



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Digitization Project Preserves Historic Image Collection of Famed Horticulturalist Luther Burbank

*Hundreds of photos and other images are preserved for all time and made available online*

Santa Rosa, CA (August 1, 2018) - The Sonoma County Library and City of Santa Rosa are pleased to announce the completion of a project to digitize over 1700 images belonging to Santa Rosa's famed Luther Burbank Home & Gardens. The project preserves the locally and nationally significant collection of pioneer horticulturalist Luther Burbank and provides unprecedented online access to the collection for scholars and members of the public. The image collection consists of photographs, slides, panoramic and stereographic images as well as post cards, greeting cards and negatives dating from the 1860s to the 1980s.

"For people to be able to easily access these historic photos and other images is such an exciting development," says Rachel Spaeth, Garden Curator with the Luther Burbank Home and Gardens Association. "Access to the collection was previously restricted, and with a 'white glove' only process in place, to protect the historic and fragile images. But now the collection is open to anyone with an internet connection!"

Spaeth adds it's reassuring to have the nationally significant collection safely preserved in digital form and housed online by the Sonoma County Library.

Luther Burbank lived in Santa Rosa for 50 years and developed more than 800 strains and varieties of plants, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, and flowers. His home and unique urban gardens are now owned by the City of Santa Rosa and operated by the non-profit Luther Burbank Home and Gardens Association.

The bulk of the images in the collection originate from the estate of Luther Burbank's widow, Elizabeth Waters Burbank. Others were purchased and large numbers of donated items came from Eric Grissell's collection of historic postcards, Dr. and Mrs. E.S. Ashuckian from the estate of M.K. Serailian, Georgina Stewart, J.B. Keil, Kay and Bob Voliva, Sherman Boivin, Western Sonoma County Historical Society, and Wendy Aikin from the estate of Frank Vail.

Subjects of local interest seen in the images include Mayor John Overton, Senator Herbert Slater, Fred Pederson, Dorothy Seawell, Dr. Joseph Shaw, Emma Burbank Beeson, and Elizabeth Waters Burbank. A few dozen images from 1919 depict Charles Hampton and members of the Agricultural Club of Santa Rosa High School demonstrating equipment and showcasing livestock.

The City of Santa Rosa entered into a contract with the Sonoma County Library in 2017 to preserve the collection, beginning the detailed process of cataloging, digitizing and providing online access to the images. Head library cataloger Geoffrey Skinner led the effort, ensuring existing metadata was correct and enhanced in some instances. High resolution digital capture was conducted by Act3 Partners. The digital images were then uploaded to the Sonoma County Library's 'Sonoma Heritage Collection'—providing unprecedented access to the historic collection and preserving Santa Rosa history and that of the nation for future generations.

See collection overview here: <http://heritage.sonomalibrary.org/digital/collection/p15763coll22>).

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