

Guide to  
PHO 20  
J. E. Morgan & Sons  
Construction Photographs

Span Dates: 1894-1956  
Bulk Dates: 1916-1940

Approximately 560 photographs  
1.5 linear feet

Processed by Rose Hillbrand  
August 2000

Donated by J. E. Morgan & Sons, 1968.

Citation: J. E. Morgan & Sons Construction Photographs, 1894-1956, PH 020, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department  
University of Texas at El Paso

## Biography

Joseph E. Morgan was born in Black Creek, Florida, on September 6, 1871 of Irish ancestry. Morgan received trade school training in New York, after which he came to El Paso in 1893 and worked for his uncle, Levi Whitmore, for several months. Unable to find employment with a contractor, he became one himself. He partnered with John Sorenson under the name of Sorenson & Morgan for several years, and then struck out on his own. His first large contract was for construction of the American Trust & Savings Bank (later Rio Grande Bank) in 1912. He then built the 5-story Roberts-Banner Building, and, during World War I, the Whipple Barracks at Prescott, Arizona. In 1916, he built the El Paso County Courthouse, followed by Liberty Hall.

J. E. Morgan had four sons who helped him with his work from the time they were children. William D. Morgan attended Marquette University, Bernard. C. Morgan went to Notre Dame, and J. Francis and Leo P. Morgan studied at the University of Illinois. When the sons finished college, they joined the firm, and by 1930 the firm was officially known as J. E. Morgan & Sons. During World War II, the firm constructed barracks at Fort Bliss, as well as other military buildings. They were also the primary contractors for one of the largest housing developments in the Southwest, the Wherry Act Project of Van Horne Park. Other projects by the Morgans include the El Paso National Bank Building, El Paso High School, Loretto Academy, the Temple Emanuel in Dallas, and the Hilton Hotel in Albuquerque, as well as various buildings at the University of Texas at El Paso, the University of Texas at Austin, the Harlingen and Kirkland Air Force bases, Camp Swift, Ysleta High School, the Galveston Medical School, and the Kern Place reservoir, which was, at the time, the largest unsupported concrete dome ever built. Joseph E. Morgan died in 1942, but his sons carried on the business, which, by 1956, was the oldest contracting firm in El Paso. His son, J. Francis Morgan, served as alderman with the City Council from April 1939 to July 1942, when he left El Paso to serve as a captain in the Army Engineering Corps for 3 ½ years. He also held office as president of the Southwestern Sun Carnival Association, and became president of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce in 1950. In 1968, he was awarded the Fifth National Human Relations Award from the El Paso Chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

## Series Description

This collection is organized into five series:

- I. Prints: 2 ¼ boxes. Most of the prints are 8" x 10", but there are also many smaller photos, ranging from 2" x 3" to 5" x 7".
- II. Panoramic Prints: ¾ box. Most of these prints are folded.

- III. Oversize Prints: 1 flat box and approximately 22 large photographs stored flat in a drawer. There is also one very long panoramic photograph stored flat in the vault.
- IV. Non-Architectural Photographs: 1 flat box containing a few apparently unrelated photographs of people or things not constructed by the J. E. Morgan & Sons firm.
- V. Non-Photographic Materials: 1 folder of assorted papers and ephemera.

## Scope and Content Notes

The collection contains mostly photographs of architectural projects undertaken by J. E. Morgan & Sons, contractors. Most are black and white, but a few color prints are also present. Most of the photos in this collection are of commercial construction projects, although the Morgans also did some residential work, including the Burges House at 603 W. Yandell Boulevard, which was built in 1912 and has been named a Heritage Home of El Paso. There are many photos of the El Paso area, but projects in Arizona, New Mexico, and various other locations in Texas are also represented. The series are divided by size or type of photograph, and files within the series are organized alphabetically by geographical location. While Series I contains mostly photographs depicting construction sites or the exterior façades of the buildings, interiors of some buildings are also shown. Series II consists of panoramic photos, similar to Series I but mostly folded and filed in legal-size folders. Series III is composed of larger photographs, which have been flattened and filed in oversize boxes or drawers. Series IV consists of a few various photographs of items and events, including two movie stills of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, a mounted photo of the Berlin Museum and Lustgarten, a photo of the sanctuary of St. John's Church at the University of Illinois, and an album of mounted photographs of Rome, which is in poor condition. Series V contains various papers found filed with the photographs, such as brochures, an art reproduction, a map of the West Central states from 1875, and a certificate of Leo P. Morgan's membership to Tau Nu Tau, an honorary professional military engineering fraternity. Included in this series is a fountain pen enclosed in an envelope, which declares that it is the pen used by President Truman in signing the Army/Navy Nurse Bill in April, 1947.

