
Guide to the M. Theo. Kearney (Martin Theodore Kearney) Papers, 1887-1907, 1966

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Collection number: MSS #001

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Archives
Fresno, California

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Separate photo collection of 8 boxes

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Descriptive Summary

Title: M. Theo. Kearney (Martin Theodore Kearney) Papers,

Date (inclusive): 1887-1907, 1966

Collection number: MSS #001

Origination: Kearney, M. Theo. (Martin Theodore), 1842-1906

Extent: 2 linear feet

Repository: Fresno City and County Historical Society

Fresno, California

Language: English.

Acquisition

Material accumulated by FCCHS staff and volunteers.

Access

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Biography

Official Birth records show that M. Theo. Kearney was born Martin Thomas Carney on February 5, 1842, on Banastre Street near the docks of Liverpool, England. Kearney's family immigrated from Liverpool to Malden, a small community north of Boston around 1854. Kearney's own diary notes do not begin until 1865, and by that time he had assumed the name Martin

Theodore Kearney. At age 18, Kearney moved to Boston and found work as a clerk for a trunk-manufacturing company, rising to the position of partner in the firm. For unknown reasons, in 1867, he left Boston for San Francisco, eventually coming to Fresno in the early 1870's. As the advertising agent for William Chapman, and with the assistance of Bernhard Marks, Kearney became an important developer of the colony farm system in Fresno County. He purchased large tracts of land for himself in Fresno and the Fresno area and developed wine and raisin businesses in the city. He acquired the Easterby Rancho, presently the Sunnyside area of Fresno, and started a winery. This property was sold, in 1885, when Kearney purchased his 5400-acre Fruit Vale Estate and switched his focus to the production of raisin grapes. In 1895, Kearney led raisin farmers to form the California Raisin Grower's Association, incorporated in 1899. He traveled extensively to develop agricultural business markets.

At the center of Kearney's Fruit Vale Estate, seven miles west of Fresno Street, was the 240-acre Chateau Fresno Park now known as Kearney Park. The park was central to Kearney's plans for the use of his estate after his death as an agricultural "adjunct" to the University of California. Kearney built the Superintendent's Lodge, now Kearney Mansion, and lived in the structure while he planned a much larger personal residence, the *Chateau Fresno*. He died of heart failure before construction of *Chateau Fresno* commenced. At the time of his death, May 27, 1906, he was aboard the Cunard steamer *Caronia*, bound for Queenstown, England.

Kearney's left his entire estate to the University of California. The University maintained operations of the Kearney Vineyard Company until 1949. The present day Kearney Foundation for Soil Science is headquartered at the University of California at Davis and was founded with funds acquired during the sale of Kearney's land holdings. The County of Fresno leases 180 acres of land that makes up the current day Kearney Park. The Fresno City & County Historical Society administers Kearney's Superintendent's Lodge as Kearney Mansion Museum.

Scope and Content

The M. Theo. Kearney papers span 1887-1907, 1966 and contain correspondence, documents, pamphlets, certificates, maps, blueprints, newspaper clippings, ledgers, and photographs that relate primarily to Kearney's Fruit Vale Estate, the California Raisin Growers Association, and California Raisin and Fruit Packing Company. Also included are originals and photocopies of Kearney's will, a hand-written epitaph for himself, a Return of Death Certificate (1966), and notes on the interior of the proposed Chateau Fresno.

Newspaper clippings concern the development of the California Raisin Growers Association (1889-1907). A daily journal (1901) contains information on the weather, livestock and crops at Fruit Vale Estate. Ledgers contain the names and store accounts of Kearney's workers. Newspaper clippings from *The Fresno Republican*, *Fresno Evening Democrat*, and *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor* refer to such notables as Ralph Friselle, H. J. Hohman, O. J. Woodward, Louis Einstein, Robert Balfour, Chester H. Rowell, and R. L. Madsen.

