Guide to the Horton House Ledger Collection MS 279

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
619-232-6203
Title: Horton House Ledger Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MS 279
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 6.0 Linear feet (6 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1870-1882
creator: Horton House.
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. He sold or leased lots for the construction of businesses and houses on the land. On January 1, 1870, construction began on the lavish Horton House Hotel (where the U.S. Grant Hotel now stands on 4th Ave and Broadway). William W. Bowers, Horton’s brother-in-law, assisted in building the hotel, including its design, erection, and furnishings. In October 1870, the hotel was open for business. Horton House enjoyed visitors from many countries including England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Venezuela, Hong Kong, Australia, and Mexico. Eighty percent of U.S. states are represented in the ledgers, though most of the patrons were from southern California. Well-known guests include T. S. Van Dyke, H. H. Bancroft, Emily Pitts Stevens, the Couts family, and the Estudillo family. Many traveling acts, such as the Two Headed Nightingale Company, the Sherman’s Circus, and various dramatic troupes, lodged at the Horton House. On several occasions, the hotel even housed jurors serving on San Diego County trials. Among the hotel’s various proprietors were A. E. Horton, J. L. Babe, P. A. Sheppard, C. P. Gerichten, W. E. Hadley, and S. W. Craigue. In 1895, U. S. Grant, Jr., purchased the Horton House, and in 1905, Alonzo E. Horton, Ephraim W. Morse, and William W. Bowers removed the first bricks in preparation for the hotel’s deconstruction. U.S. Grant, Jr., built the U.S. Grant Hotel as a memorial to his father, President U.S. Grant, and it opened in 1910. A. E. Horton died in January 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
Collection processed by Sandra Kirkwood on January 3, 2013.
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Preferred Citation
Horton House Ledger Collection, MS 279, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.
Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Covers are cracked and flaking. Some loose pages. (2012)
Arrangement
Collection is arranged chronologically.
Scope and Content
The collection consists of five guest ledgers and one transfer ledger (accounting). The guest ledgers detail the date, name, home residence, room number, and arrival for the hotel patrons, and pages are not numbered. The transfer ledger has page numbers and is organized alphabetically. The entries include arrival date, departure date, length of stay, room rate, extra charges, amount of bill, and remarks. The dates for the transfer ledger entries are unclear. The extra charges provide an intriguing insight to hotel life in the late 1800s. The extras covered laundry, medicine, fires, livery, messengers, wine,
and more. Horton House enjoyed visitors from many countries including England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Venezuela, Hong Kong, Australia, and Mexico. Eighty percent of U.S. states are represented in the ledgers, though most of the patrons were from southern California. Well-known guests include T. S. Van Dyke, H. H. Bancroft, Emily Pitts Stevens, the Couts family, and the Estudillo family. Many traveling acts, such as the Two Headed Nightingale Company, the Van Amburgh Circus, and various dramatic troupes, lodged at the Horton House. On several occasions, the hotel even housed jurors serving in San Diego County trials.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Babe, J. L.
Bancroft, Hubert Howe, 1832-1918
Bowers, William W.
Craigue, S. W.
Gerichten, C. P.
Hadley, W. E.
Horton House.
Horton, Alonzo E., 1813-1909
Sheppard, P. A.
Stevens, Emily Pitts
U.S. Grant Hotel (San Diego, Calif.).
Van Dyke, Theodore Strong, 1842-1923
Gaslamp Quarter (San Diego, Calif.)
Hospitality
Hotels
San Diego (Calif.)

**Box 1**  
Guest ledger, 1870 October 19-1873 September 30

Entries of interest:
George P. and George W. Marston registered as guest on October 24, 1870
Capt. George A. Johnson registered as guest on December 24, 1870
New York Circus registered as guest on March 17-19, 1872

