
Finding Aid to the Bancroft Reference Notes for Central America, circa 1870s-1890s

Processed by Carola DeRooy and Iris Donovan

The Bancroft Library

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Finding Aid to the Bancroft Reference Notes for Central America, circa 1870s-1890s

Collection number: BANC MSS B-C 9

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: Bancroft reference notes for Central America

Date (inclusive): circa 1870s-1890s

Collection Number: BANC MSS B-C 9

Collector: Bancroft, Hubert Howe, 1832-1918

Extent: Number of containers: 10 cartons Linear feet: 12.5

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Abstract: Consists of bibliographic and reference notes pertaining to and used in preparation of v. 6-8 of Hubert Howe Bancroft's History of the Pacific states of North America. His research notes track the initial contact by Europeans with the land and native people of Darien (Panama), Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, the Mosquito Coast, Salvador, Yucatan, and Peru, including various political, social, religious, and economic upheavals, changes, and developments in each country or region between the 1490s and the 1880s. The references draw heavily on the Alphonse Pinart collection of books and manuscripts purchased by Bancroft and cataloged into his collection in 1883. The variation in scripts found in these handwritten notes provide evidence of the team of researchers employed by H.H. Bancroft.

Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Physical Location: Many of the Bancroft Library collections are stored offsite and advance notice may be required for use. For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Bancroft Reference Notes for Central America, BANC MSS B-C 9, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Related Collections

Library

Hubert Howe Bancroft, Records of the Library and Publishing Companies, BANC MSS B-C 7

Hofmann & Curtis Architects, Specifications ... in the erection of a ... library building for H. H. Bancroft, 1881, BANC MSS 73/122 c: [no.] 64

Catalogue of the Bancroft Library of Pacific Coast Books, Maps, and Manuscripts, BANC MSS B-C 4

William Henry Knight, Bancroft Library MS Scrapbooks, 1860-64, BANC MSS C-E 200

San Francisco Bulletin index, 1855-1872, BANC MSS B-C 2

Publishing Companies

Hubert Howe Bancroft, *In these Latter Days*, BANC MSS B-A 1

John S. Hittell, *A History of the City of San Francisco, 1878*, BANC MSS 90/19 c

History Company. *The History Company periodical index*, BANC MSS B-C 3

Hubert Howe Bancroft, Letters and papers from Mexico, 1886-91, BANC MSS M-M 384

Porfirio Diaz Collection of Papers, 1881-93, BANC MSS M-M 392

Hubert Howe Bancroft, Authorities quoted in the *History of California*, BANC MSS B-C 1

Thomas Savage, Report of labors in archives and procuring material for the *History of California, 1876-79*, BANC MSS C-E 191

Hubert Howe Bancroft, Preliminary notes and plans for the *Pioneer Register*, BANC MSS C-E 170

Hubert Howe Bancroft, Correspondence relating to the *History of Oregon, 1863-1889*, BANC MSS P-A 169

Hubert Howe Bancroft, Correspondence, BANC MSS C-B 362

Bancroft Reference Notes for the Western States, excluding California, BANC MSS B-C 8

Bancroft Reference notes for Mexico, BANC MSS B-C 10

Bancroft Reference notes for British Columbia and Alaska, BANC MSS B-C 11

Bancroft Reference notes for California, BANC MSS B-C 12

Bancroft Reference notes--Bibliography, BANC MSS B-C 13

Bancroft Reference notes on the conquest of Mexico, BANC MSS B-M 1

Bancroft Reference notes, BANC MSS 97/31 c

Bancroft Miscellaneous Newspaper Clippings, 1860-1890, BANC MSS B-C 14

Henry Cerruti, Sketches of the California Pioneers, BANC MSS C-E 65

Ivan Petroff, Journal of Trip to Alaska in Search of Information for the Bancroft Library, 1878, BANC MSS P-K 62

Harry Bishop Hambly, Information for the Bancroft Library, 1936, BANC MSS C-D 5081

