



SEAEVER CENTER FOR WESTERN HISTORY RESEARCH



A film frame from the unfinished 1930 film *Creation*
(P-74 Film Frame Collection)

Notes From the Archive

MARCH 2022

This is a publication of the Seaver Center for Western History Research, a section of the History Department. If you are informed by what you read here, please share it with a friend or colleague.

The Louis B. Mayer Foundation Awards a Preservation and Digitization Grant of \$80,000

The Seaver Center has received generous funding from the Louis B. Mayer Foundation to preserve and digitize the extensive [Film Frame Collection of 3,400 items](#).

Collected by film historian and technician Earl Theisen, the film frames came to the museum in the 1930s when movie-making techniques were rapidly evolving and sound was replacing the silent medium. Theisen served as Honorary Curator of Motion Pictures at the museum.

The two-year project is in collaboration with the George Eastman Museum. Brent Riggs will serve as the project manager of the grant, and Kim Walters will serve as the processing archivist.

When complete, 500 select images will be published on a multilingual website *Film Atlas*, an online resource on film technology maintained by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF). Other contributors to *Film Atlas* include the George Eastman Museum; the National Science & Media Museum, Bradford, UK; *Cinémathèque Française*, Paris, France; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and several other film archives.

Below are sequential frames from two scenes in Willis O'Brien's unfinished 1930 film *Creation* that are part of the [Film Frame Collection](#). The images were created using the Dunning Process, a black and white film composting method that was a forerunner of green screen color techniques. Some of the scenes from *Creation* were used in the 1933 classic film *King Kong*.



Simon Shachter Receives the Student Collections Study Award

Simon Shachter, a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Chicago, is a recipient of a Student Collections Study Award that supports travel costs for undergraduate and graduate students to visit NHMLAC collections to conduct research. Simon expresses his experiences and discoveries below.



SS: "Last November as I was walking under the giant fin whale at the front of the Natural History Museum I wasn't sure what I would find in the Seaver Center, or if I was in the right place. Luckily I found the tucked-away entrance and encountered one of the best archival collections for my research. I am a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of Chicago where I study nonprofit organizations and their relationships to politics, how these sectors were created, and why they look so different in each city.

Specifically, I am comparing the 19th century civil societies of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle to uncover the earliest days that sent them on different trajectories to the nonprofit sectors we see today. A key differentiation between the cities has been the organizations created by different immigrant groups to support their communities, retain their cultures, and keep in touch with families in their birth country. As a result, I am exploring the role of racism and nativism among politicians and other civil society groups.

I only had enough time last November to spend one day among the collections, but it was enough to know that the Seaver Center was a place I needed to return to. I applied for and was chosen to receive the Natural History Museum's Student Collections Award, a grant that allowed me to return this February and spend four wonderful days with the collections and the lovely Seaver Center staff. I saw a wide range of fascinating documents, for example the 1876 constitution of the Anti-Coolie Club, No. 1, an anti-Chinese organization started by several prominent Angelenos including some who were immigrants themselves. I also reviewed the minutes of the Concordia Club, a Jewish men's social club mostly consisting of German immigrants. And in the Del Valle and Coronel collections I found evidence of their engagement with different mutual benefit associations for Hispanic-Americans alongside their political work for the city of Los Angeles and state of California.

My time at the Seaver Center has started to paint a picture of early Los Angeles as a place with an abundance of immigrant organizations and a wide plurality of civil society organizations. However, as the 19th century came to a close, many of these immigrant identities seem to have been increasingly ignored and pushed to the sidelines by politicians and a consolidating elite, despite immigrant communities increasing in population. For example, Fire Department records showed frequent responses to fires in Chinatown through the mid-1890s, but in 1899 the department responded to only one fire there, despite Chinatown's aging buildings and its rapidly increasing population density.

I have only begun to analyze many of these rich documents, and so these patterns may evolve, but I know there is so much more to explore at the Seaver Center and I look forward to returning soon."

Simon holds a volume from one of his favorite collections, the Historical Society of Southern California. Its contents about women's clubs show that most early clubs were associated with specific religious and national identities and their priorities. By



the mid-1890s, Simon explained, the prominent women's clubs were instead focused on elite social life, art and literature, politics, and citywide improvements.

Kristin Friedrich Returns to the Museum

She came back, but alas just for one day. Kristin Friedrich is the former Director of Communications at the museum. Among her many achievements in this position, she was the managing editor of the award-winning book, *Wild LA* (Timber Press, 2019).



Here is what she has been up to:

KF: "I work now on Communications for the LA County Department of Arts and Culture, and 2022 is our 75th anniversary. I wanted to celebrate it with some archival content, probably presented in a timeline on our website. The County doesn't have archives in a centralized, accessible way – at least that I have figured out thus far. So my first move was to do something I'm very good at from my old days at the museum – I decided to bug some people in Research & Collections! I wrote to John, Betty, and Brent, and made an appointment to visit the Seaver Center.

Betty clued me into the fact that some former County Supervisors had their papers in public places – I had no idea. Seaver Center has Frank G. Bonelli's scrapbooks, and the Huntington Library has the Kenneth Hahn and Ed Edelman papers. I looked through all three and learned more than I bargained for about how the County's gears and shifts work. The Seaver Center staff, back when I worked there, and now, are amazing. I consider John, Betty, Brent, and Kim brilliant at what they do, and also just ... well they're generous and helpful and kind. They always have been. It was great to be back, and to see some old friends."

Kristin wrote, "The Department of Arts began as the Music Commission. It appears to have been filled with feisty but philanthropic women who strong-armed their County Supervisors to commission concerts and performances. And it grew from there. What I ended up getting from Seaver was a photo of

something called the Pilgrimage Play, a mainstay at the venue that would become the John Anson Ford Theater."



Isabel Cortes Finds Maps to Los Angeles Street

IC: "I am currently an undergraduate at UCLA studying History and Chicana/o Studies. As an aspiring Ethnic Studies educator, my coursework focuses on uncovering counter-narratives within Los Angeles' history. A lifelong Natural History Museum supporter, I was delighted to visit the Seaver Center to conduct research for my senior capstone project entitled 'Los(t) Angeles: How Individuals in Power Employed Los Angeles Street as a Vessel for Systematic Erasure.' "



"At the Seaver Center, I examined historical maps and records documenting the history behind Los Angeles Street and its original name, *Calle de Los Negros*. Using these maps, I plan on creating a public history website through ArcGIS Story Maps documenting how city officials racialized and systematically erased the Mexican and Chinese communities living along Los Angeles Street. The website is set to release in early March."



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Digitized Collections

The collections are a part of the History Department of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. The Seaver Center opened in 1986 through a generous grant from the Seaver Institute.

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