

---

## **Guide to the Pattie Party Memorial Plaque Records MS 31**

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 22, 2012

---

**Title:** Pattie Party Memorial Plaque Records

**Identifier/Call Number:** MS 31

**Contributing Institution:** San Diego History Center Document Collection

**Language of Material:** English

**Physical Description:** 0.25 Linear feet(1 box)

**Date (inclusive):** 1906-1949

**Abstract:** Collection contains correspondence and other documents pertaining to the Pattie Party, Pattie Party descendants and the plaque commemorating Sylvester Pattie and party on Presidio Hill in San Diego.

**creator:** San Diego Historical Society.

**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The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials.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 Katrina White on May 22, 2012.

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.

**Preferred Citation**

Pattie Party Memorial Plaque Records, MS 31, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.

**Biographical / Historical Notes**

Sylvester Pattie and his son, James Ohio Pattie, led a trapping expedition to New Mexico in 1824. In 1827, the Patties, along with Nathaniel Pryor, Richard Laughlin, William Pope, Isaac Slover, Jesse Ferguston, James Puter and several others left Santa Fe on a trapping expedition that led into Arizona and California. The party reached the junctions of the Colorado and Gila rivers on December 1, 1827. Being told by the Yuman Indians that there were Christians down river, the party began following the Colorado River southward. On February 16, 1828, the party buried their traps and furs and started westward across the Baja desert. They reached Santa Catarina Mission on March 12, 1828. Ten days later, the party was arrested as Spanish spies by a wary Mexican governor, Jose de Maria Echeandia, and brought to San Diego. Sylvester Pattie died while imprisoned at the San Diego Presidio on April 24, 1828, and the remainder of the party was held captive until February 1829. The deceased expedition leader is credited as being both the first leader of an American expedition across the Southwest to California, and as the first American buried in California soil.

Sylvester's son James Pattie was later enlisted by Echeandia to help inoculate Californians against smallpox; however, his claim to have vaccinated 20,000 people seems a bit ambitious. Pattie returned to the East in 1830 and published his story, "Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky," which became "the first Western potboiler." The story of the Pattie Party's imprisonment and his father's death remained relatively unknown in San Diego until researchers associated with the San Diego Historical Society began to gather information in the early twentieth century. Isaac Frazee, a Long Beach resident, spearheaded the movement for recognition of the Pattie Party by the placement of a plaque on Presidio Hill. Frazee was the grandson of Ephraim Frazee and nephew of Dr. Lewis J. Frazee, who both knew and grew up with Sylvester Pattie in Kentucky. It was out of Frazee's interest in his family history that he first became aware of the Pattie Party, and he was soon an outspoken advocate for the memorialization of Sylvester Pattie and the rest of his party in San Diego, where their expedition had come to an end. The San Diego Historical Society took up Frazee's cause in 1929 with the enthusiasm of both George Marston and John Davidson, and was able to dedicate a bronze memorial plaque on Presidio Hill in honor of Sylvester Pattie and the Pattie Party on April 24, 1931, the anniversary of Sylvester Pattie's death. The bronze tablet bearing the names of the imprisoned men is located on the bastion of Presidio Hill, which is nearest to the site of the old prison as possible due to the changed landscape since 1829.

**Scope and Content**

The collection contains correspondence and documents regarding the Pattie Party, their descendants, and the Presidio Hill plaque that commemorates Sylvester Pattie and party. The correspondence includes letters between Isaac Frazee and members of the San Diego Historical Society including George Marston and John Davidson, as well as correspondence from descendants of the Pattie Party to the Historical Society, including Janetta B. Wright (granddaughter of Janetta Pattie), H.L. Pattie, Jr. and Leonard Laughlin (descendant of Richard Laughlin). The collection also includes papers related to the planning of the Pattie Party commemorative plaque and its dedication ceremony. Additional research documents regarding members of the Pattie Party and their respective histories are also contained in this collection.

---

**Arrangement**

Collection is arranged by subject.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Andrews, J. Pattie  
Davidson, John  
Davidson, Winifred  
Dollarhide, R. A.  
Ferguston, Jesse  
Frazee, Isaac  
Junipero Serra Museum.  
Landell, Gladys J.  
Laughlin, Leonard  
Laughlin, Richard  
Marston, George White, 1850-1946  
Pattie Party.  
Pattie, H. L.  
Pattie, James O. (James Ohio), 1804?-1850?  
Pattie, Janetta  
Pattie, Sylvester  
Pope, William  
Pryor, Nathaniel  
Puter, James  
San Diego Historical Society.  
Slover, Isaac  
Wolfskill, William  
Wright, Janetta  
Correspondence  
Kentucky  
Memorials  
New Mexico  
Pattie Party  
Presidio Hill  
Prisons  
San Diego (Calif.)

---

Box-folder 1:1

**Correspondence with Isaac Frazee 1929 October 7-1931 April 28****Includes:**

Letters between Isaac Frazee and John Davidson and George Marston of the San Diego Historical Society regarding commemorating the Pattie Party with a plaque on Presidio Hill.

Box-folder 1:2

**Correspondence with Pattie Party descendants, 1924 June 27-1949 September 14****Scope and Content**

Letters of inquiry from Pattie Party descendants (R.A. Dollarhide, Clara Burke, Gladys Landell, Mrs. J. Pattie Andrews, William Wolfskill, Leonard Laughlin, H.L. Pattie, Jr.) to the San Diego Historical Society seeking additional information about their ancestors and contact information for remaining descendants of the Pattie family. Also includes several letters from the Historical Society inviting Pattie Party descendants to the dedication of the Pattie Party plaque.

---

Box-folder 1:3

**Correspondence with Janetta Wright, 1930 February 21-1931 April 27**

**Scope and Content**

Letters between Janetta B. Wright and the San Diego Historical Society regarding contacting other remaining Pattie family members, as well as the planning of the dedication of the Pattie Party plaque. Janetta was invited to attend with her sister, and she presented a paper at the event called "The Patties in California."

Box-folder 1:4

**Pattie Party Ceremony planning, 1931 April 13 and undated**

**Includes:**

Draft of the wording for the Pattie Party plaque

Correspondence regarding the ceremony

Box-folder 1:5

**Pattie Party research, 1906-1931 and undated**

**Includes:**

Correspondence between several Midwestern historical societies and the San Diego Historical Society regarding additional information on the Pattie Party

Bibliographies and biographical sketches related to members of the Pattie Party