Henry Lebbeus Oak, Correspondence and papers, BANC MSS C-B 387

Henry Lebbeus Oak, Letters from H.H. Bancroft and diary, 1874-87, BANC MSS 67/153

Frances Fuller Victor, Correspondence and notes relating to the History of Oregon, 1865-[ca. 1886], BANC MSS P-A 170

A.L. Bancroft & Co., Account of stock, Jan. 1, 1879, BANC MSS C-E 195

A.L. Bancroft & Co., Resolutions for the year 1890, BANC MSS C-E 196

Bancroft family

Albert Little Bancroft, *My Brother Hubert Howe Bancroft*, 1907, BANC MSS 73/122 c:109

Hubert Howe Bancroft family papers, BANC MSS 73/64 c

Bancroft family, Family genealogical data, 1886-1907, BANC MSS 89/91 c

Hubert Howe Bancroft letters to his family, 1882-1918, BANC MSS 77/169 c

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog

Belize--History

Central America--History

Costa Rica--History

El Salvador--History

Guatemala--History

Honduras--History

Mosquito Coast--History

Nicaragua--History

Panama--History

Peru--History

South America--History

West Indies--History

Yucatán (Mexico : State)--History

Notes

Acquisition Information

The Bancroft Reference Notes for Central America were part of the Bancroft Collection, purchased by the University of California in 1905.

Biographical Information

Hubert Howe Bancroft was born in Granville, Ohio on May 5, 1832. After working for some time in the Buffalo, N.Y. book store owned by his brother-in-law, George H. Derby, Bancroft came to California in 1852 to establish a West Coast outlet for the shop. In 1855, after selling the initial stock, he went east and returned with sufficient books and stationery to open a San Francisco store the following year. Within two years, his firm on Montgomery Street began to grow into a publishing house, issuing such items as law books and legal stationery, texts and maps for schools, and music and piano sales.

In 1860, as an outgrowth of assembling research materials for publication of a Pacific Coast handbook, Bancroft began to collect regional writings: this was the beginning of his unparalleled collection of books and manuscripts on the West. Within a decade he had 16,000 volumes, encompassing not only California and the Pacific Coast as the central focus, but also British Columbia and Alaska to the north, the Rocky Mountains to the east, and Mexico and Central American to the south, extending back in time from the native Indian cultures of all these regions and the subsequent era of Spanish control. The collection continued to grow as a result of collecting trips to the east and Europe, as well as through extensive purchases at a number of major auctions. Eventually it included not only books and manuscripts, but pamphlets, maps, newspapers and other periodicals, and transcriptions of manuscripts made by his corps of copyists from originals still in private hands or in government and church archives. Bancroft and his staff also created original materials by interviewing pioneers whose recollections might not otherwise have been preserved, resulting in hundreds of early oral histories termed "dictations".

By 1868, a move became necessary to relieve overcrowding in Bancroft's expanding and prosperous Montgomery Street headquarters. He bought property on Market Street near Third, and began to build in 1869. In April 1870, the completed five-story building boasted a modernized steam engine in the basement to provide power for the printing presses. The first four floors accommodated nine departments, including wholesale and retail books, and stationary, music, law, and education sales; a subscription department; and a printing, bindery, and blank book production division. The fifth floor of the new Bancroft Building was a literary workshop, completely divorced from the business, where Bancroft's collections could be put to use. He engaged Librarian, Henry Lebbeus Oak, to catalog the works he had acquired.

Bancroft continued to collect materials as he planned a vast publication project of a series of histories of western North American, which in the end numbered 39 volumes: *the History of the Pacific States of North America*, also known as Bancroft's *Works*. First were five volumes on The Native Races (1874-1875), then three volumes on the History of Central America and six more on the History of Mexico, followed by two volumes on the Northern Mexican States and Texas, and one treating Arizona and New Mexico. All of these preceded his central topic, a seven-volume History of California (1886-1890), which were followed by nine more volumes on other parts of the west, and a number of more informal works, including *Literary Industries*, the author's biography.

