



Archives and Special Collections Department,
American University of Beirut
Beirut, Lebanon
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Richard Sterling Finnie Photograph Collection, 1951

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the University Libraries, AUB
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Descriptive Summary

Call No.: Ph:RSF:1951

Library catalog ID: [b25948775](#)

Record Creator: Richard Finnie, 1906-1987.

Collection Title: Richard Sterling Finnie Photograph Collection, 1951.

Collection Dates: 1951

Physical Description: 1 box, 0.3 linear foot feet

Abstract: The Richard Sterling Finnie Collection includes photographs by Richard Finnie (1906-1987) taken in Lebanon and Syria in 1951. Being a documentary filmmaker and photographer, Finnie took a special interest in keeping memories of individuals and places, during his visit to these two countries.

Language(s): English

Administrative Information

Source: The Finnie collection was received from the American University of Beirut New York Office on 24 October 2002.

Access Restrictions: The collection can be consulted within the premises of the Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Library, American University of Beirut.

Photocopying Restriction: No photocopying restriction except for fragile material.

Preferred Citation: Richard Sterling Finnie Photograph Collection, 1951, Ph:RSF:1951, Series no., Photo no., American University of Beirut/Library Archives.

Scope and Content

The Richard Finnie Collection includes 52 black and white photos of different sizes that were taken over a few months in 1951, during Finnie's visit to Lebanon and Syria. They shed light on the interests of one of the world's talented professionals in the fields of photography and filmmaking in culture, landscape, and industry.

The photograph collection by Finnie commemorates his encounters with a shepherd, a businessman, and a peasant; as well as impressions after visiting different facilities such as the Beirut International Airport, Al-Ahliyah school (one of the earliest secular schools in Lebanon), and the Parliament Square. This is not to forget other sites such as Beit Eddine Palace, the Cedars forest, and the city of Damascus; as well as flourishing institutions such as the Middle East Broadcasting Studio and the Tapline terminal (petroleum pipelines).

In the collection, there are few photographs by Ivan Dmitri (1900-1968), or Levon West, an American photographic artist. Dmitri's given name was Levon Assadorian, but he changed his name to Levon West when enlisting in the Navy for World War I. The name West was his mother's maiden name. He used the name Ivan Dmitri for his photography but kept the name Levon West for his non-photography documents.¹

¹ <https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/artists/ivan-dmitri/>

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in two series:

Series I: Lebanon: Sites and People

- Subseries I.1: Beirut
- Subseries I.2: Historical sites
- Subseries I.3: Industry
- Subseries I.4: Middle East Broadcasting
- Subseries I.5: Mountains
- Subseries I.6: People

Series II: Syria

- Subseries II.1: Damascus

Biographical Information

Richard Sterling Finnie, a documentary filmmaker, photographer, ethnographer, and historian, was born in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada in 1906. His family moved to Ottawa, where he started showing interest in geography and history of the Arctic and northern Canada. His first voyage was aboard the CGS *Arctic*, under the command of Captain Bernier, in 1924. He later became an authority on the subject all through his life. This opened the doors for him to be employed by Bechtel Corporation when the company won a major defense project in northwestern Canada and Alaska. Finnie spent 25 years of his career working with Bechtel, from 1942 until 1968, covering in word and picture Bechtel's international construction projects.

Finnie retired from Bechtel Corporation after producing 60 films, often being the cameraman, writer, director, soundman, and narrator. Along with films about Canada, he produced other documentary films such as the film *AUB* (American University of Beirut), *Stones of Angkor*, *Exploring Libya* and *Trans-Arabian Pipeline*. It was not long before he moved to California, USA, where he grew to be a renowned figure in the fields of photography and documentary filmmaking.² He produced industrial films and recorded traditional music to document the talents of local musicians and songwriters of different countries like Korea, Libya, Tunisia, Sumatra, South Africa, Lebanon, Cambodia, Venezuela, etc. He also recorded unique sounds related to pipeline and refineries business, call to prayer, mule carts, crowds at races, etc. that were used in the making of movies. Finnie passed away in 1987, leaving many recordings, preserved at the Archive of Recorded Sound at Stanford Libraries, the Archive of Recorded Sound, and the National Archives of Canada.³

Subject Headings

Dmitri, Ivan, 1900-1968.

Finnie, Richard, 1906-1987.

Photograph collections -- Middle East.

Villages -- Lebanon -- Social life and customs.

Photography.

Airports -- Beirut -- Lebanon -- 1950-1970.

Factories -- Lebanon -- Beirut.

² <http://www.explorenorth.com/library/bios/finnie-richard.html>

³ <https://library.stanford.edu/collections/richard-finnie-collection>

Schools -- Lebanon -- Beirut -- 1950-1960.
Lebanon -- Buildings, structures, etc. -- Pictorial works.
Lebanon -- History.

Format

Landscape photographs -- 1950-1960.
Panoramic photographs -- 1950-1960.
Photographic prints -- 1950-1960.
Portrait photographs -- 1950-1960.

