
Finding Aid to the Jacob P. Leese Letter (Copy) MS.689

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Title: Jacob P. Leese Letter (Copy)

Identifier/Call Number: MS.689

Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Braun Research Library

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 0.1 linear feet(1 folder)

Date: circa 1932

Abstract: This is a photostatic copy of a letter written to Abel Stearns from Jacob P. Leese, 1837 May 8.

creator: Leese, Jacob Primer, 1809-1892

creator: Stearns, Abel, 1798-1871

Scope and Contents

This is a photostatic copy of a letter written to Abel Stearns from Jacob P. Leese, 1837 May 8.

Biographical note

Abel Stearns (1798, February 9 - 1871, August 23) was a trader who came to Los Angeles, Alta California in 1829 and became a major landowner, cattle rancher and one of the area's wealthiest citizens.

Born in Lunenburg, Mass., Stearns went to Colonial Mexico in about 1826, where he became a naturalized citizen. In 1829, Abel Stearns came to Monterey, California, then settled in Pueblo de Los Angeles. Abel Stearns represented Los Angeles under American military rule, 1848-1850. He was a delegate to the 1849 California Constitutional Convention, representing the district of Los Angeles; later he was California State Assemblyman, and a Los Angeles County Supervisor, and a member of the Los Angeles Common Council, the legislative branch of the city government.

By 1860, Abel Stearns was the most important land owner in Southern California, and owned Rancho La Habra, Rancho Los Coyotes, Rancho San Juan Cajón de Santa Ana, Rancho Las Bolsas, Rancho La Bolsa Chica, Rancho Jurupa and Rancho La Sierra (Sepulveda). Stearns was hit hard by the drought of 1863-64, causing the loss of thousands of cattle. By 1868 Stearns had suffered such financial reverses that he mortgaged all his ranch assets in what were then Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties. He became a founding member of the Robinson Trust, formed to sell off land from the huge ranchos. By 1870, Stearns had paid off his debts. He died in August 1871 in a hotel in San Francisco.

Biographical note

Jacob Primer Leese (1809, August 19, St. Clairsville, Ohio - 1892, February 1, San Francisco, California) was a San Francisco pioneer, who built the first permanent house in San Francisco. He married General Vallejo's sister, moved to Sonoma, and acquired extensive land holdings.

Leese became active in the Santa Fe, New Mexico trade in 1830. Leese first came to California from New Mexico in 1833, but did not remain, instead transporting mules between New Mexico and Southern California. He returned in July 1834, and settled in Los Angeles and went into partnership with Hugo Reid. Two years later he formed a partnership with two established Monterey merchants, William S. Hinckley and Nathan Spear for the purpose of starting a store in Yerba Buena (now known as San Francisco). In 1836, he was the second permanent settler on the peninsula.

In 1837 Leese married María Rosalia Vallejo, sister of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo. In 1841, he sold his business in San Francisco and moved to Sonoma. Here, he was Alcade in 1844. During the Bear Flag Revolt of 1846, Leese was taken prisoner with Vallejo and held captive at Sutter's Fort. He figured somewhat conspicuously in the historic Bear Flag revolt as interpreter for the contending force. In 1846 he was associated with Thomas O. Larkin in executing his plans of annexation to the United States. In his later life, Leese moved to Monterey and New York, before returning to San Francisco, where he died in 1892.

Preferred citation

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Processing history

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San Francisco (Calif.)

Tallow trade
