

## Copyright Office West? Who Knew We Had a Branch Office in California?

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Don't rush to submit your application for a transfer to California. The Copyright Office branch office in San Francisco closed in 1915. But why did such an outpost ever exist?

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition that took place from February 20 through December 4, 1915, in San Francisco was the event selected to celebrate the 1914 opening of the Panama Canal and the 400th anniversary of the 1513 European discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. On September 18, 1913, Congress passed, and President Wilson signed, the Kahn Act, which had been suggested by President Taft in December 1912.

This act provided for the free importation of articles intended for exhibition and for the protection of foreign exhibitors' intellectual property. The part pertaining to copyright authorized the Librarian of Congress and the Commissioner of Patents to establish a "branch office" to issue U.S. certificates of copyright registration and trademark and patent

ownership without charge to foreign nationals who presented satisfactory proof of proprietorship in a copyright from their own countries and demonstrated that the item was actually on exhibit. The U.S. certificate was legal evidence of copyright ownership, which continued for three years after the closing date of the exhibition.

Apparently not many registration applications were filed. A communication from Register of Copyrights Thorvald Solberg to William Osborn, clerk in charge of the branch United States Patent Office in San Francisco, said, "Mr. DeWolf became so unhopeful of any business at San Francisco that he went away on his annual leave. I note, however, with much interest what you say as to the incompleteness as yet of the installation for the foreign exhibits, and that later on application for their registration may yet be made." The copyright clerk was most likely Richard Crosby De Wolf. (See [www.copyright.gov/history/index.html](http://www.copyright.gov/history/index.html).)

A leather-bound book of copyright registrations came to light in November 2009 when **Juanita Frazier** was organizing materials in LM-B14. Included was an envelope of deposits and correspondence relating to the application of Australian Septimus Jonas for the design of his playing cards. His registrations are the only ones in the book. ©

*Declaration that Septimus Jonas had registered his playing cards in Australia.*

