Finding aid of the Robert C. Laws Diary, 1852 - 1852

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Finding aid of the Robert C. Laws Diary, 1852 - 1852

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Robert C. Laws Diary, 1852 - 1852
Collection Size: 1 folder
San Francisco, California 94107-1272

Abstract: The collection consists of the diary of Robert C. Laws who traveled overland from Ohio to California in 1852. Laws joins a company in Missouri after his original party, the Buckey Emigrating Company, disbands. His diary provides details of the trip, with description of the landscape, distance traveled, weather, Indians encountered, illnesses suffered and food eaten. The diary covers the period of April 12 to August 25, 1852.

Physical location: Stored on-site at the Society of California Pioneers.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access
Collection is open by appointment for research.

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Preferred Citation

Biography / Administrative History
Robert C. Laws was born June 14, 1830 near Cincinnati Ohio. He joined the Buckey Emigrating Company on April 21, 1852 and traveled overland to California arriving sometime in the early fall with another company headed by Major Ormsby. He died February 8, 1891.

1852/1852 Robert C. Laws Diary

Scope and Content of Collection
The Diary of Robert C. Laws provides details of his daily life and travel across the plains to California in 1852. Mr. Laws begins his journey overland as a member of the Buckey Emigrating Party. Due to general dissatisfaction and the death of two members of company from cholera outside of St. Joseph, Missouri the Buckey Emigrating Party disbanded. Laws joins a new company headed to California that is led by Major Ormsby. It is a mixed company of a few women and children with the remainder of the 33-person company being men. The diary gives daily accounts of the company's progress including weather, descriptions of the places they stayed, the distance traveled, food eaten, and illnesses suffered. A number of the company die from these illnesses that include measles and cholera. In a number of entries Laws notes that their company passes other parties that did not complete the journey to California, but instead decided to return home. Supplies are often purchased from these parties. Laws writes also about the great numbers of people traveling in the same direction as his party on the way to California and his entry on June 3, 1852 gives a count of the numbers of wagons, men, women, children, horses, mules, oxen and sheep that had passed on the road since the first of June. Diary entries also mention the territories that the company passes through belonging to specific Indian tribes, such as the Sauk, the Iowa, the Pawnee, the Shawnee, the Sioux, the Crow, the Snake and the Shoshone. The company crosses the Rocky Mountains and stays for a
period in and near Salt Lake City where Laws notes details about Mormon life in Utah including a description of the 5-year celebration of their arrival in the valley of the Great Salt Lake. While there are many entries that detail the trials of the trail, towards the end of the diary there are a few that describe disagreements with Major Ormsby and a fight between Laws and the company's cook. The diary ends August 30, 1852 with the company still some distance from their destination.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

- Pioneers -- California
- Overland journeys to the Pacific
- Buckey Emigrating Company
- Laws, Robert C., 1830 -- 1891

**Related Material**

Biographical File containing 3 typed transcriptions of Diary.