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## Guide to the Frasher Foto Postcard Collection

### Collection number: Consult repository

Pomona Public Library  
Pomona, California

Processed by:

Pomona Public Library staff

Date Completed:

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Encoded by:

Online Archive of California

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Frasher Foto postcard collection,

**Date (inclusive):** 1921-1956

**Date (bulk):** (bulk ca. 1926-1950)

**Collection number:** Consult repository

**Creator:** Frasher, Burton, 1888-1955

**Extent:** 5,018 black and white picture postcards, 5,018 online items

**Repository:** Pomona Public Library.

Pomona, California 91769

**Abstract:** The Frasher collection is remarkable in its breadth and scope. A substantial portion of the collection consists of "Main Street" views of small southwestern towns and ghost towns, which no longer exist or have changed dramatically since they were first photographed. (For instance, the former gold mining town of Bodie, California, now a State Historic Park was a favorite subject for Frasher. His 1929 photos of the deserted town document buildings and structures that were mostly destroyed by fire in 1932). Frasher systematically photographed roadside cafes, lunch stands and restaurants; civic buildings such as schools, hospitals, post offices and churches; bridges, dams, highways and other major construction projects. He also photographed storefronts, group meetings, horse shows, automobiles, and county fairs. (Frasher was for many years the official photographer of the Los Angeles County Fair).

**Language:** English

### Online Items

Selected digitized photographs available online.

### Access

Picture postcard originals may be examined by appointment only. Inquiries concerning these materials should be directed to the Special Collections Room of the Pomona Public Library.

### Publication Rights

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### Preferred Citation

Courtesy, Frasher Foto Postcard Collection, Pomona Public Library.

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## Acquisition Information

Postcard originals and other photographic materials were given to the City of Pomona Public Library by Frashers, Inc. in 1966.

## Project Information: Frasher Foto/Digital Acquisitions Project

This project was made possible by a grant of Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds through the California State Library, during 2002-2003. The grant enabled the Pomona Public Library to select, scan and digitally display by means of a [Web Site](#), 5000 representative images from the Library's Frasher Foto Collection.

The photographic postcard images used in this project were selected from the Library's collection with the assistance of a three person team of expert consultants: Michael Dawson, of Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, California; Sally Stein, Professor of Art History, University of California at Irvine; Jennifer Watts, Curator of Photographs, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The picture postcards chosen for the project were scanned by the Southern Regional Library Facility (SRLF) of the University of California at Los Angeles, under the direction of Colleen Carlton, Operations Manager and Pete Lacson, Lead Preservation Microfilmer. This website was designed by Visual Perspectives Internet Inc. (VPI) of Irvine, California, Pete Deutschman, Executive Vice President and Karthika Harinath, Project Manager. The project utilized ContentDM, a digital collection management software tool created by DiMeMa Inc., to create, organize, publish and retrieve the digital objects that appear the web site.

## Biography

Burton Frasher Sr. (1888-1955) began his commercial photography business in Lordsburg (now LaVerne) California in 1914. In 1921, he moved his studio to Pomona, California, where he began to sell his own increasingly popular picture postcard views of the Southwest. By the end of the 1920's, what had begun as a sideline became Frasher's main business focus. He traveled extensively through California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada, ranging up through Oregon, Washington, and Alaska, and down through Baja, California and Sonora, Mexico, taking pictures of whatever subjects he thought would prove commercially viable on his postcards. During the Depression and pre-war years, the business expanded to the point that Frasher could hire photographers who doubled as salesmen to travel the Southwest taking new views and selling postcards. In 1948, over 3 1/2 million "Frasher Fotos" postcards were sold nationwide. By the time of his death in 1955, Burton Frasher was considered the Southwest's most prolific photographer.

## Scope and Content of Collection

The Frasher collection is remarkable in its breadth and scope. A substantial portion of the collection consists of "Main Street" views of small southwestern towns and ghost towns, which no longer exist or have changed dramatically since they were first photographed. (For instance, the former gold mining town of Bodie, California, now a State Historic Park was a favorite subject for Frasher. His 1929 photos of the deserted town document buildings and structures that were mostly destroyed by fire in 1932). Frasher systematically photographed roadside cafes, lunch stands and restaurants; civic buildings such as schools, hospitals, post offices and churches; bridges, dams, highways and other major construction projects. He also photographed storefronts, group meetings, horse shows, automobiles, and county fairs. (Frasher was for many years the official photographer of the Los Angeles County Fair).

The collection also includes thousands of scenic views of the Southwest's most imposing natural areas, including Bryce and Zion Canyons in Utah, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico; The Grand Canyon in Arizona; Yosemite National Park and most notably, Death Valley in California. Frasher's most memorable images were taken in Death Valley, which he visited frequently beginning in 1920. Many of his photographic expeditions there required the use of pack animals to carry equipment into remote wilderness areas that were without roads. Frasher's photographs, particularly those he took of the famous Death Valley character, "Death Valley Scotty" (Walter E. Scott 1872-1954) at his desert "castle", inspired great popular interest in this isolated landscape, which would not become accessible to the motoring public until 1926. In 1939, Frasher photographs were chosen by the WPA's Federal Writer's Project to illustrate its guidebook to Death Valley.

Lastly, Frasher photographed various Indian groups in California and the Southwest for inclusion in his postcards. These photos show, for instance, Pima women with their burden baskets, intertribal ceremonials in New Mexico, and sand-painters, basket makers, and Navajo and Hopi potters and silversmiths at their work.

## Indexing Terms

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

## Subjects

Frasher, Burton, 1888-1955

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California  
Death Valley (Calif. and Nev.)  
Grand Canyon (Ariz.)  
Los Angeles County (Calif.)  
Mono County (Calif.)  
New Mexico  
Nevada  
Pomona (Calif.)  
Utah  
Abandoned buildings  
Automobile service stations  
Bridges  
Dams  
Ghost towns  
Hotels  
Lakes & ponds  
Mountains  
Rock formations  
Panoramic views

**Genres and Forms of Material**

Photographic postcards