Guide to the Denton Family Papers MS 175

Finding aid prepared by Katrina White
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
619-232-6203
May 19, 2011
Title: Denton Family Papers  
Identifier/Call Number: MS 175  
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection  
Language of Material: English  
Physical Description: 0.25 Linear feet (1 box)  
Date (inclusive): 1852-1930  
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English and Spanish.  
Abstract: The collection contains family papers, land deeds, business papers related to Denton land surveys, and several maps of the Baja California region.  
creator: Denton family  
Biographical / Historical Notes  
Colonel William Denton (July 27, 1828-April 14, 1907) was born in Harrowby, England, to William Smith Denton and Sarah Nixon. He was the fourth of seventeen children. Denton came to the United States during the Gold Rush and worked as a civil engineer for the United States geodetic survey. Between 1858 and 1860, Denton participated in a surveying expedition of the Sea of Cortes and coastal Sonora region, accompanied by Federico Fitch, son of a prominent San Diego businessman. It is very likely that he met his future wife during this expedition since their ship stopped at her hometown of Mulege, Mexico. In 1860, he was married to Elena Cano de los Rios aboard the English battleship “The Cleo” at La Paz, Mexico. Elena Cano de los Rios Denton (May 8, 1845-September 23, 1930) was born in Mulege, Baja California, to Mariano Cano de los Rios and Petra Ruiz. Together, William and Elena had eight children: Eleana, William Smith, Oscar Allan, Sarah Brent, Paul Isham, Alexander Marion, Maria Soldad, and Morgan Gascoigne. In 1874, the Denton family moved to San Diego, where they remained for many years. Denton was employed by the International Colonization Company as a land surveyor in the Baja California region between 1884 and 1886, when he appears to have had a falling out with the powerful North American land syndicate. William Denton became a naturalized Mexican citizen in 1894 and was a prominent landowner in Baja California. Although at the time of his death, his American estate totaled only $1000, he owned several mines and ranches in Northern Baja California. These included: the Blanco Bay and Trinidad iron mine groups; Los Algodones Rancho, situated near the Colorado River; Rancho Jacume, situated on the U.S.-Mexican border; one-half interest in Toronjil, Angel de la Guarda, Nueva Esperanza, and La Vaca copper mines, situated on the Pacific coast; one-half interest in the Chubasco and Sireno gold mine groups; and one-half interest in the Vulcan iron mines, situated near the Pacific Coast.  
Upon Col. Denton’s death, his estate was shared amongst his family: half going to his wife, and the other half split evenly among his remaining children. His son Alexander appears to have taken over much of the responsibility for maintaining the family’s properties after Denton’s death. Alexander Denton carried on his father’s work as a land surveyor, drawing up several maps of the Baja California region that encompassed the Denton property in Mexico.  
William Denton’s daughter Maria Soldad was married to Sam Showley. The couple had two children: Samuel Denton Showley and Dan Showley. Dan Showley, who donated at least part of this collection, was a teacher of Spanish and History at Hoover High School.  
Scope and Content  
The Denton Family Papers includes documents on the Denton family history and Denton family estates (in U.S. and Mexico) as well as documents related to William and Alex Denton’s business relationships including their land surveys, and several maps of the Baja California region, including maps of specific Denton properties. Documents of particular interest include William Denton’s original Mexican Naturalization papers, original Mexican land deeds for each mine owned by the Denton family, numerous documents related to the International Colonization Company (also known as the International Company of Mexico), including a published statement from a lawsuit against the company, and field notes for the San Vicente Basin published by the company. Maps of note include an original, hand-drawn map of the lands surrounding the Cucupa Mountains, an original site plan of the Jacume area and of Los Algodones Rancho, and an oversized map of the entire Baja California region.  
Arrangement  
This collection is arranged into four series:  
Series I: Family Papers  
Series II: Family Estates  
Series III: Business Relationships  
Series IV: Baja California Maps
Within each series, items are arranged by subject.

**Preferred Citation**
Denton Family Papers, MS 175, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.

**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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**Separated Materials**
The Federico Fitch diary has been removed and is now part of MS 25 Fitch Family Papers. Photocopies of relevant pages are included in this collection.

