Inventory of the Theodore Dehone Judah Family Collection, 1850-1950

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Inventory of the Theodore Dehone Judah Family Collection, 1850-1950

Collection number: MS 2

California State Railroad Museum Library

Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Theodore Dehone Judah Family Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1850-1950
Collection number: MS 2
Creator: Judah (Theodore D.), 1828-1863 Judah, Anna Ferona Pierce and various others
Extent: 1 carton and 1 flat carton
Repository: California State Railroad Museum Library
Sacramento, California 95814
Shelf location: Big Four Building or off-site storage. Please contact the Library in advance of your visit.
Language: English.

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Theodore Dehone Judah Family Collection, MS 2, California State Railroad Museum Library, Sacramento, California.

Collection Description
The collection consists of biographical materials, including a handwritten biographical memoir of Theodore Judah, possibly by Anna, business and personal letters to the Judah, business documents, materials pertaining to the California Eastern Extension Railroad, ephemera relating to the family, portraits of Theodore D. Judah, and books from his library.
The collection is organized by type of material. Letters, biographical items, business papers, photographs, and ephemera are arranged in numbered folders. The books and a packet of pressed flowers are contained in a separate document box.

Historical Background
Theodore Dehone Judah was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on March 1, 1826. He studied at Rensselear Polytechnic Institute and entered the engineering profession, working on a number of eastern railroads. While employed as engineer for the Buffalo, New York and Erie Railroad, he became acquainted with Colonel Charles L. Wilson, who offered him a position as chief engineer with the Sacramento Valley Railroad in California.
Judah and his wife, Anna, sailed for California in 1854. Soon after their arrival, Theodore became an ardent promoter of a rail line across the Sierra Nevada. In 1856, the couple returned to the east, where Theodore lobbied unsuccessfully in Washington, D.C., for federal support for a transcontinental railroad. The Judah then returned to California where he continued to promote his plan and conduct surveys in the Sierra.

In October 1859, Judah was sent by the Pacific Railroad Convention back to Washington to lobby for transcontinental railroad legislation, and again was unsuccessful. After returning to California in 1861 however, he succeeded in convincing Sacramento merchants Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Leland Stanford and Charles Crocker to fund his Sierra Nevada surveys. Judah joined with them in the incorporation of the Central Pacific Railroad in June 1861. In October of that year the Central Pacific sent him back to Washington for a third lobbying attempt. This time Judah succeeded, and on July 1, 1862, President Lincoln signed legislation authorizing construction of a railroad to California. The Judah stayed in the east and Theodore served as the Central Pacific's purchasing agent. They returned to California in January 1863. That September Theodore sold out his interest in the railroad following a dispute with Huntington and the other investors. Judah and his wife then left for the east, where he hoped to raise enough funds to buy the Central Pacific back from his former partners. On the trip across the Isthmus of Panama, he contracted yellow fever, and died in New York City on November 2, 1863. Anna Judah outlived her husband by almost thirty-two years, dying on September 2, 1895.

Related Collections

Box 1, Folder 7

Miscellaneous documents: handwritten document: "An act to amend an act entitled An act to provide for the incorporation of rail road companies, passed April 22, 1853 and amended May 15, 1854"; sketch, pen on paper, plans for pier "C" possibly by Theodore D. Judah; clipping, poem "Epics of Old California," not dated; page from The Churchman magazine, May 17, 1890, containing a notice that Mrs. Leland Stanford had ordered a memorial window; handwritten portion of "Amended general railroad law," with printed notice attached, not dated; carbon copy of a letter: Charlotte Boles to Gladys P. Pierce, Wilmington, Delaware, April 27, 1950, transmitting a copy of the script for the radio play "Crazy Judah," with a 32-page copy of the script.

Box 1, Folder 8

Photographs: carte-de-visite of Theodore D. Judah; portrait of Theodore D. Judah; photostats of a printed portrait of Theodore D. Judah (2 sheets)

Box 1, Folder 9

Photographic reproductions of letters (1861, 1863) from the Amos Catlin Collection at the California State Library, Sacramento. Two of the letters are from Judah to his wife, Anna, and describe his surveying activities in the Sierra Nevada. The third is from Judah to Samuel S. Montague appointing him as Chief Engineer of the Central Pacific Railroad. [Formerly MS 1.63]. FOR REPRODUCTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY.

Box 2

Ambrotype (in case) of Theodore D. Judah