientists and naturalists as Charles Darwin, Alphonse de Candolle, John Muir, Alexander von Humboldt, and Joseph Dalton Hooker. Some more recent letters are those that he removed from his correspondence folders. The correspondence scrapbook contain 239 letters and 36 articles culled by Saunders from the bulk of the papers. The article scrapbook contains over 435 articles written by Saunders and has been inventoried separately.

The Mira Culin Saunders papers are a small group of articles on gardening written by her for the Pasadena Star-News. The majority of her papers were given to the Huntington Library and a copy of that finding aid is available in the library.

The artwork of Elisabeth Hallowell Saunders includes 38 original watercolors of California native plants and a limited edition set of prints that was produced in 1905. Additional published illustrations by her are in the articles scrapbook.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged according to the following series:

Series 1 Charles Francis Saunders Papers

Subseries 1: Publications

Subseries 2: Correspondence

Subseries 3: Subject files

Subseries 4: Biographical material

Subseries 5: Photographs

Subseries 6: Autographs, Scrapbooks

Series 2 Mira Culin Saunders Papers

Series 3 Elisabeth Saunders Artwork

Indexing Terms (these terms can be used in the library online catalog)

Saunders, Charles Francis, 1859-1941

Saunders, Elisabeth Hallowell

Saunders, Mira B. Culin

Native plants for cultivation—California

Gardening—California

Ethnobotany—California

Plants, Edible—California

Indians—Ethnobotany

Missions—California

Engelhardt, Zephyrin, 1851-1934

O'Sullivan, St. John, 1874-1933

Barber, Edward

Parish, S.B. (Samuel Bonsall), 1838-1928

California, Southern—History

Scrapbooks (genre term)

Ephemera (genre term)

Prints (genre term)

Paintings (genre term)

Autographs (genre term)

Negatives (genre term)

Photographic prints (genre term)

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Related Material

A selection of over 385 books, journals, pamphlets and reprints on botany, horticulture, exploration of North America, and California history have been added to the Library. The photograph collection has been transferred to the Herbarium for storage. Correspondence between Mira Saunders and Katherine Muller is located in the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Papers. An additional collection of papers of Charles Francis Saunders and Mira Culin Saunders was given to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Mira gave their collection of Native American baskets and artifacts to the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles.

Finding aid created by Laurie Hannah and Tricia Green, 2004; papers processed by Ada Wood, Emily Nelson, and Tricia Green.