The physical makeup of the collection is mostly flat photographs sleeved in polyester. Some photographs are mounted on cardboard or canvas backing. There are also a number of sleeved original negatives, which have been relocated to the Special Collections negative file.

## **Provenance Statement**

J. E. Morgan & Sons donated the materials in 1968.

## **Literary Rights Statement**

Permission to publish material from the *J.E. Morgan & Sons Construction Photographs* must be obtained from the C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, University of Texas at El Paso Library.

## **Related Collections**

Otto H. Thorman Records, MS 147; Trost & Trost Architects Collection, MS 033;  
University of Texas at El Paso Records, MS 001

## Container List

| Series I: Prints |          |   |           |
|------------------|----------|---|-----------|
| Box #            | Folder # | Description                                     | Date      |
| 1                | 1        | Albuquerque, NM (Hilton Hotel)                  | 1939      |
|                  | 2        | Austin, TX                                      |           |
|                  | 3 & 4    | Austin, TX (Children's Hospital Building)       | 1936/1937 |
|                  | 5 & 6    | Austin, TX (Negro Hospital Building)            | 1936/1937 |
| 1 & 3            | 7 & 1    | Clovis, NM                                      |           |
| 3                | 2        | Clovis, NM (Curry County Courthouse & Jail)     | 1936      |
| 1                | 8        | Dallas, TX                                      |           |
|                  | 9-13     | El Paso, TX                                     |           |
|                  | 14       | Fort Bliss, TX (NCO Open Mess)                  |           |
|                  | 15       | Galveston, TX (Nurse's Home)                    | 1931      |
|                  | 16       | Harlingen, TX                                   |           |
|                  | 17       | Huntsville, TX (Girls Dormitory)                | 1935      |
| 2                | 1 & 2    | Inspiration Electrolytic Plant                  | 1945      |
|                  | 3        | Las Cruces, NM (Alameda High School)            |           |
|                  | 4        | People  |           |
|                  | 5-7      | Prescott, Arizona (Whipple Barracks)            | 1918-1920 |
|                  | 8        | Prescott, Arizona (Whipple Barracks – Info.)    |           |
|                  | 9        | Rural Electrification Administration Project    |           |
|                  | 10       | Sherman, TX (Grayson County Courthouse)         |           |
|                  | 11-13    | Unidentified Construction Sites                 |           |
|                  | 14       | Unidentified Interiors                          |           |
|                  | 15-19    | Unidentified Photographs                        |           |
|                  | 20       | White Sands, NM (White Sands National Monument) |           |
|                  | 21       | Wichita Falls, TX (City Hall & Auditorium)      | 1920's    |

| Series II. Panoramic Prints              |          |  |           |
|--|----------|--|-----------|
| Box #                                    | Folder # | Description                                  | Date      |
| 3  | 3        | El Paso, TX                                  |           |
|  | 4-9      | Prescott, Arizona (Whipple Barracks)         |           |
|  | 10       | Unidentified Photographs                     |           |
| Series III. Oversize Prints              |          |  |           |
| Box #                                    | Folder # | Description                                  | Date      |
| Drawer 9                                 |          | Camp Swift, TX                               | 1942      |
| Box 4                                    |          | El Paso, TX                                  |           |
| Drawer 9                                 |          | El Paso, TX (El Paso County Courthouse)      |           |
| Drawer 9                                 |          | El Paso (Loretto College) [Academy]          | 1922      |
| Box 4                                    |          | Fort Bliss, TX (NCO Open Mess)               |           |
| Box 4                                    |          | Fort Worth, TX                               |           |
| Box 4                                    |          | Rio Grande                                   |           |
| Drawer 9                                 |          | Unidentified Construction Sites              |           |
| Box 4 & Vault                            |          | Unidentified Photographs                     |           |
| Series IV. Non-Architectural Photographs |          |  |           |
| Box #                                    | Folder # | Description                                  | Date      |
| 5  |          | Rome & Other                                 | 1858-1947 |
| Series V. Non-Photographic Materials     |          |  |           |
| Box #                                    | Folder # | Description                                  | Date      |
| 4  |          | Miscellaneous Papers                         |           |
| 2  | 8        | Prescott, Arizona (Whipple Barracks – Info.) |           |