Finding aid prepared by Samantha Ronzano
Society of California Pioneers
300 Fourth Street
San Francisco, CA, 94107-1272
(415) 959-1849
pkeats@californiapioneers.org
October 15, 2015
The memorial biography of John C. Fremont is 54 typed pages and bound, recalling his achievements as explorer of the unexplored territories of the Northwestern states, specifically his role in protecting California during the Mexican-American war. It records his life from birth in 1813 to death in 1890. It was written by two members of the Society of California Pioneers, W. B. Farwell, and W. F. Swasey.

**Biographical/Historical note**
John C. Fremont was born in Savannah, Georgia, January 21st, 1813. Both his parents were native Virginians. He became a teacher on the U.S. sloop of war, Natchez, under the influence of the distinguished Joel R. Poinsett, who in 1838 was the Secretary of War. After touring the coast of South America, he returned to Charleston, South Carolina, where he received the title "Professor of Mathematics in the Navy". Soon after, he joined Captain W. G. Williams of the U.S. Topographical Corp as an assistant engineer, surveying land for the Charleston to Cincinnati Railroad.

After this project was complete, Williams and Fremont were ordered to collect reconnaissance on undeveloped Cherokee territory, which was a successful mission. Fremont was appointed Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Topographical Corp.

In 1839, Fremont and French Savant Mr. Nicolett were commissioned to explore unexamined territories of now Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. Upon returning to Washington, D.C. in the winter of 1839, Fremont met Senator Benton, who was so pleased with Fremont and Nicolett's survey that he wanted to continue the exploration of the greater Northwest. Fremont was extremely adament to go, and in July of 1840, Fremont was sent to survey the lower part of the Des Moines River. After a successful trip, Fremont returned to Washington where he met, and married, his wife Jessie Benton in 1841.

In 1842, Senator Benton wanted to further extend the surveying to the Rocky Mountains, and hired Fremont as Commander of the expedition. He and his company reached the summit of the Rockies successfully, entitling it Fremont's Peak.

A year later, Fremont was appointed to survey Oregon territory. The expedition was a success, as he made his way through the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, eventually reaching Sutter's Fort in Sacramento Valley, California, March 6th, 1844.

In 1845, war between the United States and Mexio was eminent. President Polk was more concerned in losing the San Francisco Port over the state of Texas, and sent Fremont to California to protect it. He reached Yerba Buena in January, 1846, and further explored Monterey, Santa Cruz, and the San Joaquin Valley until eventually making his way up back to Oregon.

When the Mexican-American War broke out, he traveled back down to Sacramento, where he and the other settlers began the Bear Flag Party, a revolution against the Mexican army and the surrounding Native Americans. He fought alongside General Kearney and Major Gillespie. Fremont was made Military Governor of the territory of Los Angeles, and by the time the war was over in January, 1847, Fremont became acting Governor.

Fremont immediately resigned from the army, and set out on his fourth expedition, making his way up the Rio Grande River towards Utah. His guide lost their way, and horrible suffering ensued. Starvation plagued the group, where men turned to...
eating horses and dogs, and eventually cannibalism. Fremont was forced to return to Santa Fe. His second attempt would prove to be successful, making it to Sacramento Valley in the Spring of 1849, and was appointed by President Taylor to run a boundary line between the United States and Mexico.

In 1853, Fremont was elected to Senate but resigned weeks later, and went on to his fifth expedition. He was appointed Major General of Army in St. Louis, and Military Governor of Missouri in 1861. He claimed that he would emancipate the slaves of all who were rebelling against the government, but President Lincoln annulled the proclamation. in 1878, he accepted the position of Governor of Arizona, until eventually retiring in 1881. He died July 13th, 1890.

**Existence and Location of Originals note**

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
Benton, Thomas Hart, Senator, 1821-1851 -- History
Castro, José Antonio, 1808-1860 -- History
Fremont, J.C., (John Charles), 1813-1890
Frémont, Jessie Benton, 1824-1902 -- History
Gillespie, Archibald H., Major -- History
Kearney, Phillip, General -- History
Larkin, Thomas Oliver, 1802-1858 -- History
Poinsett, Joel Roberts, 1779-1851 -- History
San Francisco Bay Area Typographical Union, Local 21 -- History
Stockton, Robert Field, 1795-1866 -- History
U.S. Topographical Corps. -- History
Williams, W. G., Capt. -- History
Bear Flag Revolt, 1846
Cherokee Indians
Indians of North America
Klamath Indians
Monterey (Calif.)
Pioneers--California
Railroads--History
Railroads--surveying
Rocky Mountains
Sacramento (Calif.) - History - 19th century.
San Francisco (Calif.) - 1840-1860
San Joaquin Valley (Calif.)
Santa Cruz (Calif.)
Sonoma County (Calif.)
Sutter's Fort
Walla Walla Indians
Yerba Buena (Calif.)