**Comments**
We have been unable to establish any connection between the Indiana land deed (in Oversize Collections D1) and the rest of the documents in this collection.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**
Accession numbers 851108A, 860318A

**Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements**
Original William Denton Mexican Naturalization document encapsulated and in Oversize Collections D1. (May 19, 2011)
Original hand-drawn color map encapsulated and in Oversize Collections D1. (June 13, 2011)

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
California Academy of Sciences.
Cantu, Esteban
Cummings, Roland
de Esparza, Timoteo R.
Denton family
Denton, Alexander
Denton, Elena Cano de los Rios
Denton, William
Diaz, Porfirio, 1830-1915
Huller, Louis
International Colonization Company.
International Company of Mexico.
McAleer, Christopher
Moore, Justin P.
Rubio, Manuel, 19th cent.
Saenz, Santana
Scofield, Charles
Scott, Chalmers
Showley, Dan
Showley, Maria Soldad Denton
Sisson, George H.
Algodones (Baja California, Mexico)
Arquitas mine
Baja California (Mexico : Peninsula)
Blanco Bay mines
California, Gulf of (Mexico)
Colorado River Watershed (Colo.-Mexico)
Deeds
Durango (Mexico : State)
Ensenada (Baja California, Mexico)
Genealogy
Jacume Rancho
Land surveying
Las Cucupas Mountains
Maps
Mexicali (Mexico)
Mining
Rancho Punta Banda
Real property surveys
San Diego (Calif.)
San Pedro mine
San Vicente (Baja California, Mexico)
Sonora (Mexico : State)
Surveying
Trinidad copper mines

Series I: Family Papers

Box-folder 1:1  Official documents (some in Spanish), 1894-1917
   Includes:
      William Denton Mexican Naturalization document, 1894 (translation) (original
      encapsulated and in Oversize Collections D1) (original in Spanish).

Box-folder 1:2  Family history (some in Spanish), 1907 April-1952 April
   Includes:
      Letter to Elena Cano Denton from Baja California Governor Esteban Cantu, January 14,
      1919. (Spanish)

Series II: Family Estates

Box-folder 1:3  United States properties, 1852, 1904
   Includes:
      Winamac, Indiana land deed for Andrew Remersnider, July 1, 1852 (in Oversize
      Collections D1).

Box-folder 1:4  Mexican estates (some in Spanish), 1863-1930
   Includes:
      Land transfer documents for Los Algodones Rancho, 1899-1922. (some Spanish)
      Court-ordered report of several Denton family properties including Jacume Rancho, Los
      Algodones Rancho, and various mines, March 15, 1923. (Spanish)

Box-folder 1:5  Mexican mines (some in Spanish), 1889-1924
   Includes:
      Original deeds to mines signed by Portofirio Diaz, including site plan for each mine,
      October 3, 1903-May 31, 1904 (in Oversize Collections D1). (Spanish)
Box-folder 1:6  
**Legal disputes (property), 1924 May-September**  
Series III:  **Business Relationships**

Box-folder 1:7  
**Land surveys (some in Spanish), 1858-1906**  
Includes:  
Copies of pages from Federico Fitch's diary that mention William Denton, 1858-1860.  
Compiled reports on the Colorado River Basin completed by William Denton, in cooperation with Justin P. Moore of the California Academy of Sciences, 1878-1879.

Box-folder 1:8  
**International Colonization Company, 1878-1891**  
Includes:  
Published International Colonization Company field notes from the San Vicente Basin, 1887.  
Published "Allegation of Facts" by Timoteo R. de Esparza in lawsuit against the International Colonization Company, 1888.  
Original correspondence between George H. Sisson of the company and Denton's lawyer regarding William Denton's disputed lands claims, August-November 1891.

Box-folder 1:9  
**Legal disputes (business) (Spanish), undated**  
Series IV:  **Baja California Maps**

Box-folder Oversize Collections D1  
**Maps of Denton property (some in Spanish), 1870-1903**  
Includes:  
Original site plan of the Jacume area, 1870.  
Original site plan of Los Algodones Rancho, 1873.

Box-folder Oversize Collections D1  
**Regional maps (some in Spanish), 1875 and undated**  
Includes:  
Original map of Baja California Region, drawn up by William Denton, 1875.  
Original hand-drawn map of lands surrounding the Cucupa Mountains, undated.