Finding Aid to the William Lawton Wright Manuscript and Papers MS.215

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2012 August 23
Finding Aid to the William Lawton Wright Manuscript and Papers

MS.215

Title: William Lawton Wright Manuscript and Papers
Identifier/Call Number: MS.215
Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Braun Research Library
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 3.9 Linear feet (3 boxes; 1 oversized folio)
Date (inclusive): 1931-1962

Abstract: William “Bill” Lawton Wright (1902 March 23 - 1962 September 2) was a newspaper reporter in San Diego and San Francisco in the 1920s and 1930s. He pursued an interest in San Diego County history and discovered that the location of the Butterfield Stagecoach station on Warner’s Ranch was incorrectly identified. Wright’s 1961 publication on the topic The Warner’s Ranch Butterfield Station Puzzle resulted in a National Historic Landmark designation from the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior in 1962. This collection of papers from 1931-1962 includes Wright’s research on the topic, correspondence, and manuscript drafts, as well as a portfolio of evidence Wright constructed for proving his case to any pertinent board or committee.

creator: MacMullen, Jerry
creator: Moore, Bertram B.
creator: Ruhlen, George
creator: San Diego Historical Society
creator: Westerners. Los Angeles Corral
creator: Wright, William Lawton (Bill), 1902-1962

Scope and contents
This collection includes correspondence, manuscripts, and research materials collected or created by William Lawton Wright from 1931 to 1962, mostly in relation to the history of the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach station at Warner’s Ranch in San Diego County, California. Included in these materials are financial records and invoices, index card notes, newspaper clippings, notes from and photocopies of historical documents, and letters of response to the mailing of the independent booklet The Warner’s Ranch Butterfield Station Puzzle, which includes a postcard of receipt from the Southwest Museum Research Library, now the Braun Research Library Collection. The papers regarding donation of these papers to the Southwest Museum are also included in this collection. These materials include a portfolio of exhibit materials Wright created for presenting his case.

The collection also includes an extensive 2-volume history of the San Diego River and water usage policy, apparently commissioned by the San Diego Union-Tribune, but never published.

Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org.

Use
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Preferred citation
William Lawton Wright Manuscript and Papers, 1931-1962, Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MS.215; [folder number] [folder title][date].

Related Archival Materials
Notes on the Butterfield Stage itinerary, BANC MSS C-R 79, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Processing History
Initial processing by Braun Library Staff. Additional processing and finding aid completed by Holly Rose Larson, NHPRC Project Archivist, 2012 August 23, made possible through grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Biographical note
William “Bill” Lawton Wright was born in Omaha, Nebraska on 1902 March 23. Wright moved to California when he attended Stanford University in San Francisco. At Stanford, Wright met Katherine Frances Capell, and the two were wed in 1926 on Wright’s 24th birthday. Wright was the editor of the Stanford Daily before he and Katherine relocated to San Diego.
in 1929, where Wright was a columnist for the San Diego Union until 1937. While in San Diego, Wright was heavily involved
with the San Diego Historical Society and passionately studied the history of San Diego County, specifically the Butterfield
Overland Stagecoach station at Warner’s Ranch. The Wrights moved to Glendale, California in 1943, and William continued
his research on the Butterfield Overland route and San Diego County.

Warner’s Ranch is located in Warner Springs in San Diego County, which is land originally populated by Cupeno Native
Americans. The land passed through many hands as Mexico and the United States battled for the territory, but the deed for
the land was finally granted to Juan Jose (Jonathan Trumble) Warner in 1844. Warner’s Ranch was right in the middle of the
overland migration route to California during the 19th century, and it provided an excellent pasture for livestock. Warner
opened his ranch to travelers and built a trading post to accommodate his visitors. Warner’s home and trading post were
noted as a stopping place for the Butterfield Overland Stagecoaches in 1858.

The Butterfield Overland Mail Company was awarded the first contract for transcontinental mail to California in 1857.
Stations were erected every 20 miles along the route. The Warner ranch house was the fifth station on the route through
San Diego County. Approximately 1 ½ miles east of those two structures is another adobe building, the Kimble-Wilson
store, which was designated by the Native Daughters and Native Sons of the Golden West as the Butterfield Overland Stage
station in 1930.

Wright started researching the history of Warner’s Ranch in 1935, and over time, discovered that the wrong building was
being memorialized. Wright published and distributed his findings in an article titled “The Warner’s Ranch – Butterfield
Station Puzzle,” included in the Westerners Brand Book #9 (1961) published by the Los Angeles Corral of the Westerners,
and reprinted as a standalone publication in 1961. Warner’s house, the correct Butterfield Overland Stagecoach station,
was registered as a National Historic Landmark by the United States Department of the Interior in 1962.

