Finding Aid of the John Clar Papers C057759

Finding aid prepared by Lacey Lieberthal
Society of California Pioneers
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Title: Clar, John Papers
Identifier/Call Number: C057759
Contributing Institution: Society of California Pioneers
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1.0 folder (13 letters, 9 notices, 3 transcripts, 1 list, 1 affidavit, 1 permit, 1 pamphlet, 1 envelope, 1 clipping)
Date (bulk): Bulk, 1813-1884
Date (inclusive): 1813-1968; bulk 1813-1884
Abstract: The John Clar Papers are very extensive and detailed about Clar's life. They also include letters and poems written by his children and grandchildren. There are 13 letters, nine notices, one affidavit, one permit, one pamphlet, one envelope, and one newspaper clipping from various locations (San Francisco, Santa Barbara County, Marin County, Napa, Spain, Boston) and various dates (1813-1884, and one letter from 1968).
Language of Materials note: Primary language is English, but some documents also in Spanish.
creator: Clar, John, 1813-1884
Conditions Governing Use note
Collection open for research.
Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions on access.
Preferred Citation note
Donors
Gifts of Charles Raymond Clar (January 1990) and Charles S. Cushing.
Biographical/Historical note
John Clar did many different things in his lifetime, and he is considered a "pioneer of pioneers." He was fluent in eight languages, and he traveled all over the world. He was a poet and a guitar player. He was born in Mahón, on the island of Minorca, in Spain on May 13, 1813. He attended the Royal Naval Academy in San Fernando, Spain. At the age of 18, he was appointed Navigator of the Seas.
In 1832, he entered the United States Navy as a linguist and was shortly thereafter appointed a school master. He worked in the U.S. Navy for 17 years and taught classes. For a long time, he declared Norfolk, Virginia his hometown.
He left New York in May of 1835 with the "Peacock," where he first saw California, arriving in Monterey on October 31, 1836.
In 1841, Clar boarded the "Cyane" under the command of Captain Cornelias K. Stribling and Commodore Jones (?). On December 12, the crew sailed to Yerba Buena and the San Francisco Bay, where Clar saw the town for the first time.
In March 1845, Clar's health began to deteriorate, and he was instructed to return to land.
After his time in the Navy, Clar worked many different jobs. He was an engineer on the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad, the captain of the Ship Alexander Von Humboldt in 1849, a clerk in the Land Commissioners' office (appointed 1851), County Surveyor of Marin (appointed 1851), the superintendent of the public school system in Santa Barbara County (appointed 1861), the Justice of the Peace of Santa Barbara County (appointed 1861), and translator of the Spanish Archives in the Surveyor General's Office in San Francisco for many years.
He was married to a woman named Angele (Angela?), from Paris, who died in 1880 at the age of 48. They had several children: Maurice, Ivon, Leo, Clarence (died age 7), Lawrence, and a stillborn. Clar (and his son and grandson after him) was an active member of The Society of California Pioneers, and his funeral was probably coordinated by the Society.
This biography was created from the letters in this collection. There is much more biographical information to be found there and in "The Pacific Historian" article that is included in collection.
Scope and Contents note
The John Clar Papers are very extensive and detailed about Clar's life. They also include belongings of his children and grandchildren. There are 13 letters, nine notices, one affidavit, one permit, one pamphlet, one envelope, and one newspaper clipping from various locations (San Francisco, Santa Barbara County, Marin County, Napa, Spain, Boston) and various dates (1813-1884, one pamphlet from 1961 and one letter from 1968). In addition to these Papers, the folder contains two copies of a list titled "List of Clar Material, Received from Charles S. Cushing" (not all objects on list are in folder), and a sheet of paper indicating that some of the objects in the folder are gifts of Clar's grandson, Charles Raymond
Clar, January 1990.

There are two Papers that are in Spanish: one letter (San Fernando, Cádiz, Spain, May 10, 1831) from Don Jose de Quevedo Chiesa, Gonzales y Fernandez appointing Clar to the rank to captain a ship in European waters; and one announcement of Clar's baptism (Mahón, Spain, May 14, 1813) as Juan Josef Clar Segui.

