Guide to the Isaac N. Casner Papers MS 275

Finding aid prepared by Samantha Mills
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
August 22, 2012
Title: Isaac N. Casner Papers
Identifier/Call Number: MS 275
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.5 Linear feet (1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1882 December 19-1924 June 19
Abstract: This collection contains the personal diaries and papers of Isaac N. Casner, a ranch hand who worked in Texas, Oregon, and San Diego County, California in the late 1800s.
creator: Casner, Isaac N.
Processing Information
Collection processed by Samantha Mills on August 22, 2012.
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Preferred Citation
Isaac N. Casner Papers, MS 275, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.
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Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.
Biographical / Historical Notes
Isaac N. Casner was born in Texas on March 7, 1857. He moved to San Diego County, California by 1888, where some of his family already lived on the homestead of Martin Van Casner in Ballena. He lived in San Diego County as least through 1902, working as a ranch hand on various ranches in the Ballena and Ramona areas. He worked for several notable homesteaders, including Charles Bailey, John Clevenger, William Wallace Littlepage, Madison D. Putman, Joseph Swycaffer, Samuel Warnock, William Warnock, and various members of the Casner family. He also had frequent dealings with the Verlaque family, one of the first families in Ramona and owners of the local post office and a general goods store. By 1908 Isaac owned and operated his own ranch outside Portland, Oregon.
Scope and Content
This collection contains the personal diaries and papers of Isaac N. Casner. There are 14 diaries dated 1882 to 1908. In these diaries, Isaac kept daily records of his work and recreational activities. He moved frequently from ranch to ranch, either living with his employers, his friends, or his extended family. He recorded a variety of work tasks related to horse, cattle, and sheep ranching, plowing and sowing grains, fruit farming, beekeeping, and even a brief stint in gold mining. He also recorded the activities he engaged in during his free time on the range or in town, and in periods of unemployment between work seasons. These included cooking, mending clothes, reading novels and magazines, composing songs, playing card games with friends, drinking, and gambling. Personal papers include a letter, grocery receipts, and financial notes.
Arrangement
Collection is arranged into two series:
Series I: Personal Diaries
Series II: Personal Papers
Diaries are arranged chronologically, and papers are arranged by subject.
Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Diary 1: The pencil writing is faded. Diary 6: The cover has split along the spine and detached from the pages. Diary 9: The cloth covering the spine has partially peeled off. (August 16, 2012)
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Accession number 990516.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Bailey, Charles W.
Barnett, M.
Casner, Afra
Casner, Fannie A.
Series I: Personal Diaries

Box-folder 1:1  
**Diary 1, 1882 December 19-1886 January 18**
Scope and Content
Isaac is living in Texas. He spends the spring and summer working in Gillespie County, most frequently at William A. Shipp's sheep ranch. He works for Elex Roberts in September and spends more than a month traveling. He then spends the winter in Randall County, fishing and picking up occasional jobs from "Spanish foke." The diary has a gap in dates from February 1884 till July 1885. Isaac picks up work riding wild horses for several ranchers during the summer of 1885, primarily J. Sheppard, H. Dalton, and A.H. Parker.

Box-folder 1:2  
**Diary 2, 1886 January 19-May 7**
Scope and Content
Isaac returns to work for William A. Shipp herding sheep.

Box-folder 1:3  
**Diary 3, 1888 April 7-1898 April 13**
Scope and Content
When this diary begins Isaac is living in San Diego County, working in Ramona and Ballena. He picks up work for several ranchers in the area, including James F. Poole, William Poole, M.V. Casner, Antonio Hatfield, and William J. Warnock. He consistently keeps track of his daily tasks, the weather, and the number of meals he takes at either the Ramona Hotel or M.V. Casner's ranch. In 1889 he works solely for a rancher named Stratton from January through March, and then for William Sargent, hunting and horse counting.

Box-folder 1:4  
**Diary 4, 1889 May 7-June 4**
Scope and Content
Isaac continues to work for William Sargent. Each day he records the number of horses he sees on the range, the weather, and any errands run in Ramona.
Diary 5, 1890 April 21-August 23
Scope and Content
This diary picks up in April of 1890. Isaac continues to work on William Sargent’s ranch, counting and breeding horses. Additionally, he begins to count cattle for Tom Daily and M. Barnett and tends beehives. In July and August, he records more of his personal activities: shopping, sewing, cooking, drinking, and gambling in town.

