Guide to the M. Theo Kearney Papers, 1865-1906

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Note
Biological and Medical Sciences --Agriculture --Plant CultureHistory --History, California --History, Central Valley/SierraGeographical (by Place) --California --Central Valley/Sierra
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Collection number: BANC MSS C-G 77

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Collection Summary
Collection Title: M. Theo Kearney Papers,
Date (inclusive): 1865-1906
Collection Number: BANC MSS C-G 77
Origination: Kearney, M. Theo (Martin Theodore), d. 1906
Extent: Number of containers: 7 boxes
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.

Abstract: Correspondence and papers mainly pertaining to his property in Fresno Co., Calif., and to cooperative raisin production; pocket diary-account books, 1865-1903; social correspondence from his travels; newspaper clippings, pamphlets and pictures.

Languages Represented: English

Access
Collection is open for research.

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[Identification of item], M. Theo Kearney Papers, BANC MSS C-G 77, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Kearney Ranch records, [ca. 1888-1948], BANC MSS C-G 63

**Scope and Content**

This collection of Kearney's papers came to The Bancroft Library some time after his estate was received by the University. In 1949 the records of the Kearney Ranch, which had been administered by the University from 1906 to about 1948, were also placed here. A group of account books for the Fruit Vale Improvement Company, found with the personal papers, has now been placed with the Ranch papers which already contained two volumes of records, 1879-1892, for the Esterby "Rancho." The Kearney Ranch records have been cataloged separately (BANC MSS C-G 63) with a brief description and key to arrangement.

The correspondence has been separated from the miscellaneous papers and divided into two groups: the business and general correspondence, arranged chronologically, and the purely social, arranged alphabetically. The general correspondence reflects Kearney's interest and activities in fruit growing and marketing, including cooperative organizations. He was also engaged in promoting land colonies and in developing his Chateau Fresno Park. His purchase of a Mercedes car with a custom body by Hooker & Company, England (a vehicle admired by King Edward VII) is recorded in the correspondence.

**Biography**

M. Theodore Kearney died May 26, 1906, in his stateroom aboard the Cunard liner Caronia, alone, as he had lived in the Victorian mansion adjacent to his vast Kearney Vineyard property. The news did not reach California for nearly a week after his death, and then it was soon learned that he had left his estate to the University of California.

Nothing is known of Kearney's family and early life, nor when or where he was born. Often spoken of as a "man of mystery," Kearney has been described as a rather irascible recluse who built up his great land holdings by shrewd purchases and heartless mortgage foreclosures. From his pocket diary-account books we know that he was in Boston 1865-1867, and was in San Francisco on Jan. 1, 1870. Listed for several years in the San Francisco directories as a real estate broker, Kearney became associated with W. C. Chapman, speculator in Fresno County lands. In 1877 he was agent for the Bank of California in the sale of the Easterby "Rancho" there, and in 1880 purchased N. K. Masten's share therein. This is believed to be the foundation of his ranching and vineyard enterprises. He acquired the noted Fruit Vale estate also, and, later, a controlling interest in the Fresno Vineyard Company. He played an important part in the affairs of the California Raisin Growers' Association. His correspondence and papers reflect the turbulence of his relations with his agricultural and business associates.

Although Kearney has been described as a misanthrope - with a particular aversion to women - his papers do not bear this out. His pocket notebooks reveal that from his arrival in San Francisco he had entré to the highest social circles; his calling lists contain the most important names. Also, there is a considerable file of personal correspondence with friends and acquaintances from his travels, and particularly from his sojourns at various German "spas." This includes letters from a minor German princess, British nobility and members of American, British and Continental "Society."

**Box I**

General correspondence, 1887-Feb. 1905

**Box II**

General correspondence, Mar. 1905-May 1906

Social correspondence, ca. 1899-1905

**Box III**

Miscellaneous papers - including folders for: California Fruit Growing Company, California Raisin Growers' Association, California Raisin Growers' Company, Central California Raisin Packing Company, Fresno Vineyard Company, Fruit Vale Estate, Kearney Vineyard Company (formerly Kearney Vineyard Syndicate), Packing House Company and miscellaneous accounts, maps, and plans, planting lists and pictures.

**Box IV**

Diary-account books, 1865-1903 (30 v.); personal "record" book of land and financial transactions; address books (4 v.); visiting cards and printed or engraved invitations from friends and acquaintances; S.F. automobile driving license, 1905; copy of epitaph.

**Boxes V-VI**

Newspaper clippings and pamphlets. Contain clippings re Raising Growers' Assoc., 1893-1906, 1905-1906.

**Box VII**

Clippings and pamphlets - various.

1901-1906
Carter, Stanton Leslie
   Aug. 1903-1906
Castle, Curtis Harvey, 1848-1928
   Dec. 10, 1898
Marion De Vries, 1865-1939
   Dec. 7, 1898
Drew, Alexander M.
   Jan. 2, 1906
Fairweather, John, 1845-
   Mar. 25, 1905
Forsyth, William, 1851-
   1893 & Oct. 1905
Goodfellow, William Scott, 1850-1913
   1905-1906
Hallnlor, Andrew (as editor, Cooperative Journal)
   Jan. & Feb. 1906
Harris, Milus King, 1853-
   Mar. 1903 & Apr. 1906
Hilborn, Samuel Greeley, 1834-1899
   Dec. 13, 1898
Huntington, Collis Potter, 1821-1900
   May 31, 1894
Huntington, Henry Edwards, 1850-1927
   Mar. 22, 1902
Kern County Land Company (a few signed by William S. Tevis)
   1902-1905
Loud, Eugene Francis, 1847-1908
   Dec. 8, 1898
Morgan, Percy T.
   Nov. 25, 1905
Naftzger, Arzo Huffman, 1852-
   Dec. 10, 1898
Pardee, George Cooper, 1857-1941
   1905-1906
Perkins, George Clement, 1839-1923
   1898
Rowley, Howard C. (as editor, California Fruit Farmer)
   Mar. & Apr., 1904
Sharp, E. D. (as President, Healdsburg College)
   Nov. 6, 1903
West, Frank A. (a few for George West & Son)
   1902-1906
Wickson, Edward James, 1848-1923
   1905
Wiggins, Frank A., 1849-1924
   Dec. 7, 1898

American Raisin Packing Company
Bank of California
German Savings and Loan Society
Page, McCutchen & Knight (attorneys, San Francisco)

Beach, Warren C.
Dartmouth, William Henage Legge, Earl of, 1851-1936
Hanau, Hermione, Princess Carl von
Kidd, Anna Estelle (Mrs. George Kidd)
Kimberly, Isabel Geraldine (Stracy) Wodehouse, Countess of, d. 1927
Oelrichs, Theresa (Fair)
O'Hagan, Bessie
Tevis, Mabel (Pacheco)
Woods, William