Guide to the Fitch Family Papers MS 25

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 10, 2011
Title: Fitch Family Papers
Identifier/Call Number: MS 25
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.25 Linear feet (3 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1815-1969
Abstract: This collection contains the personal and business papers of Henry and Josefa Fitch and their descendants.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English and Spanish.
creator: Fitch family
Arrangement
The items in this collection are arranged by subject.
Four bound volumes of documents are arranged chronologically in boxes 2 and 3.
Comments
Federico “Fred” Fitch’s diary (Box 1, folder 4) added to this collection following its separation from the Denton Family Papers (MS 175). Notation of removal and copies of Denton related entries filed in MS 175.
Scope and Content
The Fitch family papers contain documents pertaining primarily to Henry Delano Fitch and his wife Josefa Carrillo Fitch. The papers include personal and business correspondence, business accounts, land deeds and documentation of legal proceedings, biographical and genealogical information on the Fitch family, and several reproductions of the Fitch map. Select documents refer to Henry and Josefa’s children or later descendants, including their son Federico’s personal diary dated 1858-1860. The collection includes the original Will and Testament of Henry Delano Fitch, copies of the family’s birth and death records from the Fitch family Bible, the land deeds for the Fitch property in San Diego and Sotoyome Rancho, and several biographies on Henry and Josefa Fitch. The collection also includes four volumes of correspondence and accounts documents reproduced in 1937-1938 from the Bancroft Library’s Fitch family collection.
Processing Information
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Preferred Citation
Fitch Family Papers, MS 25, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.
Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
The four volumes in boxes 2 and 3 have loose bindings and many pages are curled. Volume 1 is completely detached from binding. (May 9, 2011)
Conditions Governing Use
The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials. SDHC Library regulations do apply. All materials identified as copies from the Bancroft Library are restricted to research use only with no further reproductions permitted.
Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.
Biographical / Historical Notes
Henry Delano Fitch (1798-1849) was a sea captain and merchant who, it is believed, became the first North American to settle in San Diego. Fitch arrived as master of the brig Maria Ester in 1826. In 1827, Fitch applied for Mexican citizenship. He remained involved in coastal trading, including the hide trade, and even opened a store in San Diego.
In 1829, Fitch was converted to Catholicism. After his baptism, he proposed marriage to Maria Antonia Natalia Elijah Josefa Carrillo, daughter of Joaquin Carrillo. Because Fitch was still considered a foreigner, and possibly because Governor Echeandia was also enamored with Carrillo, the marriage was not permitted by the Church. Fitch and Carrillo, with the help of Carrillo’s cousin Pio Pico, eloped aboard the American ship Vulture, and were married in Valparaiso, Chile. Upon returning to California in 1830, the Fitches were arrested and charged with crimes against the church and state. Because of Henry Fitch’s baptism and his request for citizenship, eventually the marriage was declared valid. By the end of the nineteenth century, the story of the romance between Henry and Josefa Fitch had become part of San Diego folklore.
Returning to San Diego after the couple’s elopement, Fitch resumed operating his store. He also served at various times as alcalde (mayor) of San Diego. In 1832, Fitch was granted the Sotoyome Rancho near what is now Healdsburg, California. In 1845, Fitch made the first survey of the lands of San Diego. The resulting map was used in the Pueblo case (1854-1874) to determine the number of acres to be granted to the pueblo of San Diego by the U.S. government. Upon his death in 1849, Josefa Carrillo Fitch took over control of the Fitch store briefly until she moved to the Sotoyome Rancho a short time later, where she lived until her death in 1893. Henry Fitch’s widow had an incredibly difficult time maintaining possession of the Fitch family property after her husband’s death and was involved in numerous legal cases to petition recognition of her inheritance of her late husband’s property. By 1855, Josefa Carrillo Fitch was deeply in debt and faced several lawsuits over defaulted loans.

Henry and Josefa Fitch had 11 children, including Anita and Federico “Fred” Fitch. Most Fitches still residing in the San Diego area are direct descendants of Anita Fitch Grant. Many other direct descendants of Henry and Josefa Carrillo reside in Healdsburg, California where the Sotoyome Rancho was located. Fred followed in his father’s footsteps, working as a seaman and land surveyor for the U.S. government, and participated in a surveying expedition of the Sea of Cortes in the Sonora region of Mexico in 1858.

Immediate Source of Acquisition
Accession numbers 851108A and 610803.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Arenas, Luis
Carrillo, Joaquin
Clara (Schooner).
de Echeandia, Jose Maria
Denton, William
Fitch family
Fitch, Charles
Fitch, Federico
Fitch, Gilbert
Fitch, Henry Delano
Fitch, Josefa Carrillo
Fitch, Sarah Delano
Grant, Anita Fitch
Maria Ester (Brig).
Morse, E. W.
Pico, Pio, 1801-1894
Putnam, F. W. (Frederic Ward), 1839-1915
Vallejo, Mariano Guadalupe
Villavicencio, Jose Rosa
Vulture (Brig).
Business
California, Gulf of (Mexico)
Correspondence
Deeds
Diaries
Fitch map
Fitch Rock
Genealogy
Healdsburg (Calif.)
La Paz (Mexico, Mexico : Municipio)
Land titles
Maps
### Box-folder 1:1  
**Family history and genealogy, undated**

- Includes:
  - Copies of Fitch family members’ birth and death records from family bible
  - Letter from the Fitch Family Association regarding Henry Delano Fitch’s family line

