



Glendale Library, Arts & Culture

Glendale Central Library

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Finding Aid for the James L. Ruhle California Earthquake Collection, 1971

Collection Overview

Title: James L. Ruhle California Earthquake Collection

Date: 1971

ID: JLR

Primary Creator: James L. Ruhle

Extent: 0.21 linear feet, 1 box

Arrangement: This collection is arranged in its original order by slide number.

Forms of Material: Photographic Material

Language of Materials: English

Abstract

The James L. Ruhle California Earthquake Collection consists of a small set of slides and prints documenting damage to structures and roadways during the 1971 San Fernando earthquake, also known as the Sylmar earthquake. The slides were prepared by geologist and photographer James L. Ruhle who taught in the Geology Department at California State University, Fullerton. This collection of 36 slides may have been replicated in a slide set titled, "San Fernando Earthquake," one of approximately 80 sets of audiovisual teaching aids published by James L. Ruhle and Associates in the 1970s and 1980s.

Biographical History

James Lihner Ruhle was born in New Jersey in 1936 to Charles and Marie Caroline (née Lihner), originally from Pennsylvania. A brother, Charles J., Jr., preceded him in birth by four years. Ruhle attended Moorestown High School in New Jersey, and became the subject of an *Associated Press* article (Nov. 24, 1950) at age 14 when he discovered fossil remains in a creek bank near construction of the New Jersey turnpike. James reported the find to Dr. Horace G. Richards at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia who determined them to be of a giant ground sloth, a rare find for the area at the time. Ruhle's work with Dr. Richards continued, leading to the co-authored paper, "Mollusks from a Sediment Core from the Hudson Submarine Canyon" (1955). While working with Dr. Richards part-time, he received his Bachelor of Science Degree in geology from the University of Pennsylvania. He received his Master of Science Degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 1960 with a thesis titled, *The Mount Laurel and Wenonah Sands*

of New Jersey. Shortly thereafter, Ruhle took a position with the Virginia Division of Mineral Resources where he assisted with paleontological studies.

By 1966, Ruhle had moved to Southern California, and by the 1970s had formed James L. Ruhle and Associates. The company published the periodical *The Scientific Driller* as well as audio visual teaching materials, many on subjects devoted to forms of energy production such as nuclear fusion, geothermal applications, wind projects, and solar thermal electric power. Ruhle and his wife, Carolyn (née Desimone) had two children, Karl James in 1958, and Roger C. in 1966. The couple divorced in 1975. In 1979 James married Rhonda Jean Cleaves, with whom he had a son James Franklin in 1989. Among Ruhle's published books are *Strip Mining* (1974), *The San Andreas Fault of California* (1976), *Solar Homes* (1976), and *Geology Laboratory Manual for Distance Learning* (1998). He taught in the Geology Department at California State University, Fullerton for many years. James L. Ruhle died after a lengthy illness in 2016 at the age of 80, and was predeceased by his wife Rhonda in 1999.

Scope and Contents

The James L. Ruhle California Earthquake Collection consists of 36 numbered color 35 mm slides (plus one duplicate), and 41 color 8 x 10 photographic prints which replicate the slides. The collection also contains a list describing the context and location of each photograph by slide number. The slides document the impact of the 1971 San Fernando earthquake, also known as the Sylmar earthquake, which was most severe in the northeastern section of the San Fernando Valley approximately 28 miles north of Los Angeles, California.

The earthquake caused 64 deaths, most from the collapse of a hospital administered by the Veteran's Administration. Other deaths occurred at the Olive View Medical Center which had opened only three weeks earlier. The nearby Van Norman Reservoir lost 30 feet of its upper section, but due to an earlier water release, thousands of lives were spared.

The images in this collection document damage to the roofs, chimneys, and foundations of private residences, buckled and uplifted sidewalks, the collapse of the emergency vehicle carport and one wing of Olive View Medical Center, buckled sections and collapsed overpasses of the Golden State and Foothill Freeways, landslides in Lopez, Schwartz, and Grapevine Canyons, and the collapsed upper section of Van Norman Reservoir. Color of the photographic prints is degraded.

Subjects/Access Terms

Personal Names: Ruhle, James L., 1936-2016

Corporate Name: James L. Ruhle and Associates

Topical Terms: Earthquakes--California--San Fernando
San Fernando Earthquake, Calif., 1971

Geographic Names: Sylmar (Los Angeles, Calif.)
San Fernando Valley (Calif.)

Administrative Information

Processing Information: Jacqueline Zak, 2018

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Conditions Governing Access: The collection is open for research use.

Preferred Citation: The James L. Ruhle California Earthquake Collection. Glendale Central Library History Room. Glendale Library, Arts & Culture.

Acquisition: Unknown

Collection Contents

Box 1

Folder 1: List Describing Photographic Color Slides and Prints by Number

Folder 2: Photographic Color Slides, Nos. 1-36

Folder 3: Photographic Color Prints from Slide Nos. 1-17

Folder 4: Photographic Color Prints from Slide Nos. 18-36