Finding Aid of the James J. Ayers "Pioneer Times" Lecture C058748

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02/24/2016,11/02/2017
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URL: http://www.californiapioneers.org
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Society of California Pioneers
Title: James J. Ayers "Pioneer Times" Lecture
creator: Ayers, James Joseph, 1830-1897
Identifier/Call Number: C058748
Physical Description: 1 folderHandwritten in ink, and hand-bound, 55 pages.
Date (inclusive): 1878
Abstract: This is a presentation copy of a speech given in Los Angeles (on March 15th, 1878 for the benefit of the Free Dispensary) and San Francisco (on June 13th, 1878 at the Mercantile Library Hall) both under the auspices of the California Pioneer Society titled: "Pioneer Times: the Argonauts of Two Remarkable Periods Compared." The speech compares the discovery of gold and the subsequent developments of the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the 1500 to the California Gold Rush and the development of California. The Spanish conquest is characterized as relentless and quenchless avarice, subjugating and enslaving the native people with no economic or cultural development. The Gold Rush, he argues, brought a different type of adventurer, who while drawn by gold also brought the best of American culture, manhood and energy. The California experience was charactarized by the very rapid transition from gold and mining to the development of agriculture, commerce, cities and culture. The speech includes an overview of life in the gold camps during 1849 to 1850.

Scope and Contents
This is a presentation copy of a speech given in Los Angeles and San Francisco on Pioneer Times in California. The speech compares the discovery of gold and the subsequent developments of the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the 1500 to the California Gold Rush and the development of California. The Spanish conquest is characterized as relentless and quenchless avarice, subjugating and enslaving the native people with no economic or cultural development. The Gold Rush, he argues, brought a different type of adventurer, who while drawn by gold also brought the best of American culture, manhood and energy. The California experience was charactarized by the very rapid transition from gold and mining to the development of agriculture, commerce, cities and culture. The speech includes an overview of life in the gold camps during 1849 to 1850. The speech includes an overview of life in the gold camps during 1849 to 1850. The cover title has the author's name spelled incorrectly: James J. Ayres. Ayers was a member of The Society of California Pioneers, and our records note his name correctly spelled as Ayers.

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There are no restrictions on access
Preferred Citation
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Gift of James J. Ayers, presented to The Society of California Pioneers in September of 1878
Existence and Location of Originals
Biographical / Historical
James Joseph Ayers was born in Glasgow, Scotland, August 27th, 1830. He moved to America with his parents at the age of one, in New Jersey, where he spent his childhood. He was trained as a printer, working in New York City. At age 18, he moved to Saint Louis, and edited the Sunday edition of the Republican. In 1849, after hearing of the gold discoveries, he went to California via New Orleans and Nicaragua arriving in San Francisco on October 5, 1849. Ayers went to the mines the next spring, but not meeting with success, returned to San Francisco in 1851 and published the Public Balance, a newspaper published for only one year due to the fire of that June. He returned to the mines, and with two others, started the Calaveras Chronicle. He returned to San Francisco in 1854 and engaged in editorial work on the Herald, until that newspaper was closed down due to its opposition to the Vigilance Committee of 1856. At the end of that year, with a number of other printers, Ayers established the San Francisco Call. He worked there for 10 years, then in 1866 moved to Honolulu, where he founded the Hawaiian Herald, the first daily published in the Islands. The next year he returned to San Francisco and started the Evening Dispatch. Ayers went to Nevada in 1869, after the Big Bonanza discovery, and became the editor of the Territorial Enterprise, published at Virginia City. He went on to publish newspapers in San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles. in 1878 he was elected as one of thirty-two delegates at large to the Constitutional Convention. He offered the amendment "no person shall be debarred admission to any of the collegiate departments of the University on account of sex." In 1882, he was appointed State Printer, then after his term, returned to Los Angeles to work at the Herald of that
city. In 1892, the paper was sold and Ayers retired from the newspaper business. He died on November 12, 1897, while residing at Azusa, in Los Angeles County. He was at work on a sketch of his life in California at the time of his death, but it was never published. This lecture, "Pioneer Times", does not appear to be the sketch of his life. Ayers left a widow, unnamed in the Obituary from The Society, but no children. This biographical information was summarized from an institutional record of The Society of California Pioneers, Obituary Records, vol. 6, pgs. 37 - 41.

Related Materials
The Society of California Pioneers has three institutional records on James Joseph Ayers, since he was a member, joining on July 1, of 1878. They are: Archive Record, vol. 1, pg. 28, Obituary Record, vol. 6, pg. 37-41, and a Mortuary Record, 1892-1902, pg.88.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
California--Gold discoveries.
California - History - 1846-1850
America - Discovery and exploration - Spanish
Printing - California - History - 19th century
Ayers, James Joseph, 1830-1897
McCandless, Joe M.