
Finding Aid of the General John Bidwell Papers C057713

Finding aid prepared by K. Ransick and C. Miller

Society of California Pioneers

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Title: Bidwell, Gen. John, Papers

Identifier/Call Number: C057713

Contributing Institution: Society of California Pioneers

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1.0 folder1 Folder

Date (inclusive): 1851-1965

Abstract: The folder contains John Bidwell's letters to the Society of California Pioneers and articles about Bidwell and his house in Chico.

creator: Bidwell, John, 1819-1900

Conditions Governing Access note

Collection is open for research

Conditions Governing Use note

There are no restrictions on access

Preferred Citation note

General John Bidwell Papers, The Society of California Pioneers

Donor

Donor and date of acquisition unknown

Biographical/Historical note

General John Bidwell was born in Ripley, NY in 1819 and grew up in Erie, PA and Darke County, OH. By 19, he was headmaster of Kingsburg Academy, and by 22, he had left his job as a farmer in Iowa and Kansas and begun the journey west to California. As part of the Bidwell-Bartleson Party, he was a member of the first organized band of settlers to enter California over the Sierra Mountains. Once in California, he worked for Captain John Sutter as a surveyor near Bodega Bay and took a census of the upper Sacramento Valley. Bidwell was present when the first American flag was raised at Sutter's Fort on July 11, 1846. Soon after, he staked his claim to the gold in the Middle Fork of the Feather River, making him very wealthy. Bidwell Bar, a town now taken over by the Oroville Dam, was named after Bidwell. He obtained over 25,000 acres of land and laid out the city of Chico, setting the foundations for many of the city's parks, churches, and schools. An early producer of wheat, olive oil, and raisins, Bidwell had 7,000 acres of land under cultivation and was on good terms with local Native Americans/Indians, allowing them to live on his land and hiring them to work in his fields. He was the first postmaster of Chico and ran for Governor of California and President of the United State of America. He was eventually elected to Congress and met Annie Ellicott Kennedy while serving in Washington, D.C. Their marriage lasted 32 years until his death in 1900. Chico State College now rests on one of his numerous donations of land.

Scope and Contents note

The folder contains multiple letters to the Society of California Pioneers, a few personal letters written by John Bidwell, numerous newspaper articles on Bidwell and his house in Chico, a report by the California State Park Commission on his house in Chico, and various other documents relating to Bidwell's life in California.

Existence and Location of Originals note

The Society of California Pioneers, 101 Montgomery Street, Suite 150, Presidio of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94129.

Related Archival Materials note

Institutional records "Bidwell, John" Obituary Record (vol. 7, pg. 183) Autobiography Records (vol. 7, pg. 33) Mortuary Record 1892-1906 (pg. 126)

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Bidwell Mansion Association.

Powell, G.M.

Society of California Pioneers.

Chico (Calif.)--History.

Deeds--California

Society of California Pioneers

1 letter to the Society of California Pioneers regarding an invitation to renew John Bidwell's membership 1893 March 6

1 deed, with accompanying notarization, of John Bidwell to Laura Brotherton 1888 June

1 issue of the Normal Record, including an article In Memoriam on John Bidwell

1 handwritten letter written by John Bidwell to the Society of California Pioneers regarding their invitation for him to present a lecture at one of their monthly meetings 1897 September 24

1 article on John Bidwell and the Bidwell Mansion in the January 1965 issue of PG&E Progress 1965 January

1 letter to the Society of California Pioneers regarding a dues payment 1893 August 1

1 handwritten letter to the Society of California Pioneers regarding Mrs. Benjamin Kelsey's failing health, and a request for relief funds from the Society 1894 April 27

1 report entitled "Preservation of the Historic Bidwell Mansion: Chico, California," appealing for the declaration of the Bidwell Mansion as an historic site, submitted to the California Legislature by the California State Department of Education and the California State Park Commission 1954 March 15

1 article entitled "The Story of the Keg: An Incident of the Great 'Flores Revolt;' How General Bidwell's Keg Cost An Indian His Life"

2 articles on the Hooker Oak (dated 1934 and 1956) 1934-1956

1 article on the Conical Hill 1926 April 10

Physical Description: 1 article on the Conical Hill

1 article entitled "'Prince of California Pioneers' Blazed Trail to West With Missouri Settlers"

1 photograph/card of John Bidwell's home in Chico

1 photograph/card of the gold medal awarded to General John Bidwell at the Paris Exposition in 1878

1 handwritten letter to the Society of California Pioneers regarding his appointment to present a lecture at one of their monthly meetings 1897 September 28

1 copy of a letter to Captain Sutter, thanking him for his generosity in employing Bidwell 1851 April 2

1 typed account of the address of John Bidwell to the members of the Society of California Pioneers 1897 November 1