Finding Aid to the William Heath Davis Papers, 1840-1905

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Finding Aid to the William Heath Davis Papers, 1840-1905

Collection number: BANC MSS C-B 445

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: William Heath Davis Papers,
Date (inclusive): 1840-1905
Collection Number: BANC MSS C-B 445
Origination: Davis, William Heath, 1822-1909
Extent: Part I: 3 boxes and 5 volumes
Part II: 2 microfilm reels
Repository: The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California 94720-6000
Physical Location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.
Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], William Heath Davis Papers, BANC MSS C-B 445, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Scope and Content
This collection of his papers was assembled from several sources: some documents removed from the T. W. Norris, Robert B. Honeyman and Robert E. Cowan Collections of Californiana; some material purchased in 1956 from Miss Inez Estudillo; and photocopy and film from the California State Library in Sacramento. Sources are noted on the folders.

Biography
William Heath Davis was born of a Boston sea-faring, ship-owning family, in Honolulu in 1822. Visiting California as a boy, he returned in 1838 to clerk in a store in Monterey owned by his uncle, Nathan Spear, and subsequently engaged in trading trips to Yerba Buena and the Hawaiian Islands. In 1845 he settled in San Francisco, established his own business and became one of the city's most prominent merchants and ship owners. In 1847 he married María de Jesús Estudillo, daughter of Joaquin Estudillo, a wealthy rancher. In addition to his mercantile activities he was instrumental in the founding of San Diego and Oakland. He died at Hayward, California, April 19, 1909.

volume v. 1

Letters written by Davis, 1846-1850
Scope and Content Note
Photocopy of business letterbook; original in California State Library, Sacramento Contains letters, some in Spanish, addressed to other merchants, including Henry D. Fitch and John Parrott, and to customers such as Vallejo, Larkin, and Frémont. Some letters (1847) in the hand of Richard M. Sherman, temporarily in charge of Davis' business in California. Letters provide detail re ship cargoes, merchandise orders, prices for goods, etc. Some discuss future of Mexican California.

Box 1

Letters written by Davis, 1851-1905
Scope and Content Note
Originals, copies and drafts; addressed primarily to members of his family, particularly while he was in Washington, D. C. (1882-84) and in Los Angeles and San Diego (1884-ca. 1887). Letters to his wife, María de Jesús (Estudillo) Davis, are in Spanish. Arranged chronologically.

Box 2

Letters written to Davis
Scope and Content Note
Letters from members of his family, other California merchants and settlers, etc. Partial list of correspondence follows.

Accounts and other financial Papers, arranged chronologically
Leese, Jacob Primer. Orders for merchandise, Jan. 27 & Feb. 15 1840
Guerrero, Francisco. Order for merchandise, Nov. 2, 1841
Howard, W[illiam] D[avis] M[erry]. Bill for goods, noted as credited in account, June 13, 1846
Ware, William. Receipted bill for cedar shingles, Aug. 17, 1846
Shockley, H. A.. Receipted bill for goods supplied to William Heath Davis, Sept. 11, 1846
Mellus, Henry. Receipt for hides, Oct. 24, 1846
Frémont, J[ohn] C[harles]. Order for supplies written and signed for him by William H. Russell, [Nov. 3, 1846]
Powell, William John. Receipted bill for medical service on Brig Euphemia, Dec. 5, 1846
Smith, Stephen. Request to pay Leidesdorff for lumber, Jan. 7, 1847
Semple, Robert. Bill, Feb. 23, 1847
Vioget, Jean Jacques. Bill for caulking Euphemia by Mr. McLannan, Nov. 16, 1847
Davis, William Heath. Bill of lading for goods from San Francisco to Santa Cruz on the Brig Henry, Nov. 27, 1847
Hoppe, Jacob D. Note to William Heath Davis requesting delivery of merchandise, Mar. 31, 1848
Starkey, Janion, & Co. Recepted bill, Oct. 10, 1848
Gilbert, Hubbard & Co. Recepted bill for Alta California & printing, Jan. 4-May 2, 1849
Davis, William Heath. Bill of lading for gold shipped to New York via Panama on the steamship California, Apr. 30, 1849
S. H. Williams & Co. Recepted bill, Sept. 10, 1849
Coyle, Francis, pastor of the Catholic Church, S.F. Receipt for "book containing account of receipts and payments..." Jan. 15, 1850
Robert Wells & Co. Recepted bill for three frame houses, Aug. 1, 1850
Richardson, William. Order to pay one hundred and fifty dollars to G. B. Post, Oct. 31, 1850
Davis, William Heath. 3 cancelled checks on the San Francisco Savings Bank, 1852-53
Matthews, H. Bill to Davis & Ward, June 11, 1855
Davis, William H[earth]. Check on John Sime & Co., Oct. 13, 1858
Davis, William Heath. Account book, 1897-1900
Davis, William Heath. "Money to family, " 1898-1900
W[illia]m Heath Davis Account with Miss Lizzie Manning, July 18, 1903
Miscellaneous accounts
Co-partnership agreement - William H. Davis, William Richardson and John Parrott, "with a view to the navigation by steam of the Bay and tributaries of the Port of San Francisco..." March 17, 1849
Lease from William Heath Davis to Blecker, Van dyke & Belden, for land in San Francisco, Aug. 18, 1849
Power of attorney granted William H. Davis to settle estate of Louis Gravier, Oct. 15, 1849
Davis, William Heath. Copy of lease of land in San Francisco to Edward Vischer, Dec. 1, 1849
Certificate of registration of the Barque Hortensia, May 9, 1850
Summons to William Heath Davis to appear before the U.S. Commission for Ascertaining and Settling Private Land Claims in California, March 14, 1855
Davis, William Heath. Agreement to aid Abel Guy in case, Daniel Sill v. Guy, Jan. 25, 1856?
Davis, William Heath. Deed of land (copy), Aug. 25, 1856
Davis, William Heath. "Flying trip to California, " undated
Davis, William Heath. "Flying Trip to Honolulu 1847, " undated
Miscellaneous papers related to William Heath Davis
Newspaper clippings related to William Heath Davis and family
William Heath Davis papers, including:
Hinckley, William Sturgis, 1807-1848:
Letter to Gulnac, Mar. 16, 1842, from Yerba Buena, requesting him to deliver hides to W. H. Davis. 11. A.L.S.
Thompson, Joseph P.:
Letter to W. H. Davis, Aug. 1, 1845, from Yerba Buena, sending copy of letter from committee of arrangements for the celebration of the fourth of July along with one other document. 1 letter, A.L.S.