One letter (San Francisco, September 16, 1883) from Clar to A.M. Kennedy gives a brief outline of Clar's life.

There are three letters from Clar to members of his family regarding family issues and events. Two of them are to his son, Ivon (San Francisco, October 15, 1878; August 11, 1883). The third is in the form of a poem (March 16, 1884) written to his daughter-in-law, Annie. On the back there is another poem (Napa, July 1, 1882) to Killie M. Even (?). Ann Thomas married Maurice Clar (son of Clar) in July 1883, although it is unclear whether Ann/Annie is Anita, or whether they are two different women.

There are four letters regarding Clar's work, either appointing him to various positions or discussing his career and work ethic. The first is from I.B. Ferand to Clar requesting him to take charge of the Ship Alexander Von Humboldt (Panama, May 16, 1849), and there is another (San Francisco, September 10, 1849) from Simmons, Hutchinson, & Co. directing Clar to continue this command. The third letter (San Francisco, August 10, 1852) is from Clar to Hiland Hall stating his resignation from his clerk position in the Land Commission Office. The signature and addressee on the fourth letter (San Francisco, April 4, 1856) is very difficult to read, although they appear to be from the General Land Office. The writer speaks highly of Clar and his qualifications as translator of the Spanish Archives.

There are three letters pertain to Clar's family members. There is one that is written as a poem (San Francisco, January 30, 1884) from Ivon to Anita (?). There is another letter (November 22, 1882) written to Annie, wishing her well. The signature is difficult to read, although it looks like W.S. Rosecrans (?). The third letter (Daly City, September 3, 1968) is written to Clar's grandson, C. Raymond, from his sister (Clar's granddaughter), Mrs. T.J. Loramie (Amelda?). She had done some research on their family and on Clar in particular, and this letter tells of her findings.

There are seven notices appointing Clar to various positions, such as: Translator in the U.S. Surveyor General's Office (San Francisco, August 1, 1882); Translator of the Spanish Archives in the U.S. Surveyor General's Office (San Francisco, July 1, 1879); Superintendent of the public school system in Santa Barbara County (Santa Barbara, November 10, 1861); County Surveyor of Marin County (Marin County, September 11, 1851); Justice of the Peace of Santa Barbara County (Santa Barbara, May 20, 1861); Professor of Mathematics in the U.S. Navy (October 15, 1841); and Clerk in the Office of Commissioners of California Land Claim (San Francisco, December 22, 1851).

In addition to these notices, there is also a pension of disability issued to Clar from the U.S. Navy (May 15, 1846) and a permit declaring that Clar is entitled to ride the Fritchburg R.R. without charge (Boston, June 28, 1848).

There is an affidavit (Marin County, October 20, 1851) of Jas. (Jasper?) Poindexter that A. Barney was the Judge of the County Court in Marin County. It is unclear how this pertains to Clar, although Barney certified Clar’s election of County Surveyor of Marin County one month earlier.

There is a copy of "The Pacific Historian," a pamphlet published by University of the Pacific in conjunction with the California History Foundation and the Jedediah Smith Society (Stockton, California, November 1961). In this issue there is an article about Clar written by C. Raymond, titled "Pioneer Among the Argonauts."

An envelope with a note inside is labeled "Letters from John Clar." This envelope had been carried around by Clar's "Negro boy," Dan Seale, and the note inside is a love note from Clar to his wife.

Clar's obituary is included in the collection, a newspaper clipping (San Francisco, April 28, 1884) from "The Morning Call." The article is titled "Another Argonaut Gone: Death of Captain John Clar of the Pioneer Ship Humboldt."

Existence and Location of Originals note
The Society of California Pioneers, 300 Fourth Street, San Francisco, CA, 94107.

Related Archival Materials note
The Society of California Pioneers also has:

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Clar, Charles Raymond
Vallejo, Mariano Guadalupe, 1808-1890
Mahón (Spain)
Marin County (Calif.)
San Francisco (Calif.)
Santa Barbara County (Calif.)
U.S. Navy
Yerba Buena (Calif.)