Container List

Series I. Lebanon

Subseries I.1 Sites and People (10 photos & 2 duplicates)

I.1.1 International Air Terminal at Beirut Airport

(a.k.a Beirut International Airport in Khalde)

1 Photographic print: black and white; 25.5 x 20.5 cm

Photographer: Moss Photos

I.1.2 Bus of the American Export Liner for the Damascus-Baghdad Run, Beirut.

1 Photographic print: black and white; 20.5 x 25.5 cm

Photographer: Ivan Dmitri

I.1.3 Al-Ahliah School Courtyard, Beirut

1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 28 x 23.5 cm

Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.1.4 Parliament Square- Beirut

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 22 cm

Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.1.5 [Beirut Souks.]

4 Photographic prints and 1 duplicate: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm

Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.1.6 Students' Cafeteria: American University of Beirut

2 Photographic prints and 1 duplicate: black and white; 25 x 19.5 cm

Photographer: Richard Finnie

- Subseries I.2 Historical Sites** (7 photos and 1 duplicate)
- I.2.1 **Roman bridge across the Beirut River** (a.k.a. Beirut Bridge)
1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie; Ph:1951/11: 24 - 25
- I.2.2 **Beiteddine Repairing and Enlarging**
1 Photographic print: black and white; 25.5 x 20.5 cm
Photographer: Ivan Dmitri
- I.2.3 **Nahr el-Kalb Commemorative Stelae** (5 photos)
- I.2.3.1 **Roman Inscription on Cliff at Nahr el-Kalb**
1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.2.3.2 **Inscription Commemorating British and Free French Campaign in 1941**
1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.2.3.3 **Plaque Proclaiming the Creation of the Republic of Lebanon in 1945**
1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie; Ph:1951/11: 44
- I.2.3.4 **Inscription by Napoleon III**
1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie; Ph:1951/11: 45
- I.2.3.5 **Inscription Commemorating the Capture of Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo by the British troops in 1948**
1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie; Ph:1951/11: 46
- Subseries I.3 Industry** (8 photos and 3 duplicates)
- I.3.1 **Young Girl Cleaning Apples at a Jam Factory**
1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.3.2 **Near East Rug and Carpet Factory, Beirut**
3 Photographic prints and 1 duplicate: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.3.3 **New Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, Beirut**
2 Photographic prints and 1 duplicate: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

- I.3.4 **Tapline (Sidon)**
- I.3.4.1 **Tapline Shore Manifold, Sidon**
 1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.3.4.2 **Gauging Station at Tapline Terminal Sidon, Lebanon**
 1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- Subseries I.4 Middle East Broadcasting Studio (2 photos and 1 duplicate)**
- I.4.1 **Lebanese Flute Player in Middle East Broadcasting Studio in Beirut**
 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.4.2 **'Oud Player in Middle East Broadcasting Studio, Beirut**
 1 Photographic print: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- Subseries I.5 Mountains (5 photos and 3 duplicates)**
- I.5.1 **Lebanese Mountains (1 photo)**
 1 Photographic print: black and white; 25.5 x 20.5 cm
 Photographer not Identified
- I.5.2 **Country House in the Mountains of Lebanon**
 1 Photographic print: black and white; 25.5 x 20.5 cm
 Photographer: Ivan Dmitri
- I.5.3 **Kadisha Valley with Cedar Seedlings for UN Reforestation Project⁴**
 1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.5.4 **Country House in the Mountains of Lebanon⁵**
 1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.5.5 **View of the Cedars of Lebanon⁶**
 Photographic print: black and white and 1 duplicate; 28 x 23 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- Subseries I.6 People (9 photos with 2 duplicates)**
- I.6.1 **Dimitri Barmaki, Archeologist and Curator of Museum, A.U.B.**
 1 Photographic print: black and white; 25 x 19.5 cm
 Photographer: Richard Finnie
- I.6.2 **Richard Finnie with Hanna Fakhar.**

⁴ Title on verso reads: "281-12 Looking down Kadicha Valley. In foreground are potted cedar seedlings for U.S. reforestation project. Nov.11, 1951"

⁵ Title on verso reads: "281-11 Valley below the Cedars, showing terraced hillsides and (right) the village of Becharra. Nov.11 1951"

⁶ Title on verso reads: "282-4 Telescopic View of the Cedars of Lebanon. Nov.11, 1951.

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.3 **Hanna Fakhar, Shepherd, playing the mizmar (pipe)**

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.4 **John C. Salameh, Businessman from Beirut.**

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.5 **Lebanese Peasant Plowing his land with an ox and a donkey.**

1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.6 **Farmer Plowing his land with an Ox on a hillside overlooking Tapline Tank Farm, Sidon.**

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm.
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.7 **Fishermen in Sidon.**

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.8 **Resident of the Cedars Makes a Recording of a Folk song.**

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie; Ph:1951/11:12

I.6.9 **Weighing Banana before Shipment to Market, Lebanon.**

1 Photographic print: black and white; 27.5 x 23 cm
Photographer: Richard Finnie

I.6.10 **Young Arab Girl near Hammana, Lebanon (nun).**

1 Photographic print and 1 duplicate: black and white; 20.5 x 25.5 cm
Photographer: Ivan Dmitri

Series II. Syria

Subseries II.1 Damascus

II.1.1 Rebuilding of Damascus (1 photo)