Diary 6, 1891 May 10-1895 April 24
Scope and Content
This diary has several large gaps between entries, three of which are filled in by subsequent diaries. In 1891 Isaac works for James F. Poole, herding and counting cattle, buying supplies, and building fences. In September and October, he frequently goes to Mesa Grande after work to drink and gamble. In the winter of 1892 he picks up some work for William J. Warnock and takes his meals at the Ramona Hotel. In the spring of 1895 Isaac begins to spend more of his time playing games with friends (often at the home of the Swycaffers), and his main work responsibility seems to be doing chores for Bell Sargent.

Diary 7, 1891 December 25-1892 October 7
Scope and Content
This diary covers one of the gaps in Diary 6. Isaac works for James F. Poole, herding and tending cattle. He drives the cattle to Mesa Grande and Palm Creek, and spends the winter months camped outside the Borrego Springs area. In April, he drives the cattle out of the desert and back to Mesa Grande. He has some trouble settling his wages with James F. Poole in May. He picks up odd jobs through the summer, riding horses for Clevenger and William J. Warnock, stacking grain for Tom Daily and Stokes, and driving a team for William Poole.

Diary 8, 1892 November 4-1893 August 23
Scope and Content
This diary covers one of the gaps in Diary 6. Isaac works for Ernest Strahan, Charley McLeod, and Lonnie Sewell in the winter of 1892-1893. He tends hogs, collects turkey eggs, and hunts for quail. He works for Lonnie Sewell through mid-March, stays with his friend Charley McLeod for a month, and then picks up regular work for Hayward, plowing and hauling hay through May and June. He spends the rest of the summer doing chores at M.V. Casner’s. He spends time at the Littlepage residence after helping them bury Mace Woods.

Diary 9, 1893 September 3-1894 June 27
Scope and Content
This diary covers one of the gaps in Diary 6. Isaac continues to pick up work with horses and cattle. He spends most of the winter with John Clevenger and Samuel Warnock, as well as Doc Woodson and Mrs. Mitchell. He helps William J. Warnock build a barn in March, and continues to ride horses for Mrs. Mitchell. In June Fannie Casner quits speaking to him, but he does not state why.

Diary 10, 1896 August 12-December 20
Scope and Content
Isaac picks up work for Boies[sic], McFall, the Littlepages, and old man Barnett. He prospects for gold in Black Horse Mountain and begins to record the books he is reading, including The Science of Common Things, Across the Continent, and The Rajah’s Heir. In September, William J. Warnock is cut with a knife and the incident goes to trial.
Diary 11, 1897 May 3-October 10
Scope and Content
Isaac continues his prospecting efforts and picks up work bailing hay for William Casner. July is largely consumed by his lawsuit against Lazarus Peter Casner following a fist fight. In August and September, Isaac splits his time between camp and his friends’ homes, and records a long list of reading material. In the Fall, he begins to work for M.D. Putman.

Diary 12, 1897 October 29-1899 January 13
Scope and Content
Isaac finishes boxing apples for M.D. Putman and begins chopping wood with W.W. Littlepage. He then does chores for Mart Curlee till March, when he quits after having a fight with Fannie Curlee. He moves back in with the Littlepages, but abruptly moves to W.J. Mulkins in April, after Edith Littlepage refuses his favor. Isaac moves frequently through the rest of the year, living for a few weeks at a time at each ranch he finds work.

Diary 13, 1901 November 6-1902 March 29
Scope and Content
In December Isaac helps Cyrenious Casner run a butcher wagon to a slaughterhouse in Los Angeles. He spends the rest of the winter and following spring at the Swycaffer home. At the end of March he moves into the “Percien Place” and begins to furnish it.

Diary 14, 1908 May 4-July 11
Scope and Content
Isaac is now living in Oregon, on his own ranch outside the Portland area. He keeps chickens, and works daily to clear and plant his land. Throughout this diary he records the movements of his neighbors (the Hutchens family, Switcher, Charles Stevens, and Prince) as well as any other passersby who use the road in front of his home. In particular he mentions any passage of Charles Stevens, with whom he has a recurring conflict. He keeps up a steady correspondence with friends and family in San Diego County, California and Gillespie County, Texas.

Series II: Personal Papers

Finances, 1886 May 15-1924 June 19
Includes:
- Letter regarding a debt
- Grocery receipts
- Bank statement and check
- Calculations of payments due for work

Miscellanea, 1912 and undated
Includes:
- Clipping of a poem titled “The Farm,” by A.E.M.
- Coupon for the Jaques MFG Co.