
Guide to the The Society of California Pioneers Collection of Autobiographies and Reminiscences of Early Pioneers

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Collection number: Vault-6E

Society of California Pioneers
San Francisco, California

Contact Information

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Descriptive Summary

Title: The Society of California Pioneers collection of autobiographies and reminiscences of early pioneers

Dates: 1900-1904

Collection number: Vault-6E

Collector: Society of California Pioneers

Collection Size: 8 v. (1661 p.); 36 cm. and 63 items (755 leaves); 36 cm. or smaller.152 online items

Repository: Society of California Pioneers

San Francisco, California 94107-1272

Abstract: The Autobiographies and Reminiscences are made up of 153 documents varying in length from one page to over sixty pages, the average being around five pages in length. Most include details from the writer's early life, but the bulk of each document tends to be their overland journeys or voyages to the Pacific Coast and California in pre-Gold Rush times and then accounts of their lives after arrival. Many of the writer's - all are men - talk of their families, education, occupations before and after arriving out West, as well as experiences mining, businesses, farming and ranching. Other aspects of their new lives are discussed: law and politics, the military and wars, social events, agriculture, literature and theater, shipping and leisure activities. The time period covered by the accounts is from the 1840s through 1904 - when the project was completed. The geographic location discussed range from all over the United States: New England, New York, the south, the Midwest - especially Missouri - and of course locations along both the overland trails to the West, as well as ports of call in South and Central America. Many accounts are looking back at their lives, and some are accurate and others may or may not be embellished as the writer relates a life some fifty or sixty years earlier.

Physical location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult Library staff.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

 <http://content.cdlib.org/search?style=oac-img&sort=title&relation=ark:/13030/kt8489q5km>

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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holder, which must be obtained by the reader.

Preferred Citation

Please use the following citation format for all items: Autobiography and Reminiscence of [Name], [Place]. The Society of California Pioneers, Alice Phelan Sullivan Library. San Francisco, California.

Acquisition Information

This collection was created by the Historical Committee of The Society of California Pioneers from 1900-1904.

Project Information: Institutional Records Digitization Project: Reminiscences of Early Pioneers, 1900-1904

This collection level record was created as part of a one-year project funded by a grant to The Society of California Pioneers under the Library Systems and Technology Act (LSTA), from October 2002 through September 2003. This project's intent was to initiate a digitization program for the Society's institutional records that contain biographical and narrative information about early members' lives prior to their journey out West, travels to pre-Statehood California, and lives after their arrival. The project has made the 153 records of the Autobiographies and Reminiscences available online via the Online Archive of California (OAC) through Finding Aids, and actual digital objects of the typed transcriptions and the original sixty-three handwritten documents which still exist. The Finding Aids and images will also be available in the Society's library online and via the Society's website: www.californiapioneers.org . The Society uses OCLC for cataloging, and therefore, individual records for each of the 153 accounts will be accessible in OCLC as well.

The work of 2002-2003 resulted in the digitization, cataloging, and creation of finding aids for all 153 Autobiographies and Reminiscences (eight volumes of legal-size ledgers), as well as 63 handwritten documents which were the original records from which the typed transcriptions were made. There were also some photographs dispersed throughout the eight volumes, and those were also digitized and note in the finding aids. Having the text online will help to preserve the ledgers, eliminating repeated photocopying of the bound volumes. And, the finding aids will now allow researchers subject access to the information included in the accounts, whereas prior to this project, the only access was by the name of the member.

The records were digitized by Pauline Wolstencroft , hired specifically for the duration of the grant. The finding aids for each record were also created by Wolstencroft, and cataloging into OCLC and in the Society's online catalog (Inmagic) was done by the Library Director, Patricia Keats. The finding aid information was utilized to produce the metadata for both the collection level record and each individual record in OCLC. For more detailed information on the project, please see the Society's website (www.californiapioneers.org) under The Alice Phelan Sullivan Library where there is a link to the project manual.

Administrative History

The Society of California Pioneers is California's oldest historical organization, founded in 1850 by pre-Gold Rush pioneers. The Society's original aims were "...to collect and preserve information connected with the early settlement and conquest of the country, and to perpetuate the memory of those whose sagacity, enterprise, and love of independence induced them to settle in the wilderness...". Toward the end of the 19th century, when many of the original members began passing away, the Society's Historical Committee put out a call for "Autobiographies and Reminiscences" of its members. The members included in the 154 reminiscences range from gold miners to farmers and businessmen to lumbermen, representing the broad range of men who made up the early membership of the Society. Accounts relate the members' early lives, journeys out west, and finally their lives in California and places beyond. Many were submitted by handwritten documents, but others appear to have been dictated to the Committee. Each submission was then typed and all were bound into eight oversize volumes which still exist today, as do sixty-three of the original handwritten accounts.

Scope and Content of Collection

The Autobiographies and Reminiscences are made up of 153 documents varying in length from one page to over sixty pages, the average being around five pages in length. Most include details from the writer's early life, but the bulk of each document tends to be their overland journeys or voyages to the Pacific Coast and California in pre-Gold Rush times and then accounts of their lives after arrival. Many of the writer's - all are men - talk of their families, education, occupations before and after arriving out West, as well as experiences mining, businesses, farming and ranching. Other aspects of their new lives are discussed: law and politics, the military and wars, social events, agriculture, literature and theater, shipping and leisure activities. The time period covered by the accounts is from the 1840s through 1904 - when the project was completed. The geographic location discussed range from all over the United States: New England, New York, the south, the Midwest - especially Missouri - and of course locations along both the overland trails to the West, as well as ports of call in South and Central America. Many accounts are looking back at their lives, and some are accurate and others may or may not be embellished as the writer relates a life some fifty or sixty years earlier.

Indexing Terms

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

Bidwell, John, 1819-1900
Coffey, Alvin Aaron, 1822-1902
Hutchings, J.M. (James Mason), 1820-1902
Kemble, Edward C. (Edward Clevelant), 1828-1886
Kimball, Charles P. (Charles Proctor), 1821-1894
Nordhoff, Charles, 1830-1901
California-History-1846-1850
California-History-19th Century
San Francisco (Calif.)-History
Sacramento (Calif.)-History
California, Northern
Pioneers-California-Biography.
Gold miners-California-Biography
Gold mines and mining-California
Overland journeys to the Pacific
Voyages to the Pacific Coast
Frontier and pioneer life
Voyages and travels
California-Social life and customs-19th century
California-Social conditions-19th century
California-Gold discoveries
Commerce-California-San Francisco
Indians of North America-California
Agriculture-California
Steamboats-California
Autobiographies
Addresses
Overland journals
Narratives
