James G. Steele scrapbook

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Descriptive Summary

Title: James G. Steele scrapbook
Dates: 1876-1886
Collection Number: SFH 444
Creator/Collector: Steele, James G., 1838-1914
Extent: 1 box
Repository: San Francisco Public Library. San Francisco History Center
San Francisco, California 94102
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.

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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
Donated by Napa County Historical Society, 2016.

Biography/Administrative History
James Gordon Steele was born in Boston and came to California in 1852. Early on he was employed by jeweler George C. Shreve, and by 1865 by Shreve’s uncle, Wm. H. Keith & Co., apothecaries in San Francisco. He studied botany under Dr. Kellogg, curator and librarian at the California Academy of Sciences. Steele was instrumental in the founding of the California Pharmaceutical Society in 1868, and in 1874 with other committee members formed the California College of Pharmacy. First occupying himself in the retail drug business, he later supplied Eastern and European markets with California crude drugs, and followed with opening a retail store as “druggists and dealers in California medicinal plants.” From 1880 to 1886 he worked out of a shop in the Palace Hotel. He held the position of City Chemist for the years 1895-1897.

Scope and Content of Collection
Scrapbook of 196 numbered pages. Includes clippings, ephemera and a small amount of manuscript material relating to plants of California; general commercial trends and statistics; mines and minerals; stocks; Steele handbill (p. 42); Steele Scientific American poison oak article (p. 43); honey; forest culture and eucalyptus; mineral springs; labor in California, and wages (p. 66); rainfall; Poison Oak of California by Steele (p.75); article on cedron and manzanita by Steele (p. 76); Steele's work with California medicinal plants discussed (p.78); B. F. Wellington’s 1879 plant catalog (p. 84-86); Parke, Davis & Co. 1879 handbill (p. 88); Steele’s Squirrel Poison 1875 advertisement (p.98); S.F. News Letter’s Medical Directory of San Francisco and News Letter’s Our Quacks (Steele listed in neither, p. 107-110); pamphlet, Natural Bitter Water of Friedrichshall (p. 112); Treatise on the Hot Sulphur Springs of El Paso de Robles, 1875 (p. 113-122); ephemera from Pearson Springs, Lake County; Congress Springs, Santa Clara; Gilroy Hot Springs; Witter Springs, Lake Co.; Litton Springs (p. 133-134); California Medicinal Plants...List of Samples Sent...by Steele (p. 138). Clippings are taken from Commercial Herald and Market Review; San Francisco Journal of Commerce and Price Current; Scientific American; News Letter and California Advertiser, and other publications. Letter, 1876, Allen Chalybeate & Sulphur Springs to Steele (p. 126); letter, 1879, Charles Meinecke to Steele (p. 135); Steele’s manuscript notes on plants and trees follow, p. 180-190.

Indexing Terms
Pharmacists--California--San Francisco
Medicinal plants
Materia medica, Vegetable
Mineral waters--California
Quacks and quackery--California--San Francisco
San Francisco (Calif.)
Scrapbooks