Green, Talbot H., 1810-1889:
Bill to W. H. Davis, Monterey, Apr. 15, 1846. 1 letter, A.D.S.

Davis, William Heath, 1822-1909:
Bill and receipt to the U. S. Portsmouth for five pounds of nails. Yerba Buena, Sept. 21, 1846. 1 letter, A.D.S.

Pell, E. Ward:
Certificate of inspection of hides and tallow for W. H. Davis, Oct. 18, 1846, at Yerba Buena. 1 letter, A.D.S.

Davis, William Heath, 1822-1909:
Cancelled promissory note to T. C. Pelton, Feb. 2, 1854, San Leandro. 1 letter, A.D.S.

Davis, William Heath, 1822-1909:
Cancelled promissory note to Hirshfelder, Levy & Co., Sept. 6, 1858, San Leandro. Printed form, filled in. 1 letter,

Davis, William Heath, 1822-1909:
Cancelled promissory note to Main & Winchester, July 21, 1860, San Francisco. Printed form, filled in. 1 letter,

Box 3
Publishers' dummies for Davis' Sixty-Six Years in California and Seventy Years in California. (2 v.)

Scope and Content Note
His reminiscences were published as Sixty Years in California (1889) and Seventy-Five Years in California (1929). The mss. of the published works are in the Huntington Library.

volume v. 2-5

volume v. 2
Journals, cash books and ledgers

volume v. 3
Journal for ranching operations, San Leandro, 1863-67

volume v. 4
Cash book [for ranch expenses?], 1868-73

volume v. 5
Journal, 1868-71 [most of the pages are blank]

reel 1-2

Positive microfilm of letters written by and to Davis, July 1849-August 1898

Scope and Content Note
Relating to business dealings with merchants in California, Hawaii and Boston and to family affairs. Originals in California State Library, Sacramento.

Alexander & Mellus, San Pedro
Letter, Sept. 4, 1848. Re hide and tallow accounts.

Davis, Albert G. [son]
18 letters, 1881-1887. Re family finances and status of Mexican War claim.

Davis, George Hyde, 1868?- [son]
5 letters, 1881-1884.

Davis, Maria Jesús (Estudillo), 1831-ca. 1905 [Mrs. William Heath Davis]
5 letters, 1881-1888[?]. Written in Spanish.

Davis family miscellany
12 letters, 1864-190[?]. Letters written by Davis' daughters, some while students at the Academy of Notre Dame, San Jose.

Flügge, Charles W., d. 1852
2 letters, 1845-1846

Frisbie, John Baptist, 1824-

Misroon, John Stoney, 1810-1865
Letter, Nov. 15, 1846. Written aboard the U.S.S. Portsmouth.

Nye, Gorham H., 1802-1878
Partial List of Correspondents

Parrott, John, 1811-1884
8 letters, 1849-1853. Photostats of originals in the California State Library, Sacramento. Re various business enterprises in partnership with Davis.
Peck, Sherman
Letter, June 1, 1847. Enclosure: account with Nathan Spear, Jan. 1, 1847.
See also Semple, Robert B.
Revere, Joseph Warren, 1812-1880
Letter, Nov. 3, 1846
Ridley, Robert Thomas, 1819?-1851
Letter, March 6, 1840.
Semple, Robert Baylor, 1808-1854
Stearns, Abel, 1798-1871
Letter, Feb. 2, 1858. Declines Davis' invitation to join in a business venture.
Sutter, John Augustus, 1803-1880
Letter, April 22, 1844. Re account with Davis.
Vischer, Edward, 1808-1878
2 letters, 1850. Re San Diego real estate investment.