
Sylvester A. Ballou Papers: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Huntington Library Staff and updated by Diann Benti.

Manuscripts Department

The Huntington Library

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Sylvester A. Ballou Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1836-1968

Collection Number: mssHM 51194-51274, mssFAC 1067-1081

Creator: Ballou, Sylvester A.

Extent: 150 pieces in 3 boxes, 2 volumes, and 2 rolls.

Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens Manuscripts Department

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Abstract: The collection consists primarily of the letters of California State legislator Sylvester Ballou (1828-1899), to various members of his family, assorted poems and public addresses prepared by Ballou, and his 1878 diary kept after the Ballous moved to Naperville, Illinois. There is also a diary by his first wife, Julia, of their sojourn in California during 1865-66. Subject matter includes politics and government in Civil War-era California, ocean travel to and from California in 1865 and 1866, mining in California and Colorado, farm life in Illinois, and Ballou family history.

Language: English.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Sylvester A. Ballou Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Gift of Mrs. Albert Martin, 10/27/1980.

Biographical Note

Sylvester Allen Ballou (1828-1899) first came to California in 1849 from Ohio with his brother Volney in search of gold. Miner, trader, temperance advocate and school teacher while a resident of the Golden State, Ballou's active involvement in Democratic politics led him to serve four terms in the state legislature. A well-respected politician admired by colleagues and by the press, his career was marked in particular by his advocacy of Sacramento as permanent state capital and by his ardent support of popular sovereignty as a solution to the question of slavery in the territories. During the Civil War, he served in the Union Army's Department of Subsistence, being present at the siege of Vicksburg in 1863 and after war's end held the post of Chief Commissary in the Department of California for a year. Returning once more to the family home (now in Naperville, Illinois), he settled with his first wife, Julia Hills (Barnard) Ballou, who had accompanied him to California in 1865, until her death in 1869. Although he never again lived in California, he did return to the West several times, notably in 1873 when he revisited California and in 1879 when he participated in the Leadville, Colo. silver rush (without notable success). Returning to Naperville, he remained there with his family including his second wife, Eliza (Norton) Ballou, whom he had married in 1874, until his death in 1899.

Scope and Content

The collection consists primarily of Sylvester Ballou's letters to various members of his family, assorted poems and public addresses prepared by Ballou, Ballou's diary of the year 1878 in Naperville, Ill. and his first wife Julia's diary of their sojourn in California during 1865 and 1866, letters written at different times by his brothers Orlando, Ray, and Volney, and a large amount of biographical data assembled by three of his granddaughters for a projected but uncompleted biography. The biographical materials include xerox copies of a number of letters and official records relating to his years in the California legislature and his military service, xeroxes of various pages from the Plumas (Co.) Argus between 1857 and 1860, and

reproductions of several Leadville maps.

Subject matter includes politics and government in Civil War-era California, ocean travel to and from California in 1865 and 1866, mining in California and Colorado, farm life in Illinois, and Ballou family history.

Notable items include:

- Orlando Ballou's letters to his friend Moses Morgan about gold mining in Plumas County, Calif. in 1855 and 1856 (HM 51212-51214) including one letter with a pictorial lettersheet of The Miners' Ten Commandments on verso (HM 51214)
- 6 letters written between 1858 and 1864 about California politics (HM 51215, HM 51247, HM 51249, HM 51257, HM 51258 and HM 51262)
- 2 letters by Sylvester Ballou at the time of the Vicksburg campaign (HM 51224 and FAC 1068)
- Julia (Barnard) Ballou's diary of her ocean voyage to California and her residence there with husband Sylvester in 1865-1866 (HM 51207)
- Sylvester Ballou's letters to his wife Eliza Anne (Norton) Ballou during his stay in Leadville (HM 51226-51238)

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](#).

Subjects

Ballou, Sylvester A.

Farm life -- Illinois -- Naperville.

Gold mines and mining -- California.

Legislators -- California -- Archives.

Ocean travel.

Silver mines and mining -- Colorado -- Leadville.

California -- Gold discoveries.

California -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865.

California -- Politics and government -- 1850-1950.

Forms/Genres

Letters (correspondence) -- United States.

Alternate Authors

Ballou, Julia Barnard.

Ballou, Orlando.

Ballou, Ray.

Ballou, Volney.

Conness, John, 1821-1909.