### Box-folder 1:2  
**Henry Delano Fitch (some in Spanish), 1815-1940, undated**

- Includes:
  - Certification of Henry Fitch’s U.S. Citizenship, 1815
  - Biographical sketches of Henry Fitch’s life, 1885 and 1940
  - Letter from his mother, Sarah Fitch, 1848
  - Henry D. Fitch’s original Will & Testament, January 1, 1849
  - “Inventory of the rural and urban landholdings and other property belonging to the late Henry Fitch, by request of Josefa Fitch” (copy) (original encapsulated and in Oversize Collections D1). (Spanish)

### Box-folder 1:3  
**Josefa Carrillo Fitch (some in Spanish), 1831-1969**

- Includes:
  - “Dictation of Mrs. Captain Henry D. Fitch: Narrative of the widow of Captain Henry D. Fitch” (Spanish, with English translation) (Spanish copy courtesy of Bancroft library)
  - Copy of San Diego magazine article, “Josefa” by Mary Stewart, 1969

### Box-folder 1:4  
**Federico “Fred” Fitch diary, 1858 August 11-1860 June**

- Entries of interest:
  - Federico Fitch’s personal diary narrating the Survey of Sonora.
  - "On Brd [sic] Schooner ‘Clara’ Capt Aguilar from Guaymas to [illegible] (Surveying Cruise)."
  - On orders of Engineer Denton, begins trip to La Paz to buy another boat for the expedition (page 51), April 7, 1859.
  - Description of social encounters with aristocratic landowners in La Paz, including Don Jose Rosa Villavicencio and his daughters (pages 57-61), April 13-19, 1859.
  - Accounting entries for money Mr. Denton owed Fitch (pages 89, 108-10), August 1, 15, September 19, 1859 and May 11, 1860.

### Box-folder 2:1  
**Archivo Particular de la Senora Dona Josefa Carrillo de Fitch (Bancroft Library reproductions) Volume 1 (some in Spanish), 1827-1841**

- Includes:
  - San Diego correspondence between Henry Fitch and customers. (some Spanish)
  - Business accounting documents. (some Spanish)
  - Personal correspondence from Henry’s mother, Sarah Fitch (page 65), May 7, 1838.
Box-folder 3:1  
**Archivo Particular de la Senora Dona Josefa Carrillo de Fitch (Bancroft Library reproductions) Volume 2 (some in Spanish), 1841-1844**

Includes:
- Business correspondence and accounting, (some Spanish)
- Correspondence from Sarah Fitch (page 283), July 1, 1841.

Box-folder 3:2  
**Archivo Particular de la Senora Dona Josefa Carrillo de Fitch (Bancroft Library reproductions) Volume 3 (some in Spanish), 1844-1847**

Includes:
- Business correspondence and accounting, (some Spanish)
- Government documents and correspondence signed by Pio Pico (pages 594-96, 611-14), July 12, 1845 and October 10, 14, 1845. (Spanish)

Box-folder 3:3  
**Archivo Particular de la Senora Dona Josefa Carrillo de Fitch (Bancroft Library reproductions) Volume 4 (some in Spanish), 1847-1856**

Includes:
- Business accounting. (some Spanish)
- Public Notice to customers of Henry Fitch’s death, stating that Josefa Carrillo Fitch will be taking over the accounts (page 987), January 25, 1849. (Spanish)
- Document from California Probate Court regarding the family inheritance of Henry Fitch’s property (page 1034), March 23, 1856.

Box-folder 1:5  
**Henry and Josefa Fitch romance, 1831-1946**

Includes:
- Copy of San Diego Tribune article: “How Captain Fitch Won a Daughter of Spain” by Jeanne E. Francoeur, August 19, 1906.
- Transcription of KGB Radio Program on Henry and Josefa Fitch romance, February 15, 1946.

Box-folder 1:6  
**Fitch family property (some in Spanish), 1833-1888**

Includes:
- Deed for Fitch property in San Diego documenting sale of house in Mission San Luis Rey from Antonio Anzar to Luis Arenas (March 3 and April 1, 1833) and sale from Luis Arenas to Henry Fitch (April 2, 1835) (copy) (original encapsulated and in Oversize Collections D1). (Spanish)
- Sale of house in San Diego Plaza from Petra Ponciano to Henry Fitch (August 18, 1845) and from Henry Fitch to Richard Freeman (February 10, 1847) (two encapsulations and in Oversize Collections D1). (Spanish)
- Original deed to Block No. 24, Town of San Diego, Beach Lot, sold by Juan Maria Marran Alcadi to Henry G. Fitch, January 15, 1850 (encapsulated and in Oversize Collections D1).
- Transcription of Legal Petition for recognition of land grant presented by Josefa Carrillo Fitch for “Parage del Arroyo” at Presidio San Francisco, 1852-1854.
- Original hand-drawn plan of Fitch lot in San Diego, March 12, 1854.
- California Fourth Judicial District Court Summons for Charles Fitch and Anita Grant, August 3, 1865.
- Real estate documents signed by E.W. Morse from Morse, Noell & Whaley Real Estate Dealers, on behalf of Josefa Carrillo Fitch, 1858-1882.
Box-folder 1:7  **Fitch family business papers (some in Spanish), 1825-1857**

   Includes:
   List of Henry Delano Fitch’s commercial voyages, 1825-1848.
   Invoice from Henry Fitch addressed to U.S. War Department for California Battalion, October 27, 1846.
   “Libro de los cueros de res” (Book of cow hides), list of commercial purchase and sale of cow hides, January-May 1848. (Spanish)

Box-folder 1:8  **Fitch map of San Diego (Spanish), 1845-1872**