



Guide to the Bonfils Studio Photograph Albums of Palestine, circa 1881

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Table of Contents

Summary	3
Background	4
Administrative Information	5
Related Materials	6
Names and Subjects	6
Collection Inventory	6
Bonfils studio photograph albums of Palestine, circa 1881	6
Album I	7
Album II	8

Summary

Collection Title:

Bonfils studio photograph albums of Palestine, circa 1881

Creator:

Bonfils, Félix, 1831-1885

Abstract:

Collection consists of two large cloth-bound photograph albums dating from circa 1881, housing 56 large albumen photographs taken by noted 19th century French photographer Félix Bonfils, who owned the Bonfils studio, and his Syrian assistant Georges Saboungi. The images were sold as souvenirs, and portray cities and towns, landscapes, ruins, monuments, tombs, and other religious and historic sites of Palestine, in areas now occupied by Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Locations named in the captions include Beirut, Bethlehem, Cana, Damascus, Galilee, the Holy Sepulchre shrine, Jaffa, Jerusalem, the Mosque of Omar at the Dome of Rock, the Mount of Olives, Mount Tabor, Nazareth, Samaria, the Tomb of David, the Wailing Wall, the interior of the house of the English Consul in Damascus, a "crusader's tower" in the village of Ramleh, and various other sites.

Extent:

3 Linear Feet (2 volumes)

Physical Location:

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Language:

English

Language:

Material in English

Collection ID:

RL.00126

Permalink:

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/bonfilsalbums/>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Bonfils studio photograph albums of Palestine, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Background

Scope and Content

These two large photograph albums were owned by Wilbur E. Hagans, who toured the area of Palestine known as the Holy Lands around 1881. He purchased dozens of souvenir albumen prints from the studio, then upon his return had the cloth-bound albums assembled in New York. The 56 images date from about 1881 and were taken by noted 19th-century French photographer Félix Bonfils, who owned the Bonfils studio, and his Syrian assistant Georges Saboungi. They portray cities and towns, landscapes, ruins, monuments, tombs, and other religious and historic sites of Palestine, in areas now occupied by Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. Locations named in the captions include Beirut, Bethlehem, Cana, Damascus, Galilee, the Holy Sepulchre shrine, Jaffa, Jerusalem, the Mosque of Omar at the Dome of Rock, the Mount of Olives, Mount Tabor, Nazareth, Samaria, the Tomb of David, the Wailing Wall, the interior of the house of the English Consul in Damascus, a "crusader's tower" in the village of Ramleh, and various other sites. In some cases there are small figures visible among the landscapes, but these are the only individuals present in the images.

The two albums measure 14 x 18 inches (37 x 47.5 centimeters); Volume I holds 30 albumen prints, while Volume II holds 26 prints. The prints all measure 9 x 11 inches (22 x 28 centimeters) and are affixed to card mounts, one per print. Some show signs of fading, but most are in good condition. Each print bears the name of one of two photographers: Félix Bonfils (18 prints), or Georges Saboungi (38 prints); some prints are also marked with an identification number assigned by the studio, and these have been included in the inventory.

Biographical/Historical

Félix Bonfils (1831-1885) was a French-born photographer who migrated to Beirut, Lebanon around 1867, where he opened a studio named "Maison Bonfils" together with his wife, Lydie Bonfils (1837-1918), who was also a photographer. They changed the name to Bonfils et Cie in 1878. Studio assistants included the Bonfils's son Adrien (1860-1929), who in 1878 took over the photographic work while his parents ran the studios, and the Syrian brothers Georges and Louis Saboungi.

The studio produced photographic views of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Greece, totaling an estimated 15,000 single prints; they were also sold as stereographic views and in albums. They became much sought after by tourists

and publishers, and in the wake of this success, other Bonfils studios opened in Alexandria, Cairo, and in Alés, France, where Félix Bonfils died in 1885. His son Adrien and wife Lydie continued to operate the studios; Adrien quit the business sometime around 1900, but Lydie continued to manage it until World War I forced her to flee Beirut in 1916, taking many of the Bonfils plates and prints with her.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Acquisition Information

The Bonfils studio photograph albums of Palestine were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library in 1965.