William Wright remained active in the Westerners Los Angeles Corral until his death on 1962 September 3. Katherine
stayed in their Glendale, California home until her death on 2000 October 11. Katherine Capell Wright was a prominent
political activist, former Republican Woman of the Year, and a freelance magazine photographer.

Resources: Hoover, Mildred Brooke, Hero Eugene Rensch, and Ethel Grace Rensch. Historic Spots in California, Third


Photographs, Written Historical and Descriptive Data. San Francisco: Western Office, Division of Design and Construction,

Acquisition
Donation by the author to the Southwest Museum, 1961 December 21.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
E Clampus Vitus. (Fraternal Order)
Butterfield Overland Stage Line
Butterfield Overland Trail -- History
Clippings
Correspondence
Corrizo Corridor (Calif.)
Financial records
Manuscripts
Rancho Santa Margarita (Calif.)
San Diego (Calif.)
San Diego River (Calif.)
San Diego River (Calif.) -- History
Warner’s Ranch (Calif.)

Box 1, Folder 1 Packet of note cards, undated
Box 1, Folder 2 “Working copy” completed manuscript “The Butterfield Station at Warner’s Ranch,” 1960
Box 1, Folder 3 “Suggested Tax Valuation of Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores” by Charles J. Husband, 1931

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Box 1, Folder 4  Correspondence stuck in Westways articles, 1961, undated
Box 1, Folder 5  Extra copies of data, undated
Box 1, Folder 6  Early road data excerpts, undated
Box 1, Folder 7  Miscellaneous notes, especially regarding distances, 1957, undated
Box 1, Folder 8  Testimonials on research and conclusions, 1959-1960
Box 1, Folder 9  Early research correspondence, 1958-1960
Box 1, Folder 10  Research correspondence, 1960-1961
Box 1, Folder 11  Newspaper account of research done, 1960
Box 1, Folder 12  Material for Westerner's Brand Book Version (Folder A), 1960-1961
Box 1, Folder 13  Correspondence regarding Brand Book Version (Folder B), 1960-1961
Box 1, Folder 14  McKinstry material and other notes, 1958
Box 1, Folder 15  More early delving, 1959
Box 1, Folder 16  Continued controversy, 1935, 1960
Box 1, Folder 17  Correspondence with Bertram B. Moore, 1958-1961
Box 1, Folder 18  Some mileages taken in 1958, 1958
Box 1, Folder 19  "Press Argus" Volume 100, Van Buren, Arkansas, 1958 September 19
Box 1, Folder 20  Requests for copies of the monograph, undated
Box 1, Folder 21  Mailing label lists, undated
Box 1, Folder 22  Letters of response to booklet's mailing, 1961-1962
Box 1, Folder 23  Accounts and receipts-also Photostat of 1861 tax book and the first draft monograph, 1958-1961
Box 1, Folder 24  The investigation, step by step, 1958
Box 1, Folder 25  Working copy of the monograph, undated
Box 1, Folder 26  Regarding the mailing and distribution, 1961-1962
Box 1, Folder 27  Correspondence regarding replacing the "landmark" historical marker (Folder A), 1960
Box 1, Folder 28  Correspondence regarding controversy regarding historical landmark (Folder B), 1960
Box 1, Folder 29  Call slips UC Library, undated
Box 2, Folder 30  Land preemption clause Butterfield contract copy and Christmas card, undated
Box 2, Folder 31  Details as to preparation of the "landmark," 1960
Box 2, Folder 32  Correspondence regarding Forster-Helm grave, 1962
Box 2, Folder 33  Donation of manuscript material to Southwest Museum, 1960-1962
Box 2, Folder 34  San Diego-Los Angeles stage road log, 1936
Box 2, Folder 35  Pamphlets regarding the district by Rensch & Conckling, 1957-1958
Box 2, Folder 36  Correspondence in appreciation of the monographs, 1957-1962
Box 2, Folder 37  Correspondence with George Ruhlen, 1958-1959
Box 2, Folder 38  Correspondence with Bertram Moore, 1958-1959
Box 2, Folder 39  Miscellaneous Correspondence and E Clampus Vitus material, San Diego Historical Society, 1958-1959
Box 2, Folder 40  Correspondence largely with Jerry MacMullen, 1958-1959
Box 2, Folder 41  Comments on the evidence, 1960
Box 2, Folder 42  Editing comments and correspondence, 1958-1959
Box 2, Folder 43  Early articles and correspondence on the Butterfield Trail 1943-on, 1938-1959
Box 2, Folder 44  Correspondence with "Parky," 1958-1961
Box 2, Folder 45  Miscellaneous clippings, 1960
Box 2, Folder 46  Notes copied from diaries and documents, 1958-1961
Box 2, Folder 47  Notes copied from early newspapers, 1958
Box 2, Folder 48  Notes copied from San Diego Country records, undated
    Scope and contents
    Materials studied are dated 1855-1875.
Box 2, Folder 49  Notes copied from San Diego tax records for 1855-1863, undated
    Scope and contents
    Materials studied are dated 1855-1863.
Box 2, Folder 50  Information regarding Jonathan Rains, 1959
Box 2, Folder 51  Miscellaneous early notes, 1958
Box 2, Folder 52  Correspondence regarding the monograph, 1960
| Box 2, Folder 53 | Correspondence regarding news coverage of release of monograph, 1960 |
| Box 2, Folder 54 | Responses to publication, 1960 |
| Box 2, Folder 55 | Correspondence after completion of manuscript, 1960 |
| Box 2, Folder 56 | San Diego County tax assessment on Overland Mail Co., undated |

