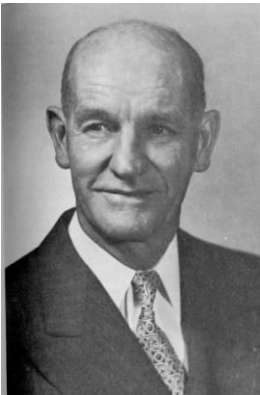


About Burton Frasher

Burton Frasher Sr. (1888-1955) began his commercial photography business in Lordsburg (now La Verne) 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.

The Frasher Postcard 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 1927 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 "Death Valley Scotty" at his desert "castle", inspired great popular interest in this isolated landscape. The motoring public would not access this area 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 Indians and other ethnic groups in California and the Southwest for inclusion in his postcards. These photos show, for instance, Kiowa Feather

Dancers in Arizona, Pima women with their burden baskets, dances and intertribal ceremonials in New Mexico, sand painters, basket makers, and Navajo and Hopi potters and silversmiths at their work.

The Pomona Public Library came into possession of its Frasher materials, (including photographic postcards and prints, salesmen's sample books, and even the original subject and numerical indexes created for the business), by means of a formal agreement with the Frasher family in the mid 1960's. These materials represent almost the entirety of Burton Frasher's commercial photography output over the course of his career.

The Frasher collection can be examined, by appointment, in the Special Collections Room of the Pomona Public Library. Contact Special Collections at 909-620-2043 or by e-mail at: Library@ci.pomona.ca.us.

