Finding aid of the Stephen L. and James E. Fowler Diary C058475

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Title: Fowler, Stephen L. and James E. Diary
Identifier/Call Number: C058475
Contributing Institution: Society of California Pioneers
Language of Material: English
Storage Unit: B001620
Storage Unit: C058475
Physical Description: 1.0 folder(1 diary)
Date (inclusive): 1849 to 1852
Abstract: A handwritten daily diary comprising 211 pages written by Stephen L. Fowler, covering the period from Jan 12, 1849 to March 19 1852. It records the life and experiences of the author and his brother, James E. Fowler, beginning with their 7 month voyage on the sailing ship "Brooklyn" around Cape Horn. It provides descriptions of the places they were, the details of daily life and the hardships of mining and making a living in Gold Rush California. For two years they try their luck in the diggings at Dry Creek and Downeyville, with intermittent periods doing carpentry, fishing and hunting for the market and other jobs to cover expenses. They go to Bodega Bay in 1851 to try potato farming supplemented with carpentry work for Captain Stephen Smith. There the diary ends in March 1852.
creator: Fowler, James E
creator: Fowler, Stephen Lawrence
Conditions Governing Access note
Collections open for research
Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions on access
Preferred Citation note
Donor
Donor and date of acquisition unknown.
Biographical/Historical note
There is no biographical information on Stephen Lawrence Fowler. His brother James E. Fowler joined the Society of California Pioneers in July 1890. James is also mentioned in the "History of Sonoma County (1879)" where he is described as a retired merchant, living a life of leisure upon handsome competence gained in this township. His home was located at Valley Ford.
Scope and Contents note
A handwritten daily diary comprising 211 pages, written by Stephen L. Fowler covering the period from 01/12/1849 to 03/19/1852. It records the experiences of the author and his brother, James E. Fowler, beginning with their 7 month voyage on the sailing ship "Brooklyn" around Cape Horn. Beginning on January 12, 1849, the ship did not reach San Francisco until August (a longer journey than was typical for the time) due to improper navigation; many of the passengers developed scurvy. Some perished. Upon reaching San Francisco, Captain Joseph W. Richardson was put on trial for his negligence, was found guilty, and fined $2,000. Stephen L. Fowler recorded the trials of ship life and details of those who fell ill and died. After several months doing carpentry in San Francisco they start for the mines to "see the elephant" in October, 1849. Due to heavy rains, they were largely unsuccessful and sold their cabin and stake in January of 1850, returning to San Francisco. A short while later they set out north once again, to begin construction and carpentry work in Marysville and later Plumas City. From there the brothers again attempted gold mining, tried a fishing business, and then traveled to Bodega Bay in 1851 to begin farming and working construction for the mill owner, Captain Steven Smith. Daily entries grow sporadic in September 1851, toward the end of the diary. (There is a single entry for October, and then one for February, 1852.—appears to be incorrect/mixed up with Gager) Final entry written is dated March 3, 1852. Most entries are reasonably detailed and legible.
Existence and Location of Originals note
The Society of California Pioneers, 300 Fourth Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Smith, Stephen, Captain, 1782-1855
Bodega Bay (Calif.)
Gold mines and mining -- California -- History.
Voyages to the Pacific coast