Box 1 **Correspondence.**
 Arrangement
 Arranged alphabetically

Box 2 **Diaries, speeches, poems, photographs.**
 Arrangement
 Arranged alphabetically

HM 51270 **Photograph of Hannah (Allen) Ballou. 1852**

HM 51271 **Reproduction print of portrait drawing of [Sylvester Allan Ballou]. [Before 1861**

 With negative of print

HM 51207 **Ballou, Julia Hills (Barnard). Diary. 1865-1866, 1873**

HM 51218 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. "Men-Ancient Israelites had their day of regency" [Decoration Day address]. Between 1849 and 1861**

4 p. in pencil, incomplete. Also: typewritten copy.

HM 51194 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. "A bachelor sat in his easy chair" [poem]. Between 1850-1899**

Manuscript, 2 p. Also: typewritten copy.

HM 51219 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. Decoration Day address given at Joliet. 1897**

Manuscript and typewritten copy.

HM 51220 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. Decoration Day speech. [1874-1899]**

2 p. typescript. Also: carbon copy.

HM 51274 **Print of a group portrait of the Ballou family, Naperville, Illinois. [Before 1887].**

With handwritten description of Ballou homestead on verso.

HM 51223 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. [Free Masonry: address]. [Approximately 1895?]**

Manuscript, 12 pp.

HM 51195 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. Hudibrastic [poem]. [Between 1850-1899]**

1 p. in pencil. On verso: "After Watts" poem. Also: typewritten copy of "Hudibrastic."

HM 51196 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. Know Thyself [essay]. [Between 1874-1899?]**

2 p. typewritten.

HM 51222 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. Notebook with clippings related to politics. 1892 September**

Naperville, Illinois.

HM 51197 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. "On old Long Island's sea gert shore" [poem]. [Between 1850-1899]**

1 p. in pencil. With a word game on verso. Also: typewritten copy of poem.

HM 51198 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. [Poems sent to newspaper for publication]. 1872-1905**

Typewritten copies, 9 p. Signed Charley Michigan, Maggie Michigan, Sempronius Scroggins, and Truthful Bill.

HM 51199 **Ballou, Sylvester Allen. The Seasons [poem]. 1891 February 8**

3 p. in pencil. Also: typewritten copy.

Box 3

Biographical materials.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically

FAC 1081 **Research materials on Sylvester Allen Ballou's years in the California Legislature collected by Eleanor (Beckman) Martin. 1854-1860**

Xerox copies of 24 pieces.

FAC 1080 Army record of Sylvester Allen Ballou. 1862-1867

Xerox copies, 17 pieces. Also: Xerox copy of Morgan Ballou's army record. Made from originals in the National Archives, not to be reproduced.

HM 51244 Beckman, Mary [Eloise] (Ballou). The Life and Times of Sylvester Allen Ballou and his two wives Julia Barnard & Eliza Anne Norton. 1938 August 22

1 volume. Also: typewritten copy and notes made by Sylvania Allen (Beckman) Warner.

HM 51263 Simpson, Elizabeth (Barnard) Nichols. [Biographical notes on Julia Hills (Barnard) Ballou and Sylvester Allen Ballou]. 1938 September 6

Handwritten, 8 p. Also: typewritten comments and a letter from Elizabeth (Barnard) Nichols Simpson to Sylvia Allen (Beckman) Warner.

FAC 1079 [Martin, Eleanor (Beckman)] Sylvester Allen Ballou. Chronology. [Approximately 1968]

Xerox copy of typewritten document, 26 p. Also: chronology for Sylvester Allen Ballou, 1860-1866, 3 p. carbon copy of typescript document.

HM 51267 Martin, Eleanor (Beckman). Notebook with information pertaining to Sylvester Allen Ballou. [Approximately 1968]

1 volume

HM 51268 Biographical material relating to Sylvester Allen Ballou, collected by Eleanor Beckman Martin. [Approximately 1968]

37 pieces.

Ephemera

5 pieces. 3 clippings, fragment of undated letter; and fragment of letter with child's drawing on verso.

Maps and xerox copies of newspaper clippings.

12 pieces.

Volume

Ballou, Isaac Albee. Ledger. 1836-1868 HM 51265

1 vol. containing accounts from Brecksville (Ohio) and Ballou family genealogy.

Volume

Scrapbook with Ballou family genealogy. [Approximately 1870-1933?] HM 51266

Rolled item

[FACSIMILE] Printed copies of Leadville, Colorado, maps, including 1879 topographical map.

5 maps.

Conditions of Use

Not to be reproduced.

Rolled item

[FACSIMILE] Photographic reproductions of assorted pages from the *Plumas Argus* between September 17, 1857 and September 27, 1860.

18 pages.