Scope and contents
Materials studied are dated 1859-1861.

| Box 2, Folder 57 | Work sheet details of the study, 1958 |
| Box 2, Folder 58 | Clippings, et cetera, regarding OM centennial, 1958 |
| Box 2, Folder 59 | Copies of notes and some correspondence, 1958 |
| Box 2, Folder 60 | Notes on the Mexican section of the Butterfield trail, 1947 |
| Box 2, Folder 61 | Notes on the trail made in 1947-1948, 1947-1948 |
| Box 2, Folder 62 | Miscellaneous photos and statistics, 1937, undated |
| Box 2, Folder 63 | The Brand Book - the finished product, 1961 |

Physical Description: 2.0 copies

| Box 2, Folder 64 | Correspondence regarding side issues, 1961 |
| Box 2, Folder 65 | Miscellaneous correspondence, 1961 |
| Box 2, Folder 66 | Clippings and articles, some by William Wright, Bulk, 1934-1935 Bulk, 1934-1935 1934-1935, 1948 |
| Box 2, Folder 67 | Tracing of Warner's ranch house, undated |

Physical Description: 3.0 carbon copies

| Box 2, Folder 68 | Correspondence regarding the Westerners, 1959-1962 |
| Box 2, Folder 69 | 1500 word version of Butterfield Station paper, undated |
| Box 2, Folder 70 | Correspondence regarding San Diego Historical Society (Folder A), 1961 |
| Box 2, Folder 71 | Correspondence regarding San Diego Historical Society (Folder B), 1961 |
| Box 2, Folder 72 | Westerners Directory Galley proofs, 1961 |
| Box 2, Folder 73 | Glossary of Mexican and other Localisms of the Southwest from "Coronado's Children" by J. Frank Dobie, undated |
| Box 2, Folder 74 | Rebuttals: William Lawton Wright to B.B. Moore, 1961 |
| Box 3, Folder 75 | Emory's Reconnaissance and Desert Water-Holes, undated |

General note
Dr. Munk also had a facsimile/carbon copy (new missing) June 1986
Scope and contents
Emory's Military Reconnaissance (1848), incomplete; and Brown's "Routes to Desert Watering Places," (1920). These are photostatic copies bound in non-professional hard cover.

| Box 3, Folder 76 | Diaries of the Great Southern Overland, undated |

Physical Description: 1.0 binder folio
Scope and contents
Notes from various memoirs published from 1865-1931.

| Box 3, Folder 77 | History of the San Diego River, volume 1, 1933 |

Physical Description: 2.0 binder folios
Scope and contents
History recorded is from 1773 through September 10, 1924.

| Box 3, Folder 78 | History of the San Diego River, volume 2, 1933 |

Scope and contents
History recorded is from September 10, 1924 through February 1933.
Wright's "Exhibit" presented in the debate, undated

General Physical Description note: Oversize folio

Scope and contents

Includes Wright's personal copy of his manuscript and eight posterboards with items pasted on for exhibit. The label on the portfolio reads: Presented to SOUTHWEST MUSEUM 12/21/61 by William L. Wright, with the proviso that he shall be permitted to borrow this material on request, for display to any Board or Committee which has jurisdiction over the placement of a truthful Plaque at Warner's Ranch.