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Frank family collection

Title: Frank family collection
Collection No: MSS.458
Extent: 3.75 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1880-1970

Abstract: The collection comprises mainly copies of photographs taken by Abe and Henry Frank of Memphis, Tennessee, from 1880 to 1970.

Donor: Henry Frank, Woodruff, Wisconsin, March 1977; Diana Frank Sater, September 2007.

Processed by: Mary A. Clemons & T.N. McNeil, May 1979; Charles Griffith, October 2015

Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English

Preferred Citation: Frank family collection, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: November 2017

Biographical information

The brothers Godfrey (1834-circa1905) and Henry Frank were born in Lust, Bavaria, Germany, and emigrated to the United States, taking up residence in Napoleon, Arkansas, circa 1852, running a general store. Both brothers served with the Bolivar cavalry during the Civil War. In 1863 they moved to Memphis, Tennessee, and entered the mercantile business. The date is uncertain of Henry Frank's marriage to Rosa Kalish (born 1835 in Posen, Prussia); they had seven children including Amelia (born 1859), Theodore (born 1861), Theresa (born 1862), Leah, and Abe H. (1869-1941). Godfrey and Henry established themselves as successful cotton factors in Memphis, and later Godfrey expanded the business in Bolivar County, Mississippi. After Henry's death, Godfrey remained in Mississippi until 1888 and then he returned to Memphis. He was a partner in Fader, Frank and Company, which became Godfrey Frank and Company in 1882. Godfrey was also a director of several banks and a land company.

Abe Frank carried on the family business in Memphis after attending the University of the South. He married Celia Nathan of Columbus, Mississippi, and they had three children: Louise, Hannah C. (1895-1994), and Henry C. (1900-1986). Abe Frank had numerous hobbies in which he was highly skilled, including marksmanship, horse racing, boxing, and photography. It appears he first began to experiment with photography before 1900, the year his son Henry was born.

Henry C. Frank learned about photography when he was a small child, having his own camera when he was about seven years old and continued his interest throughout his life. After serving in World War I, Henry returned to Memphis and chose to enter the laundry business, serving for a decade as vice president of the Loeb Laundry until 1945 and he also became part-owner of the Success Laundry. Henry married Viola Hart, with whom he had two children, Stephen H. and Diana H.

Scope and contents

The Frank family collection contains 547 photographs (including positives and negatives) and 3 reels of both positive and negative microfilm (copies of the Franks' entire 3,000 images). The photographs document, in great detail, the business affairs, family and social life, and physical conditions in Memphis; after 1920 there are increasing numbers of photographs dealing with family vacation sites in Wisconsin and Europe.

The collection is divided into four series: the work of unknown photographers, Abe Frank's work, and that of Henry Frank, and the 2007 Addition. The first series, Unknown photographers, contains twelve images that pre-date the known period that Abe Frank owned a camera and are mainly studio shots. The second series, Abe Frank photographs, contains 139 contact prints and 137 copy prints, and spans the years circa 1895-1915. This series is divided into subject headings: Architecture, Exterior activities, Places of amusement, Transportation, Snapshots, Posed portraits, the Memphis floods, circa 1912-1914, and Oversized images. The Oversized

images are all contact prints made from existing 8" x 10" negatives. Under each subject heading, the images will generally be of family, friends, and business associates engaged in an activity which Abe Frank wanted to photograph.

The third series, Henry C. Frank photographs, contains 248 images and spans the years 1950-1970. This series is also divided into subject headings: Activities, Architecture, Travel and vacation, Portraits, and Miscellaneous photographs. Due to advances in photography and photographic equipment, the images as a whole are less portraits and more snapshots of everyday activities. Children are a main theme in the work of Henry Frank.

The 2007 Addition series contains clippings and original photographs, as well as a photograph album from circa 1902-1903.

Provenance

Henry C. Frank provided his family photograph collection to Memphis State University for copying in 1977. Part of the funding for the copying project was provided by the National Publications and Records Commission. Additional materials were donated by Henry's daughter, Diana, in 2007.

Processing information

A scrapbook containing newspaper clippings was disassembled and the clippings removed for preservation reasons. The scrapbook was discarded. The metal spine of the photograph album was removed to facilitate the interleaving of the pages and to enhance preservation.

Related materials

MSS.484. Oral history collection. Series 2.1.4. Interview conducted by Berkley Kalin, 1968 March 26. Re: the Frank family and the history of the Jewish community in Memphis. Includes transcript.

Subject terms

Frank, Abe, 1869-1941.
Frank, Henry C., 1900-1986.
Frank family—Photographs.
Jews—Tennessee—Memphis—Photographs.
Memphis (Tenn.)—Photographs.

Inventory

Box 1

Series 1. Unknown photographers.

Folder 1. Items. 1-12.

Prints of friends and family members that pre-date the known period Abe Frank owned a camera. Most are studio shots but there is one postcard type image of a heron in Wisconsin. 1880-1905.

Series 2. Abe Frank photographs.

Folder 2. Items 13-42.

Formally and informally posed portraits of family members, friends, and associates; also included is a photograph of the family's dogs in a child's "IRON CLAD" wagon.

Folder 3. Items 43-63.

Snapshots

Very informally posed shots, and spur of the moment photographs of family, friends, and strangers the photographer thought would make interesting subjects. Also included is a study of a boxer in action.

Folder 4. Items 64-82.

Snapshots

Folder 5. Items 83-85, 87-99.