The Bancroft Library at UC, Berkeley and the Sanoian Special Collections Library at California State University, Fresno, maintain related collections. The Kearney Collection housed in the FCCHS Archives is comprised of accumulated material from various sources acquired by FCCHS staff and volunteers. FCCHS Archivist Maria Ortiz separated a collection of Kearney photographs prior to this arrangement.

Correspondence, 1887-1904

Incoming (1887-1904)

Scope and Content Note

Correspondence is in alphabetical order and contains a letter from Bell and Beckham Glass Painters and Decorators, London (1887) regarding plans for stained glass windows intended for Chateau Fresno; two letters from the Burlingame Country Club of San Mateo, CA (1894-1898) regarding Kearney's election to membership and resignation four years later; a handwritten note from R. Friselle (1903) regarding the illness of his son, with Kearney's reply on the back; one letter from J. Kruttschnitt, General Manager of Southern Pacific Co. (1897) regarding a proposed railroad switch to the site of the raisin packing house at Chateau Fresno Park (refer also to contract in Legal Documents, File 5 Box1), and a postcard of Chateau De Chenonceaux from F. A. West (1904).

Outgoing (1889-1905)

Scope and Content Note

Copies arranged in chronological order and primarily written on Palace Hotel stationery from San Francisco, and hotels in Germany, regarding business matters in Fresno. A letter to Robert Balfour (1901) mentions "preference shares" for some new vineyards and Kearney's hesitance to risk such a large investment as \$100,000 on them. A letter to Mr. Frisselle, from Bad Nauheim (1904) discusses withdrawing money from Farmers' Bank in Fresno because of a rumor they lost \$50,000 in the "Foster Bro's failure". Fearing a general panic on Fresno banks, he directs his manager to transfer funds to the Nevada Bank in San Francisco quietly. He closes saying he'll be in Bad Nauheim for three weeks, "longer as doctor orders." A 1903 note to A. C. Balch mentions Mr. Huntington of Los Angeles and has a note on the back to Mr. M. G. Kerchoff. It is on Chateau Fresno notepaper, made of Genuine Irish Linen from Wm. H. Ward & Co., Belfast. The last letter, addressed to Conrad Myers, discusses the by-law for the election of a president to the CRGA. Kearney favored the growers voting, as opposed to the Board of Directors.

Notes (1887-1904)

Scope and Content Note

Various notes and lists are contained in this file including a list of window panels for Chateau Fresno, landscape plans, the 1899 crop yield, a list of CRGA assets held in Fresno banks, and a 1904 summary of economic statistics for Fresno County.

Printed Material (1887-1893) and Prospecti, Maps, Notices (1889-1903)

Scope and Content Note

Series includes promotional folios with maps of tracts for sale, compiled by Kearney (1888, 1890, and 1901) and pamphlets written and compiled by Kearney (1887, 1890, and 1893). The second folder of Printed Material contains working plans of Chateau Fresno Park by landscape gardener, R. Ulrich (1889) and his card; five copies of Kearney's speech before the State Fruit Growers' Convention (1899) on the organization of the raisin growers; T. C. White's certificate for one share of stock in the California Raisin and Fruit Packing Company (1900); six pay vouchers for Kearney Vineyard Syndicate workers, signed by Ralph Frisselle and H. J. Lohman, the storekeeper (1902); prospecti with bonds and shares forms for the Kearney Vineyard Syndicate and the California Fruit Growing Company; an announcement from the Western National Bank in New York (1904) with a list of the board of directors and a handwritten epithet on the inside which reads, "Kearney's Waterloo/Jan 14/04", an envelope containing a copper plate for Kearney's calling cards, one of his cards, a card from Viscountess Galway, and a business card from Howard Iron Works of Bedford.

Maps contains a map of land surrounding Kearney Park, indicating acreage planted in alfalfa and lands sold (hand-drawn on plastic or coated linen?) and printed blueprints indicating the townsite of Smyrna or Kearney immediately southwest of Kearney Park (ca. 1899).