Processing Information

Processed by Sara Reams, May 2014

Encoded by Paula Jeannet and Sara Reams, May 2014

Accession(s) described in this finding aid: 7-28-65

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Related Materials

Related Material

Harvard Semitic Museum Photographic Archives [many Bonfils images]Harvard University Libraries[Brünnow Papers](#) [about 800 Bonfils images]Princeton University Library

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Names and Subjects

- Cities and towns -- Middle East -- Photographs
- Architecture -- Middle East -- Photographs
- Monuments -- Middle East -- Photographs
- Photographers -- Palestine
- Tombs -- Middle East -- Photographs
- Photographers -- Middle East
- Middle East -- Antiquities -- Photographs
- Middle East -- Photographs
- Palestine -- Antiquities
- Palestine -- Photographs
- Albumen prints
- Photograph albums
- Saboungi, Georges, 1840-1910
- Bonfils, Félix, 1831-1885

Collection Inventory

Bonfils studio photograph albums of Palestine, circa 1881

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Scope and Contents note

The photographer's name appears following the title for each print. All titles are taken from the original captions; original French captions have not been transcribed but appear with each print. When known, the image negative numbers assigned by the studio have been included in the description; all of these were taken by Félix Bonfils. Box 1 contains information on the collection, including photocopied articles on the history of the Bonfils photography studio.

Album I

Information Folder	Box 1
Beyrout from the Sea, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of Beyrout toward the Sea, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of Beyrout, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
Bridge Across the Dog River, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
The Cedars of Lebanon, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
Ruins of Ba'albek, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of the Cyclopean Wall, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of the Temple of the Sun, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of the Portal, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of the Six Columns of the Temple of Jupiter, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
The Celebrated Stone in the Quarry, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
View of the City of Damascus, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 251
The Court of a Damascus House of a Constantinople Jew, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 273
Interior of the House of the English Consul at Damascus, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 276

The Street Which is called Straight, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 256
View of Mount Hermon, Félix Bonfils	Box 1
Cave of Pan or Banais, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 453
View of Capernaum, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 446
Tiberias, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 215
Cana of Galilee, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 448
Nazareth, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 219
Mount Tabor, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 213
Samaria, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 442
View of Shechem or Nabulus, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 211
Jacob's Well, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 440
View of the Jordan, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
In the Valley of the Jordan - Mount of Temptation, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
Dead Sea, Félix Bonfils	Box 1 > Image 205
Hebron, Georges Saboungi	Box 1
Pools of Solomon, Georges Saboungi	Box 1

Album II

General view of Bethlehem, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Church of the Nativity, or, of St. Mary, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Latin Entrance to Grotto of the Nativity, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Greek Entrance to Grotto of the Nativity, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Tomb of Rachel, Georges Saboungi	Box 2

Tomb of the Kings, Félix Bonfils	Box 2 > Image 198
Church of the Ascension, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Mount of Olives, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Garden of Gethsemane, Félix Bonfils	Box 2 > Image 185
Garden of Gethsemane, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Valley of Jehoshaphat, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
View of the Holy City - Jerusalem, Félix Bonfils	Box 2
Damascus Gate, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Facade Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Shrine Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Jew's Wailing Place - Jerusalem, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Mosque of Omar - Dome of the Rock, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Nave of the Dome of the Rock, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
The Holy Rock and Prayer Niche, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Mosque El-Aksa, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Via Dolorosa and Ecce-Homo Arch, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Tower of David, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Tomb of David, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Village of Ramleh, Georges Saboungi	Box 2
Crusader's Tower - Ramleh, Georges Saboungi	Box 2

Jaffa, Georges Saboungi

Box 2

[Return to Table of Contents](#)