Bancroft's ten year marriage to his beloved wife, Emily Ketchum Bancroft, ended upon her death in 1869. Left alone to raise their daughter, Kate, born in 1860, Bancroft devoted his energies to family and literary productions. He placed the full responsibility of managing the business interests of the firm with his younger brother, A. L. (Albert Little) Bancroft, creating a new partnership in 1860 under the title, A. L. Bancroft and Company. The business expanded and prospered under A. L.

Bancroft's direction until a fire destroyed the Bancroft Building and its contents in 1886. Old resentments and quarrels erupted following the traumatic event which eventually severed the brothers personal and professional relationships.

Fortunately, the library (referred to as both the Bancroft Library and the Pacific Library) was spared. In 1881, it had been moved from the fifth floor of the Market Street location to a specially constructed fire-proofed brick building on Valencia Street. Following the fire and dissolution of his partnership with A. L. Bancroft in 1886, Hubert Howe Bancroft formed two new companies: The History Company, and the Bancroft Company. In August 1887, under these new imprints, the production, publication, and marketing of Bancroft's *Works* resumed in the rebuilt quarters at 723 Market Street, known thereafter as the History Building.

Throughout the West, Bancroft's numerous sales agents continued to sell subscriptions to his *Works* and the seven-volume *Chronicles of the Builders*. Following a successful marketing campaign which secured orders for more than 6,000 sets of volumes during the 1870's and 80's, the canvassing effort was abandoned in 1892. In the late 1880's, Bancroft's methods for writing and marketing his *works* came under attack by literary critics and several of his former employees, including Mr. Henry Oak and Mrs. Francis Fuller Victor. Oak and Victor claimed authorship for major portions of the *Works* that were credited solely to Bancroft, calling the historian's methods and reputation into question. The retail book and stationary store finally closed its doors in 1894, after a long and bitter price war had made the business unprofitable.

In 1905, Bancroft's accomplishments as an historian and collector were recognized by the University of California. The institution purchased the book and manuscript collections of the eminent historian, numbering over sixty-thousand items, for \$250,000. Although the collector contributed \$100,000 of the purchase price, the contents of the library had been appraised at twice the net cost to the University. *The History of the Pacific States* won recognition as an indispensable work for students of western history. The collection as a whole remains a distinguished primary source of unique books, maps, pamphlets, and documents on the early history of the West, from Alaska to Central America.

In his later years, Bancroft wrote several volumes (*Retrospection*, *The New Pacific*, *In These Latter Days*) expressing his political, moral, economic, and social concerns for a modernizing world. On March 3, 1918, at the age of 86, Hubert Howe Bancroft died at his home, having been struck by a street car several days earlier. He was survived by his daughter, Kate, and his four children (Paul, Philip, Griffing, and Lucy Bancroft) by his second wife, Matilida Griffing Bancroft. They were married in 1876 and she predeceased him in 1910.

Harry Clark, *A Venture in History: The Production, Publication, and Sale of the Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft*. University of California Press, 1973.

John Walton Caughey, *Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of the West*. University of California Press, 1946.

The Bancroft Library, University of California, *The Bancroft Collection of Western and Latin Americana*, June 4, 1998, <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/bancroft.html>.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Bancroft Reference Notes for Central America, ca. 1870s-1890s, consist of bibliographic and research notes pertaining to and used in the *History of Central America*, volumes 6-8, of Hubert Howe Bancroft's, *History of the Pacific States of North America*. The research notes as a whole track the initial contact by Europeans with the land and native people of Darien (Panama), Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, the Mosquito Coast, Salvador, Yucatan, and Peru. The notes follow in a chronological manner various political, social, religious, and economic upheavals, changes, and developments in each country or region between the 1490s and the 1880s.

