Amos Clift papers

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2017
**Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** Amos Clift papers  
**Dates:** 1850-1860  
**Collection Number:** SFH 129  
**Creator/Collector:** Clift, Amos, 1830-1887  
**Extent:** 3 folders  
**Repository:** San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco History Center  
San Francisco, California 94102  
**Abstract:** Papers of a Farallon Islands lighthouse keeper and former Sacramento commission merchant  
**Language of Material:** English  

**Access**  
The collection is available for use during San Francisco History Center hours, with photographs available during Photo Desk hours. Collections that are stored offsite should be requested 48 hours in advance.  

**Publication Rights**  
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**Preferred Citation**  
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**Acquisition Information**  
Purchase?  

**Biography/Administrative History**  
Amos Clift, Jr. was born in Connecticut and came to California in 1850. He joined with Robert M. Folger as commission merchants in Sacramento, but he left the partnership in April 1851; Folger sued Clift in 1852. After this, Clift made at least one trip to Tahiti, then settled in San Francisco. After his term as lighthouse keeper on the Farallon Islands, he returned to Connecticut. He served in the Union army in the Civil War, married Hannah Morse in 1861, and died in Washington, DC in 1887.  

**Scope and Content of Collection**  
One folder includes an account book for (Robert) Folger & (Amos) Clift, Sacramento commission merchants, for the period April-August 1850. Another folder holds 23 letters by Amos Clift, Jr. dating 1850-1860, the bulk of which are written to his father, Amos Clift, and to his brother, Horace Clift, both of Mystic River, Connecticut. The earliest letter (1850) is from Amos to Fanny Morse, Bridgeport. With the exception of the 1850 letter, which discusses gold mining, Clift’s correspondence centers on gaining federal employment, either as a lighthouse keeper, or in the Custom House, San Francisco. He hopes to get endorsements from Connecticut Governor Isaac Toucey, and from Milton S. Latham, Collector of the Port of San Francisco. Clift’s fourth letter mentions his temporary position as light keeper at Point Bonita. Three of the letters also have notes appended by Lodowick Latham Sawyer, messenger in the Custom House, and one of these joint letters is addressed to Groton, Connecticut assemblyman David A. Daboll. In July 1858 Clift is appointed light keeper on the Farallon Islands. Letters following this discuss communication difficulties, provisioning, shipwrecks, the conduct of a lighthouse keeper, road building on the island, fishing, boredom, wildlife (including rabbits), and the Egg Company on the island and its conflict with the federal government. His last letter discusses the war between the Egg Company and the light keepers. A third folder includes typewritten transcriptions of the letters and account book.  

**Indexing Terms**  
Lighthouse keepers - California - San Francisco - Biography.  
Commission merchants - California - Sacramento - Biography.  
Gold mines and mining -- California  
Customs administration -- California -- San Francisco -- History -- 19th century.  
Clift, Amos, 1830-1887 -- Correspondence.  
Folger, Robert M., d. 1899  
Latham, Milton S., 1827-1882  
Daboll, David A., d. 1895  
Sawyer, Lodowick L., 1832-1911 -- Correspondence.
Clift family.
Folger & Clift (Firm)
United States Customhouse (San Francisco, Calif. -- History.
United States Customhouse (San Francisco, Calif.) -- Appointments, promotions, salaries, etc.
Farallones Egg Company (Firm)
Farallon Islands (Calif.)
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Biography.
Sacramento (Calif.)
Mystic River (Conn.)
Connecticut -- Biography.
California -- Biography.

folder list