Finding aid of the Robert Ferral Letter C058847

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Abstract: One letter from former judge, Robert Ferral, to B.G. Haskell Esquire, dated 01/23/1885. Judge Ferral gives his regrets at being unable to be an active member of the Central Committee of the International Workingmen's Association due to the time he has to put into his private law practice.
creator: Ferral, Robert, Judge, b.1841
Conditions Governing Access note
Collection open for research.
Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions on access.
Preferred Citation note
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Biographical/Historical note
Robert Ferral was born in Philadelphia on October 13, 1841. Coming to California a boy, in 1852, two years later he arrived in Tuolumne, in 1854. His active life began with the commencement of his labors in the printing office of the Sonoma Herald, edited at that time by J. J. O'Sullivan. After a few months he left that employment and entered the office of the Union Democrat, published by A. N. Francisco, and so acquired his trade of a practical printer. In 1862 he went to Aurora, Nevada, and became editor of the Daily Times of that town, taking the place of E. D. Draper, who had been shot in a duel by Dr. W. E. Eichelroth. During his stay in Aurora, Mr. Ferral was admitted to practice law by the Hon. George Turner, Chief Justice of the Territorial Supreme Court. In the year 1865 he removed to San Francisco, and became editor of the Irish People newspaper. In 1866 he went to Sonoma County and edited the Sonoma Democrat, at Santa Rosa. In 1871 Mr. Ferral was chosen Chief Clerk of the Assembly, and shortly after the expiration of his term he proceeded to San Francisco and was appointed Assistant District Attorney, and afterwards nominated by acclamation District Attorney; but was defeated in a close a contest. Next chosen Secretary of the Senate, and again Chief Clerk of the Assembly, Mr. Ferral was finally appointed, by Governor Irwin, Judge of the City Criminal Court of San Francisco, and was afterwards elected by the people to the same office.
Burnette Haskell was the founder of the local version of Karl Marx's First International. Born June 11, 1857 in the Sierra foothills, he went to several universities, graduating from none, passed the California bar in 1879 but quickly came to detest the law. Haskell's wealthy and ambitious uncle gave him editorial control of his newspaper Truth. Haskell offered the paper to the Federated Trades Council as house organ, which they accepted. Haskell continued on as editor, and became a prominent local radical, passing through incarnations as a socialist, communist-anarchist, and finally an Edward Bellamy-inspired cooperativist. The San Francisco branch of the International Workingmen's Association was organized in a classic cell-form, based on successive hierarchies of groups of nine people, each holding a distinctive membership card. And though it intended to be a clone of Marx's group in England, it actually took positions more akin to the Black International (anarchist) associated with Bakunin. After peaking in popularity in 1886, Haskell's IWA collapsed soon after, partly because the depression of 1883-85 ended, and partly because Haskell and other activists left to form the Kaweah Cooperative Commonwealth, a utopian experiment, in California's Central Valley (which in turn failed by 1891).
Scope and Contents note
One letter from former judge, Robert Ferral, to B.G. Haskell Esquire, dated 01/23/1885. Judge Ferral gives his regrets at being unable to be an active member of the Central Committee of the International Workingmen's Association due to the time he has to put into his private law practice.
Existence and Location of Originals note
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San Francisco (Calif.)--Societies, etc.
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