The Central American notes draw heavily on the Alphonse Pinart collection of books and manuscripts purchased by Bancroft and cataloged into his collection in 1883. These notes reflect many primary sources, such as ship logs and church correspondence. Secondary source notes, focus on the relationship between sixteenth century European monarchs, the explorers they financed, and their impact on and interactions with rebellious and subdued natives of various regions. These notes include sources of correspondence, biographical materials, and histories of conquistadores such as Cortez, Drake, and Pizarro and other Europeans as well as the economic developments made possible by their establishment of ports, regular shipping and mail routes, and later railroads throughout Central America. A body of notes document sources and information concerning the politics and construction of the Panama Canal.

Notably, the variation in scripts found in these handwritten notes provide evidence of the team of researchers employed by H.H. Bancroft. While the assistants compiled notes using a systematic method of topic research, Bancroft himself collated and edited the notes, often in a literal cut-and-paste fashion. In this manner, he carefully documented the sources he intended to draw upon and quote as authorities while constructing chapter outlines and textual drafts for the *History of Central America* volumes.

Series 1: **Bibliographic and Research Notes circa 1870s-1890s****Physical Description:** Cartons 1-10**Arrangement**

Arranged alphabetically by country, and then chronologically, except for Inter-ocean communications, which follows at the end.

Content/Description

The majority of notes were taken from manuscripts and books which were part of Bancroft's collection during the years 1870 to 1890. Bibliographic notes include title, author, volume, and page citations. Many notes are simple, 1- to 4-line summaries of a specific region, with the date noted in the left hand margin. Research notes of one to ten pages are transcriptions or summaries relating to historical events or persons. Inter-ocean communication notes deal with the exchange of information between explorers and the Spanish Crown concerning sea-routes and maps, and also include notes on shipping developments, mail, the establishment of ports, and the developments leading to the building of the Panama Canal.

"Paper bag files" refer to samples of the flat, brown paper bags which Bancroft used as a systematic method of organizing and storing his voluminous research notes.

carton 1, folder 1	America, General 1492-1887
carton 1, folder 2-4	Belize miscellaneous 1600-1882
carton 1, folder 5-19	Central America 1498-1889undated
carton 1, folder 20-23	Biography. 1501-1885
carton 1, folder 24	Early discoveries. undated
carton 1, folder 25-26	Early voyages. 1498-1880
carton 1, folder 27	Christopher Columbus. 1491 undated
carton 1, folder 28	Laws and jails. undated
carton 1, folder 29	Laws of the Indians. undated
carton 1, folder 30-31	Miscellaneous. undated
carton 2, folder 1-15	Costa Rica 1500-1886
carton 2, folder 16	Ecclesiastical. 1500-1600
carton 2, folder 17	Miscellaneous. undated
carton 3, folder 1-20	Guatemala 1520-1724
carton 4, folder 1-24	miscellaneous 1725-1886
carton 5, folder 1-14	Honduras 1502-1886
carton 5, folder 15	"Paper bag files"
carton 5, folder 16	Miscellaneous. undated
carton 5, folder 17-19	Mosquito Coast 1528-1884
carton 6, folder 1-20	Nicaragua miscellaneous 1524-1886
	Panama

carton 7, folder 1-18	1499-1851
carton 8, folder 1-12	1852-1886
carton 8, folder 13-14	Drake's expeditions. 1572-1596
carton 8, folder 15-17	Miscellaneous. undated
	Peru
carton 9, folder 1	1510-1818
carton 9, folder 2	Early explorations. ca. 1500s
carton 9, folder 3	Political disruptions. 1544-47
	Salvador
carton 9, folder 4-16	miscellaneous 1524-1885
	South America
carton 9, folder 17	1820-1886
	West Indies
carton 9, folder 18-19	1446-1521
	Yucatan
carton 9, folder 20	1529 undated
	Inter-Ocean Communications
carton 10, folder 1	Costa Rica. 1840-1885
carton 10, folder 2-4	General. 1900-1870
carton 10, folder 5	Honduras. 1604-1886
carton 10, folder 6-8	Nicaraguan Route. 1551-1885
carton 10, folder 9-14	Panama. 1502-1886
carton 10, folder 15-18	Tehuantepec. 1715-1882
carton 10, folder 19	Miscellaneous. 1884 undated