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Summary

Title: A. C. Brown Photographs Collection

Dates: Ca. 1937 - 1985

Creator: Brown, A. C.; Austin C. Brown Jr.

Abstract: The A. C. Brown Photographs Collection is comprised of photographic prints and negatives taken by commercial photographer A. C. Brown. Geographically represented is Long Beach, Signal Hill, Lakewood, Seal Beach, Carson, Anaheim, and Los Angeles from the 1930s to the 1980s. Brown was a commercial photographer located in Long Beach, California. In the 1930s, Brown worked as an assistant for Dick Whittington Photography, the largest commercial firm in Los Angeles. He worked for a number of other companies before opening his own studio.

Extent: Approx. 50 Cold Storage Boxes, 9.5 Linear Feet. Approx. 30,000 negatives processed. Collection is inventoried and available to researchers.

Language: English

Preferred citation: A. C. Brown Photographs Collection, Historical Society of Long Beach

Background

Scope and content:

The A. C. Brown Photographs Collection contains 85 photographic prints and thousands of 4x5, 2x2, 6x6cm, and 6x9cm black and white and color photographic negatives, all taken by commercial photographer A. C. Brown. These images consist mainly of scenes

of Long Beach, CA, but also include some neighboring areas such as Signal Hill, Lakewood, Seal Beach, Carson, Anaheim, and Los Angeles from the 1930s to the 1980s. Many of the images were taken for various businesses and companies, including Communication Manufacturing Company, Shell Oil Company, Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, General Telephone Company of California, Kit Manufacturing Company, Allstate Insurance Company, Travelers Insurance Company, American Institute of Banking, and others. The images cover a variety of life in and around Long Beach, such as street intersections, the Pacific Coast Club, the Long Beach Pike, construction projects, insurance claims photographs, stores and businesses, houses, events, oil operations, beauty pageants, and more.

See attached inventories for the full scope of collection. The prints, which arrived unnumbered, were identified and described by HSLB staff 2020-2021, while the original order of the negatives was preserved as much as possible by using the numbers and descriptions on Brown's original sleeves. Both the sleeves and the negatives were processed and rehoused. Only the negatives and prints are cataloged.

An initial assessment was done in 2008 when the items arrived at HSLB. A more thorough assessment was done in 2016, but not entered into the database. Approximately half of the collection was processed by HSLB staff in 2020 and 2021, thanks in part to support from the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association (LBNMHA).

Processing, cataloging, rehousing, integration with the previously processed materials, and cold storage was completed in the 2025-2026 FY with a second grant from the LBNMHA. The Finding Aid and Collection Guide was updated in 2026.

Biographical / historical:

A. C. Brown, full name Austin C. Brown Jr., was a commercial photographer located in Long Beach, California. Brown was born in Sacramento and grew up in Los Angeles. His father was a landscape artist. His parents separated when he was about two years old, and Brown had an assortment of stepmothers growing up. In the 1930s, Brown

worked as an assistant for Dick Whittington Photography, the largest commercial firm in Los Angeles. During the Second World War, Brown was a photographer in the Signal Corps. In 1947, Brown joined the studio of commercial photographer Lawrence Inman in Long Beach, and worked there for six years before he started his own studio. In the 1940s, Brown became a photographer for the Pacific Coast Club (PCC), photographing parties and other activities at the PCC. Other clients Brown worked for included insurance companies, attorneys, the Shell Oil Company, the City of Signal Hill, the Lakewood Country Club, and various businesses and individuals. HSLB volunteers, Zona Gale Forbes and Dr. Kaye Briegel, interviewed Brown on August 2, 1981 at his home at 5535 Orange Avenue, Long Beach. This interview is also available at HSLB.

Acquisition information:

The collection was donated to HSLB by Marilyn Stryker, A. C. Brown's daughter, in 2008.