**Box 2**  
Guest ledger, 1873 October 1-1882 March 19

Entries of interest:
Proprietors listed as W. E. Hadley and S. W. Craigue
Col. W. J. Gatewood registered as guest on February 9, 1874; June 25, 1874; March 24-25, 1875; and April 14, 1875
Templeton Dramatic Troupe registered as guest on March 18, 1874
Lewis Bro's Grand Exposition registered as guest on May 18-19, 1874
Vivian's Parlor Entertainment (Vivian's Concert Co.) registered as guest on August 3, 1874
Judge W. T. McNealy registered as guest on August 8, 1874
Florence Kent Dramatic Troupe registered as guest on November 10, 1874
Vivian's Combination Co., "Naval Engagements," and Vivian's Parlor Clio. registered as guests on February 26, 1875
T.S. Van Dyke registered as guest on June 26, 1877 and January 16, 1882
Golden Gate Baking Powder Co. (stamp from agent) registered as guest on January 15, 1882
Grandma's Birthday Comedy Company registered as guest on January 20 and 22, 1882
Grover's Eastern Dramatic Company registered as guest on February 10, 12, and 13, 1882
Slaven's California Fruit Salt registered as guest on March 4-5, 1882
Guest ledger, 1877 July 1-1880 April 2

Entries of interest:
- Proprietors listed as J. L. Babe, P. A. Sheppard, and C. P. Gerichten
- George S. Neville registered as guest on November 3, 1877
- Burr & Fink Merchant Tailors (sticker advertisement), April 28, 1878
- William B. Collier registered as guest on March 31, 1878 and November 9, 1878
- Dr. R. H. Harcourt registered as guest on February 7, 1879
- Two Headed Nightingale Company (Baron Littlefinger, Count Rosebud, Millie Christine) registered as guest on February 5 and 11, 1880
- San Bernardino Cornet Band registered as guest on March 30, 1880

Guest ledger, 1881 March 14-November 30

Entries of interest:
- Emily Pitt Stevens registered as guest on March 17, 1881
- R. E. Ames (written in mirror image) registered as guest on March 15 and June 5, 1881
- H.H. Bancroft registered as guest on September 23, 1881
- California Combination registered as guest on September 23, 1881
- Robert D. Israel registered as guest on September 26, 1881
- Sherman’s Circus registered as guest on October 8, 1881

Guest ledger, 1886 March 8-December 17

Entries of interest:
- Proprietor listed as W. E. Hadley
- Frost and Co.’s Van Amberg Circus registered as guest on March 12 and 18-19, 1886
- Jeffreys Lewis Combination registered as guest on April 12, 1886
- Birch and Cotton’s San Francisco Minstrels registered as guest on May 14, 1886
- Chas. Andress’ Carnival of Novelties and Trained Animal Show registered as guests on June 26, 1886
- San Diego Minstrels registered as guest on July 3, 1886
- Dots and line entry on July 22, 1886
- MODOC Club registered as guest on August 13, 1886
- George W. Marston registered as guest on August 23, 1886
- Advertisement for “Grand Ball given in honor of the San Bernardino Excursionists,” Sept. 14, 1886
- Chauncey Hayes registered as guest on September 27 and November 14, 1886
- Home Opera Company registered as guest on October 12, 1886
- Song and Motts Comedy Company registered as guest on October 28, 1886
- HMS Triumph registered as guest on November 2, 1886
- Buffalo Bill’s Great Show registered as guest on November 19, 1886
- John L. Sullivan Combination registered as guest on November 23, 1886
- George V. Dyche registered as guest on December 2, 1886
- Milton Santee registered as guest throughout
Box 6

Transfer ledger, 1870 December 1 and undated

Entries of interest:

Arapahoe Drum Corps (page 10)
San Diego County Court (page 54-55, 388-390, 467, 472, 474)
Capt. William S. Emery (page 89)
Stanley & Gardner Burlesque Co. (page 141)
J. Chauncey Hayes (pages 143-144, 146, 149)
Gov. Luis E. Torres (Governor of Lower California) (pages 398-399, 401, 403-405)
Bijou Opera Co. (page 475)
Lydia Thompson Co. (page 475)
Pyke Opera Co. (page 476)
Frost Companies Van Amburgh Circus (page 478)
Grace Hawthorne, R. B. Belgrave (Adv. Agent) (page 479)
Janauschek Company (page 480)
Jacques Kruger Dreams Co., "Kickers" (page 480)