Memphis area architecture-Interiors

Mainly interiors of the family business, but also images of a parlor with nightly entertainment in progress, two children using a chamber pot before retiring, two females (possibly students) working by an electric lamp, and an afternoon tea.

Box 2

Folder 1. Items 100-129.

Memphis area architecture-Exteriors

Images include the bandstand in Raleigh, Tenn., unknown church set into a hill, Frank house, Bendorf house, a cityscape showing the Orgill Brothers store and two early skyscrapers, the original Cossitt Library, a three part skyline of Memphis, and the Lowenstein house.

Folder 2. Items 130-155.

Exterior activities

Subjects appear to be interrupted in their activities and then posed. Images of children dominate this section.

Folder 3. Items 156-181.

Exterior activities

Folder 4. Items 182-206.
Exterior activities

Box 3

Folder 1. Items 207-236. Places of amusement.

Scenes and people from around the North Memphis Driving Park; a section dealing with the carnival in Memphis with scenes of the bandwagon, hula dancers, the flying lady, and other side shows.

Folder 2. Items 237-251. Transportation.

Various types of transportation including horse-drawn wagons, buggies, bicycles, river boats, airplanes, trolleys, and automobiles.

Folder 3. Items 252-268. Memphis floods, 1912-1914.

The annual flooding of the Mississippi River in Memphis before the series of levees were constructed. Included are scenes around factories, homes, businesses, and churches.

Folder 4. Items 269-287. Oversized images.

Most of these images appear in other sections but because of the greater detail in these contacts they were reproduced here also. Some of the images include: a lady in a Victorian parlor, a picnic in Raleigh, and a fruit wagon in downtown Memphis.

Box 4

Series 3. Henry C. Frank photographs.

Folder 1. Items 288-312. Activities-Family and friends.

Images by Henry Frank of his wife, daughter, and friends at parties, weddings, and Christmas celebrations. Also appearing very often are baby pictures and some gag photographs.

Folder 2. Items 313-347. Activities-Group and community.

Memphis images that the photographer thought would be of interest, including Henry Loeb as a candidate for mayor, a section on the Beaux Arts Ball, various social gatherings, and horse and speed boat racing.

Folder 3. Items 348-379. Architecture.

Most images are of dwellings, with some art galleries, museums, and the United Nations building. Some dwellings are log cabins and tar shacks while others are more expensive homes. Of particular note are two structures, including the "Lamp House", designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright in Madison, Wisconsin.

Box 5

Folder 1. Items 380-394. Portraits.

Formal studies of subjects, usually family or friends, but also included are two black laundry workers who were employed by the Success Laundry which was co-owned by Henry Frank.

Folder 2. Items 395-413. Travel and vacation.

Locations the family visited, including the family's usual vacation spot in northern Wisconsin. Also included are some unidentified locations in Europe, taken by Viola Frank.

Folder 3. Items 414-432.

Travel and vacation.

Folder 4. Items 433-454, 456-458.

Miscellaneous, 1.

These five folders have various themes, some which are: children, Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, a family holiday celebration, views of the University of Illinois at Chicago, artwork in Memphis and Chicago and a large number of snapshots.

Box 6

Folder 1. Items 459-484. Miscellaneous, 2.

Folder 2. Items 485-509. Miscellaneous, 3.

Folder 3. Items 510-534. Miscellaneous, 4.

Folder 4. Items 535-547. Miscellaneous, 5.

Box 7

Duplicates. 72 images.

Folder 1. Frank family extras (17 images).

Folder 2. Frank family children (2 images).

Folder 3. Henry Frank with unnamed man (1 image).

Box 8

Series 4. 2007 Addition.

Folder 1. Abe Frank, Godfrey Frank.

Folder 2. Postcards. Memphis, Bolivar, Tenn., 1907 and undated.

Folder 3. Scrapbook. Newspaper clippings, re: Abe Frank and horse racing, 1901-1917.

Folder 4. Henry C. Frank: 1919 and undated. Photographs and promotion warrant for Henry C. Frank during his service in World War I

Folder 5. World War II. Contains 6 Frank family ration stamp books with holder.

Folder 6. Newspaper clippings. Re: Abe Frank.

Folder 7. Memphis State University calendar, 1977. Features image of steamboat "Henry Frank" on cover; Memphis State University calendar, Friends of the Libraries, 1978. Frank family images; *Memphis* magazine, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1992 June. Features article on collection, pp.23-27.

Photographs:

Folder 8. Places. Includes Memphis downtown, Frank homes.

Folder 9. Family: 1, 1906 and undated.

Folder 10. Family: 2.

Folder 11. Family: 3.

Folder 12. Flood, Memphis, circa 1910.

Box 9

Arm bands (2): In envelope from Memphis-Shelby County Civilian Defense Council addressed to Henry C. Frank.

Oversize photographs:

Abe Frank as a child. Photographer: Gray, Memphis, Tenn.

Frank house on Adams. Photographer: Gray, Memphis, Tenn.

Photograph album: Family photographs, circa 1902-1903. Includes images of family, Dr. Herman and C.K. Smith houses, parade.

Microfilm Three reels each of positive and negative microfilm, containing 3,000 photographic images of the entire collection. The bulk of the material is Henry Frank photographs.

Separated materials

Newspapers: *Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tenn., 1945 August 15. Extra edition; final edition, first section.

Separated to Special Collections newspaper collection.