California Raisin Growers Records (1899-1909)

Scope and Content Note

Series contains the Articles of Incorporation (1899), stock certificates, printed announcements, price lists, lease-contract agreements, bank contracts (1903, 1904), a list of raisin growers (1903), a statement of liabilities (1904), election ballots, unsigned proxies, etc., reflecting Kearney's and R. K. Madsen's presidencies and their dealings with the First National Bank of Fresno, O. J. Woodward president, and the Bank of Central California, Louis Einstein, president.

Legal Documents, 1887-1905, 1966

Scope and Content Note

Series includes the Southern Pacific Railroad contract with Kearney for the Garfield Avenue and Fruit Vale Estate right-of-way (1897); Kearney's handwritten will of March, 1899, naming the Regents of the University of California as sole beneficiaries of his estate, or failing that, naming James D. Phelan, Mayor of San Francisco, John Farrott and J. D. Grant of San Mateo, and W. H. Crocker and Wm. Alvord of San Francisco, as joint tenants. The 1905 will also names Prof. E. W. Hilgard of Berkeley as a possible joint tenant. The epitaph, written by Kearney, which still hangs in the office of his mansion, is included among these documents. The latest document is a certificate of Return of Death (1966) from the Assistant Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen in Cardiff, stating the cause and location of Kearney's death, May 27, 1906.

Newsclippings

Scope and Content Note

Two folders of newsclippings and transcribed news stories on the organization of the raisin growers annotated by Ben R. Walker and probably collected by him as a young man in 1899. Three folders of clippings from Fresno's three newspapers, Fresno Expositor Articles (1898), Fresno Republican Articles (1895-1905), Fresno Evening Democrat Articles (1902-1906) concern the raisin growers. Many of the clippings chronicle the bitter debates between Kearney and the newspaper editors, especially Chester H. Rowell of the Fresno Republican, concerning the interests being served by the various proposed forms of organization.

Financial Documents, Oversize

Scope and Content Note

Kearney Store records (1890-1895): Includes the names of Kearney's employees and an epithet "Defendants Proposed Exhibit 19a" in the front of this ledger.
 Receipt Book (1901)
 CGRA Records (1901-1902)
 Index Book-unused (1877)
 Daily Journal of Fruit Vale Estate (1901)
 Kearney Store Account Envelopes-unused (1890)
 Accounts Receivable, Rent Records (1902)

Printed Material, Oversize

Scope and Content Note

Elocution Book (1854): The adolescent Kearney's name and address in Boston written over and over in the front of this book, and a note in the back of the book as follows, "Martin Theodore Kearney was you Ever in Love if so please take a Show t__th[?]"
 Pamphlet, Profitable Agriculture (1901)
 Catalog, Mantles, Grates, and Tiles (1902)
 List of members, Homburger Golf Club (1899)
 Catalog, Price List California Nursery Co. (1902)

Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 1
 Folder 2
 Folder 3
 Folder 4
 Folder 5
 Folder 6

Incoming 1887-1904
Outgoing 1889-1905
Notes 1887-1904
Pamphlets 1887-1893
Prospecti, maps, notices [1889]-1903
CRGA Records 1899-1909

Legal Documents

Box 1, Folder 7

SPRR Contract, Will, Epitaph, Death Certificate 1897-1905, 1966
Maps

Box 1, Folder 8	Maps Blueprints, maps [1889] Newsclippings
Box 1, Folder 9	Fresno Republican articles collected by Walker 1899-1905
Folder 10	Fresno Republican articles collected by Walker 1904-1907
Folder 11	Fresno Expositor articles 1898
Folder 12	Fresno Republican articles 1895-1905
Folder 13	Fresno Evening Democrat articles 1902-1906
	Financial Documents
Box 2, Folder 1-5	Oversize 1890-1895 Oversize [1901] Oversize 1901-1902 Oversize 1877 Oversize 1901
Box 3, Folder 1-2	Oversize [1890] Printed Material
Box 2, Folder 3-8	Oversize 1854