Guide to the Alonzo Horton Ledger Collection MS 167

Finding aid prepared by Sandra Kirkwood
Collection processed as part of grant project supported by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) with generous funding from The Andrew Mellon Foundation.
San Diego History Center Document Collection
1649 El Prado, Suite 3
San Diego, CA, 92101
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March 29, 2012
Title: Alonzo Horton Ledger Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MS 167
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.5 Linear feet (1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1870-1878
Abstract: The collection contains two ledgers recording Alonzo Horton’s business activities from 1870 to 1878.
creator: Horton, Alonzo E., 1813-1909
Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.
Conditions Governing Use
The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials. SDHC Library regulations do apply.
Processing Information
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Preferred Citation
Alonzo Horton Ledger Collection, MS 167, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.
Biographical / Historical Notes
Alonzo Erastus Horton, known as the “Father of San Diego,” was born in Union, Connecticut, on October 24, 1813. Horton moved to Wisconsin in 1836 to improve his health, and began working in the cattle business and as a land speculator. In the mid-1840s, Horton traveled to St. Louis to purchase land warrants which entitled him to 1500 acres of land in Wisconsin. With this land, Horton developed and founded the town of Hortonville. A few years later in 1850, he sold his land and ventured west to California in order to work in the mining industry, though not as a miner. Eventually he settled in San Francisco as a supplier and furniture dealer. When he heard about the climate and valuable harbor in San Diego, Alonzo Horton decided to sell his business and move south in 1867 with his second wife, Sarah Wilson Babe. Beginning shortly after his arrival in San Diego, Horton purchased nearly 1000 acres at auctions from 1867-1869 and successfully established New Town, including Horton’s Addition. His success followed that of “Davis’ Folly,” William Heath Davis’ failed attempt in the 1850s. Horton granted land or building space to multiple religious organizations in order to build churches, and he even helped organize the San Diego Free Reading Room Association, which would later become the San Diego Library. Horton opened the first bank in San Diego, called the San Diego Bank, and he built the lavish Horton House (a hotel) which was replaced many years later by the U.S. Grant Hotel. Additionally, he helped finance a post office, a telegraph line (arr. 1870), and the railroad (arr. 1885). He built Horton’s Wharf at the end of Fifth Avenue which he later sold to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. The intense interest in purchasing New Town land continued through several burst-and-boom cycles until 1906 when falling real estate values cost Horton most of his holdings, such as his bank and hotel.
Following the death of his second wife, Alonzo Horton married Lydia M. Knapp (widow of a naval officer) in 1890. Alonzo Horton died in January 1909.
Scope and Content
The collection consists of two ledgers recording Alonzo Horton’s business activities from 1870 to 1878.
The first ledger (1870-1878) is organized by accounts, but not chronologically or alphabetically. At the beginning there is a table of contents that lists accounts by a specific person or business. The detailed account entries are followed by Horton’s personal financial accounts including his land account, interest account, and bank accounts. Some notable entries relate to Horton’s good friend Ephraim W. Morse, George P. Marston, the San Diego Union, Western Union Telegraph Company, and Wells Fargo & Co., as well as the development of the Horton House and the Express Building.
The second ledger, a cash book, (1870-1873) is organized chronologically and there is no table of contents. The even pages outline cash received while the odd pages list cash paid. Some methods of payment include cash, labor, checks, or stocks.
Arrangement
Each ledger is arranged by account or chronologically within.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Bowers, William W.
Gatewood, William Jefferson, Col.
Hinton, Gallagher, & Co..
Horton House.
Horton, Alonzo E., 1813-1909
Marston, George P.
Morse, Ephraim W.
San Diego and Gila Railroad Co..
Wells Fargo & Company.
Western Union Telegraph Company.
Account books
Commercial real estate
Development
Financing
Gaslamp Quarter (San Diego, Calif.)
Hortonville (Wis.)
Housing development
Old Town (San Diego, Calif.)
Real property
San Diego (Calif.)
San Diego Union

Ledger, 1870 January-1878 May

Entries of Interest:
Express Building (page 318)
Gatewood, William J. (page 163)
Hamilton and Marston (page 157)
Hinton, Gallagher, & Co. (page 139)
Horton House (pages 208-211, 217-218)
New Hotel, Block 37 (pages 200-205, 212-213)
Marston, George P. (page 97)
Morse, Ephraim W. (page 320)
San Diego & Gila Railroad Co. (page 121)
San Diego Union (pages 98, 164-165)
Unitarian Society (page 215)
Wells Fargo & Company (page 105)
Western Union Telegraph Company (pages 94-95, 144-145)
Cash book ledger, 1870 January-1873 September

Entries of interest:
Bowers, William W. (designer and builder of Horton House Hotel) (multiple pages throughout)
Gatewood, William J. (pages 359, 377, 381, 393, and multiple pages throughout)
Marston, George P. (pages 192-193, 243)
Morse, Ephraim W. (pages 39, 164, 178, 234, 267, 285, 290, 296, 319)
New Hotel (construction, wages, freight charges) (multiple pages throughout)