Descriptive Summary

Title: William P. Hanson Diaries
Dates: 1849, 1862-1889.
Collection Number: MSS 082
Creator/Collector:
Extent: Boxes: 4 | Items: 33 volumes | Linear Feet: 1.5
Repository: California State University, Chico
Chico, California 95929-0295
Abstract: The diaries of William Hanson describe his life as a rancher in Yuba County from 1862-1879, then moving to Willows, California until his death in 1889. It includes recollections of Honorable D. M. Hanson crossing the Plains in 1849, written in 1919.
Language of Material: English

Access
Collection is open for research without restriction.

Publication Rights
The library can only claim physical ownership of the collection. Users are responsible for satisfying any claimants of literary property.

Preferred Citation
William P. Hanson Diaries. California State University, Chico

Acquisition Information
Gift of Colusi County Historical Society.

Biography/Administrative History
William P. Hanson was the fourth child of George and Polly Hanson. He was born in Prestonburg, Kentucky on August 15, 1826. He married Lydia A. Wilson on March 1, 1853 in Illinois. Together they traveled to California with part of Lydia’s family, William’s relatives, and some cattle. William lived in Marysville for a while, working at the mines on the Feather River. Indians from Lake Country went to Rancherias along the Sacramento River to hunt and fish, sometimes visiting Marysville. Their bartering attracted the attention of William who found some Indians to acts as guides, going with them to upper Lake County. They traveled by way of Sulphur Creek, through Grizzly Canyon, and William decided to settle there with his family. They lived in Lake County from 1856 to 1860 before deciding to return to “civilization,” making their new home in Yuba City until 1873. In 1873, William bought the Sam Brannan Ranch and lived the life of a farmer, an occupation common for ex-miners. In 1879, he decided to move to Willows after leasing the Brannan Ranch to his brother, Daniel. William’s family remained in Willows until his death in 1889. William and Lydia had eight children--the first and the last both died as children. In December 1889, Williams was hit by a train on Christmas Day while waiting to meet his daughter Clara. His leg was amputated afterwards, but he failed to recover from the shock and died four days later.

Scope and Content of Collection
In his diaries, William expressed love and tenderness for his wife and children, who seemed to mean everything to him. He described his life as a busy, productive farmer and a genuine “family man.” He played pool, went to the races, and saw chicken fights. With his family, he went to the circus, on picnics, drank eggnog at Christmas, celebrated Thanksgiving, and went to see the fireworks on the Fourth of July. The Hanson family competed with each other in cribbage, croquet, whist, euchre, 7-up, Pedro, and Smut. William often mentioned small pleasures in his diary that would not seem to be important to such a busy man. He mentioned what Lydia made for dinner (often “exotic” foods like squab, brains, or pig head), what chores Lydia and the children did, whether someone wasn’t feeling well, and the phases of the moon. The diaries span twenty-eight years of William’s life, 1862-1889 inclusively. The collection includes recollections of Honorable D. M. Hanson crossing the Plains in 1849, written in 1919.

Indexing Terms
Colusa County (Calif.) -- History.
Yuba County (Calif.) -- History.
Willows, (Calif.) -- History.
Farm life -- California.
Farmers -- California.
Hanson, David Mark, 1840-1920.