

TITLE: U.S. Army Quartermaster Depot-Customhouse Collection

DATE RANGE: 1865–2010

CALL NUMBER: Y-MS 22

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.5 linear feet (3 boxes)

PROVENANCE: From the estate of Mary Ben Kerckhoff

COPYRIGHT: Unknown

RESTRICTIONS: None

CREDIT LINE: U.S. Army Quartermaster Depot-Customhouse Collection, Y-MS 22, Arizona Historical Society-Rio Colorado Division, Yuma

PROCESSED BY: Benjamin Findley, 2013

HISTORICAL NOTE:

The Army Quartermaster Depot was established in the early 1860s, the exact date differs depending on the source. Prior to this time, supplies were shipped by sea to the mouth of the Colorado River where they were transferred to steamboat for delivery to Fort Yuma on the California side of the river. The Fort acted as a supply hub, storing the supplies until they were transported to other forts in Arizona. Ferrying supplies across the river to mule trains that would carry to their destinations proved to be very expensive. As a cost-saving measure, the Army established the Quartermaster Depot on the Arizona side of the river so military supplies could be delivered, warehoused and freighted without the ferry expense. The Army used the Depot until 1880 when it was closed and much of the equipment was moved to Fort Lowell. The Corral House was originally attached to the corral in the depot and was used to store grain and tack. After the Depot was closed the corral itself was dismantled. When the Bureau of Reclamation built their headquarters at the Depot they appended it to the remaining structure of the Corral House. The Customhouse is the only building on the site that predates the establishment of the Depot.

There is some confusion as to what comprised the Customhouse. Some sources use it interchangeably for several of the buildings that were part of the Quartermaster Depot. The exact details are unknown, but it was reportedly built by steamboat captain George A. Johnson as early as 1859. It served for a time as the Quartermaster's residence. In 1873 the U. S. Signal Corps had an office in the building where they relayed telegrams to other government installations in the Southwest and collected weather records. The building ceased to function as a supply outlet in 1883. After the Depot was shut down, the building held the office of the United States Weather Bureau. The United States Custom Service also used it as a headquarters for roving customs agents. Later it was used by the United States Boundary Commission. The City of Yuma acquired the building in 1956 and in 1967 it was leased to the Assistance League of Yuma and used as the headquarters for Operation School Bell, a program providing clothing for

impoverished school children. As part of the lease agreement the Assistance League worked on restoring the building and researching its history. In 1986 the Quartermaster Depot and the Customhouse became part of the Yuma Crossing Park, later renamed the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Historic Park. The City of Yuma has operated the park since 2009.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:

The bulk of the collection came from the estate of Mary Kerckhoff, who researched the Customhouse on behalf of the Yuma Assistance League. Other donated items have been added from a variety of sources.

This collection is organized into three series:

Series I – General: This series contains various documents concerning the Quartermaster Depot and related subjects. These documents include biographical material about various people related to the Depot, copies of ledgers from the time that the Depot was active, and copies of the deeds dating to the period in which the city of Yuma acquired the property. Also included in this series are materials concerning Mary Kerckhoff and her research into the history of the Customhouse.

Series II – Publications: This series contains historic structure reports, cultural resource investigation reports, manuals, and interpretive plans.

Series III – Media: This series contains media related to the Quartermaster Depot, including newspaper clippings, photographs, an audio interview and a video recording.

CONTAINER LIST:

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
1	1	General: Biographical (A – Z)	1997, n.d.
	2	General: Biographical, Kerckhoff, Mary Ben	1976 – 1980
	3	General: Corral House	1981
	4	General: Correspondence	1948 – 1991, n.d.
	5	General: Deeds	1956 – 1957, n.d.
	6	General: History, Quartermaster Depot (Notes on Custom House)	1884 – 1997, n.d.
	7	General: Ledger, Letter Book (copy)	1883 – 1884
	8	General: Ledger, Shipping Records (copy)	1883 – 1890
	9	General: Maps	1869 – 1912, n.d.
	10	General: Yuma Assistance League	1967 – 1983, n.d.
2	11	Publications: <i>Instructions to the Custodians of Public Buildings...</i>	1905
	1	Publications: <i>Regulations for the Government of Customs Inspectors, Weighers, Gaugers, and Measures</i>	1908
	2	Publications: <i>Gaugers Weighing Manual</i>	1911
	3	Publications: <i>Measurement of Vessels</i>	1915
	4	Publications: <i>Navigation Laws of the United States</i>	1915

	5	Publications: <i>Manual for the Quartermaster Corps</i>	1916
	6	Publications: <i>Custom House Guide</i>	1926
	7	Publications: <i>Manual for the Guidance of the Outside Force of the Customs Service</i>	1939
3	1	Publications: <i>Manual for the Guidance of Customs Inspectors</i>	1946
	2	Publications: <i>Office of the Depot Quartermaster – An Historic Structure Report</i> , Gerald A. Doyle & Associates	1982
	3	Publications: <i>Final Environmental Assessment for Yuma Quartermaster Depot</i> , Arizona Department of Transportation	1989
	4	Publications: <i>Cultural Resources Investigations of the Yuma Quartermaster Depot</i> , Banner Associates, Mesa, Arizona, by Mark T. Swanson and Jeffrey H. Altschal	1989
	5	Publications: <i>Historic Preservation and Interpretative Plan: Officers Quarters</i> , Gerald A. Doyle & Associates	1989
	6	Publications: <i>Cultural Resources Investigations of the Yuma Quartermaster Depot</i> , Statistical Research, Tucson, Arizona, by Mark T. Swanson and Jeffrey H. Altschal	1991
	7	Publications: <i>Determination of Eligibility of the Yuma Quartermaster Depot Storehouse</i> , United States Bureau of Reclamation by Christine Pfaff	1995
4	1	Media: Magnetic Audio Recording Tape, <i>Glenn Sanders Interview</i>	1976
	2	Media: Newspaper Articles	1891 – 2010, n.d.
	3	Media: Photographs	1865 – 1980, n.d.
	4	Media: VHS Tape, <i>Custom House Artifacts</i>	n.d.