Related resources

Additional collection guides:

- A. C. Brown Photographs Collection: Prints
- A. C. Brown Photographs Collection: Negatives

Indexed terms

Subjects:

Accidents

Beach

Beauty Pageants

Businesses

Buildings

City Officials

Construction

Dwellings

Employees

Events

Homes

Insurance

Intersections

Long Beach Pike

Negatives

Oil

Oil Operations

People

Photographic Prints

Photographs

Politicians

Streets

Trailers and Mobile Homes

Weddings

Names:

Agate, Inc

Allstate Insurance Company

American Institute of Banking, Harbor District Chapter, Women’s Committee

Ball, Hart, Hart, Brown & Baerwitz

Bank of America, Motor Center Branch

Beverage Bulletin

B-J Art Service

Brown, A. C.

Brown Jr., Austin C.

Brown Bothers Adjusters

C-AIR

Cadillac International

California Church Furniture Co.

Carpenters Local 710

Carl Frye Gallery

Christine’s Ceramics

Chubb & Son

City of Carson

City of Long Beach

City of Signal Hill

Communication Manufacturing Company

Communications Workers of America

Creative Scientific Equipment Co.

Culinary Alliance

Curtis Publishing Co.

David Free & Associates

El Bekal Shrine

Electric Supplies Distribution Company

Electrical Contractors Association, Inc.

Elks Club

Employers' Casualty Co.

Environmental and Development Lab

Farmers and Merchants Bank

Farmers Insurance

Garland Crane Company

General Insurance Company

General Mills Company

General Mills Inc.

General Telephone Company (GTE), Southern Area Management Club

Girl Scouts, Greater Long Beach Council

Hogebuilt, Inc.

Hollydale American Legion

Hollydale Rainbow Girls

Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union

Jack Watson GMC

Japan Machinery Corp.

John M. Johnston and Associates

Johnny Gillette Tire Co.

Kit Manufacturing Company

Liberty Mutual Insurance

Long Beach Amusement Company

Long Beach Athletic Club

Long Beach City College

Long Beach Motor Car Dealers Association (L.B.M.C.D.A.)

Long Beach Retarded Children's Foundation

McCulloch International Airlines

Mickey Thompson Equipment Company

Mr. Ron Hairstyles

Old Ranch Country Club

Pacific Coast Club (PCC)

Pacific Drive-In Theaters

Pacific Indemnity Company (Surplus Lines Adj. Co.)

Pacific Union Metal Div.

Paragon Equities

Patrick B. Phelan

Petrolane, Inc.

Pomeco Corp.

R. Howard Strasbaugh, Inc.

R. P. S. / Panavise Products, Inc.

Riley-Nelson Company

Roadcraft Manufacturing Company (Roadcraft Mfg. Co.)

Recreational Coach & Equipment Assn.

Rotary Club of Signal Hill

Safeco Insurance Company

Senator Joseph Kennick

Shell Chemical Corporation

Shell Oil Company

Signal Hill Chamber of Commerce

Signal Hill Petroleum Club

Signal Hill Rotary Club

Southern California Edison Company (So Cal Edison)

Spano Crane Sales

State Assemblyman

State Farm Insurance Company

The Texas Co.

Toplis & Harding

Travelers' Insurance Company

Tri-Cor, Inc.

Union Metal Manufacturing Company

Union Oil Co.

U. S. Fidelity and Guarantee Co.

Viking Manufacturing Company (Viking Mfg Co)

Vines Leasing Co.

Westways Manufacturing Company

Wonderly Construction Company

Worthington Towing

Zurich American Insurance Co.

Places:

Long Beach, CA (Calif.)
Signal Hill, CA (Calif.)
Lakewood, CA (Calif.)
Carson, CA (Calif.)
Los Angeles, CA (Calif.)
Compton, CA (Calif.)
California (CA)

About this collection guide

Collection Guide Author:

Finding aid created by Historical Society of Long Beach staff.

Date Updated: 2026 03 31

Date Encoded:

Access and use

Restrictions:

Collection open for research. Users may search the attached collection inventories for images of interest. Please summit a research request to HSLB in advance to access the materials. Reproductions of images may also be purchased, contact HSLB for details.

Terms of access:

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Preferred citation:

A. C. Brown Photographs Collection. Historical Society of Long Beach

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