1 Photographic print: black and white; 25.5 x 20.5
Photographer: Richard Finnie

Related Materials at AUB

Archival Collections

- Richard Finnie fonds at NWT Archives: This fonds includes: 543 photographs: b&w and col. prints and negatives; 8 audio reels; 4 DAT audio cassettes; 7 films: 16mm; 11 videocassettes https://www.nwtarchives.ca/fonds_display.asp?Archival_Number=229

- Richard Sterling Finnie papers relating to the history of Bechtel Corporation, 1945-1967. [Library and Archives Canada](#) includes 22 Photographs, 31 audio tapes, and 28 films relating to many of Bechtel Corporation's major construction projects. Accession 2000-347 (not on original listing) contains 7 records (78 rpm): "Santo Tomas' interviews" (2 disks), "Saudi-Arabia" (2 disks), and "Engineer roundtable" (3 disks, one broken), all 1945. Also included are 2 films: "Petrole de Zarzaitine, " 1961, and "Exploring Libya, " 1960
- [Finnie family fonds, Yukon, Canada, Archives Department of Tourism and Culture](#). The fonds consists of photographs, textual records, and films. The majority of the material was created or collected by Richard S. Finnie primarily during his work on the Canol and Alaska Highway projects.
- [Guide to the Richard Sterling Finnie Papers, 1950-1967 Stanford University: Manuscripts Division](#)
- Finnie, Richard Sterling, 1906-1987 at [Dartmouth Library and Archives](#): Richard S. Finnie (1906-1987), historian and film producer. Consist of Finnie's correspondence, essays, and published articles about Vilhjalmur Stefansson, his son Alex, and Stefansson's career as well as Arctic engineering, aviation, exploration, and oil exploration.

Books

- Chiha, M. (1948). *Images du Liban: Un aperçu en soixante-quatre photographes du Liban*. [J 915.69:131iF:c.1](#)
- Finnie, R. (1958). *Bechtel in Arab lands: fifteenth-year review of engineering and construction projects*. San Francisco: Bechtel Corp; [CA:F 621.7:F514:c.1](#)
- Haïk, F.(1958). *Lebanon*. [Paris]: Librairie Hachette. Hachette world albums. J/ASC [CA:915.69:H14L:c.1](#)

Periodicals

- *18 of the greatest photographs from 125 years of national geographic*. (2017, Oct 26). Telegraph.Co.Uk Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/galleries/125-years-of-National-Geographic/>
- *Photographer Jamal Saidi reminds future generations of Lebanon's beauty*. (2013, Apr 03). Al - Shorfa Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1323648917?accountid=8555>
- *Photographer finds beauty in Lebanon's nature*. (2009, Apr 27). The Daily Star Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/432561781?accountid=8555>

Video recording

- AUB Documentary Film 1952 by Richard Finnie; DVD: AUB:1952

Photographs of AUB by Richard Finnie

- Bechtel family with President Penrose, 1950
[Ph:AUB:1950/10/13\(03\):01:44](#), (1 photo mounted on cardboard)
- Aziz Yurghaki Sayigh Conducting a Class, 1950
[Ph:AUB:1950/10/13\(01\):1-2:44](#), (2 photos)

- Elisabeth Moser and James Robinson, 1951
[Ph:AUB:1951/11/12:01:44](#), (1 photo)
- Richard Finnie with Mr. and Mrs. Albert Julius Meyer at Cedars, 1951].
[Ph:AUB:1951/11/11:1-2:44](#), (2 photos)
- American Community School, 1951, [Ph:AUB:1951/11/09\(02\):1-5:44](#)
- Bechtel Engineering School, 1957
[Ph:AUB:1957/12/18:01:48](#), (1 photo)
- Bechtel Engineering Building, 1958
[Ph:AUB:1958\(03\):1-14:48](#), (14 photos)

Digital Resources

- Finnie, A. (n.d.). [*Explore North: An explorer's guide to the North, Richard Sterling Finnie, 1906-1987*](#)
- Finnie, A. (1987, September). [Richard Sterling Finnie, 1906-1987. *Artic*, 40\(3\), 175–237.](#)
- Geller, P. (1996, Spring). [Visions of a Northern Nation: Richard Finnie's Views of Natives and Development in Canada's 'Last Frontier'. *Cinema and Nation*, 8 \(1\), pp. 18-43.](#)
- Geller, P. (2004). *Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920-45*. UBC Press. The University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- Finnie, R. (1947, March). [The Epic of Canol \(Canadian Oil\). *Canadian Geographical Journal*.](#)
- Finnie, R. (1973). [Travelling Passions: The Hidden Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson.](#) Dartmouth College Library.
- [Photo collections: Private Collections Richard Sterling Finnie](#)
- [Archives of American Art: Ivan Dmitri/Levon West papers, 1892-1969](#)