J. W. Gunnison Papers: Finding Aid

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
Manuscripts Department
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
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Overview of the Collection
Title: J. W. Gunnison Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1832-1926
Bulk dates: 1832-1896
Collection Number: mssHM 17033-17096, mssHM 42622-42638, mssHM 46985-46988, mssFAC 706
Extent: 83 pieces in 4 boxes + 2 volumes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: This collection contains journals of United States Army topographical engineer J. W. Gunnison (1812-1853), kept on expeditions between 1840-1853, including one with descriptions of life among the Mormons in Utah; correspondence during the American Civil War period from family in the South; and letters, sketchbooks, and journals of nephew Charles Andrew Gunnison (1861-1897) in Europe and Japan in the 1880s.
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
Provenance
Alternative Form of Materials Available
Visit the Huntington Digital Library to view digitized sketchbooks HM 17038 (volumes 1 and 2) from this collection.
Related Materials in the Huntington Library
Related to the Mormon file, approximately 1805-1995.
Biographical Note
John Williams Gunnison (1812-1853), the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Williams Gunnison, was born in Goshen, New Hampshire, in 1812. He attended Hopkinton Academy in New Hampshire, then taught school before he entered the U.S. Military Academy in 1833. Gunnison graduated from West Point in 1837, second in his class of 50. During the winter of 1837-1838, Lt. Gunnison served as an ordnance officer in the Seminole War in Florida, and in the spring of 1838 he aided in the transfer of the Cherokees to Indian Territory. He then returned to the Florida War, having been transferred to the Corps of Topographical Engineers. From 1840 to 1849 Gunnison was engaged in survey work in Georgia and in the Wisconsin-Michigan Lake region. While in Georgia, he married Martha A. Delony in 1841.
Gunnison had been appointed a first lieutenant in 1846, and was next assigned to accompany Captain Howard Stansbury’s expedition in 1849-1850 to map and survey the Great Salt Lake. While in Salt Lake, Gunnison wrote a book about the Mormons, The Mormons, or Latter-Day Saints, in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake, which was published in 1852. From 1851 to 1853, he was in Washington, D.C., supervising the publication of the Stansbury Expedition report, after which he engaged in further survey work of the Northwestern Lakes.
Gunnison was promoted to Captain in 1853 and was chosen to lead a Government survey for a Central Pacific Railroad route. The expedition completed a reconnaissance through the mountains of Colorado and Utah, and reached the valley of the Sevier River in Utah in October 1853. On October 26, 1853, Gunnison and several members of his party, including the artist Richard Kern, were ambushed by Pah Vant Indians near Sevier Lake and were killed.
Bibliography

Scope and Content
The collection consists of letters, manuscripts (including 9 journals and 2 sketch books) and photographs arranged in three separate series. The first series concerns J. W. Gunnison himself: his journal kept in Florida and Georgia in 1840, letters from Wisconsin Territory (1841), the Stansbury Expedition (1849-1850) with descriptions of life among the Mormons, the expedition Gunnison led from St. Louis to Utah (1853), and the official communications relating to his death. The second group contains letters written during the Civil War period from his wife’s family in the South. The third group consists of letters, sketchbooks, and journals of his nephew, Charles Andrew Gunnison (1861-1897), who traveled in Europe and Japan with San Francisco businessman Timothy Hopkins, adopted son of Mrs. Mark Hopkins.

Some interesting or important items include: Martha Delony Gunnison’s letter to Alice Mary Boothe and Mary Boothe (1854, Feb. 19) contains a copy of a letter by Brigham Young giving his account of the death of J. W. Gunnison. The letter by Mrs. William Gaston Delony to Maria Osborne Delony (1865, July 4) gives an account of life in Georgia just after the Civil War. Also, in Box 2 is a genealogical tree of the Gunnison-Briard families (c.1862-1892) (HM 42638). This family record includes photographs and is very old (the last page has writing dated 1666. Later pages with photographs and clippings have been inserted. There are also three daguerreotype and ambrotype photographs in their cases. Also includes a facsimile of Booth, Andrew G. Notes on Biography of Capt. John W. Gunnison ... 1860 (FAC 706).

Arrangement
Arranged in the following order:
- Box 1: Correspondence and manuscripts (1832-1896, 1926)
- Box 2: Genealogical Tree, Photographs in cases, Clippings, Typewritten Transcripts of Correspondence in Box 1
- Box 3: Charles Andrew Gunnison. Journals, 1881-1894
- Box 4: Charles Andrew Gunnison. Volumes of Poetry, Sketches, Scrapbook, Autograph Album, etc.
- Two loose volumes: Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Sketchbooks

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

Subjects
Gunnison, Charles A., 1861-1897.
Hopkins, Timothy, 1859-1937.
Stansbury, Howard.
United States. Army. Corps of Topographical Engineers.
Mormons -- Utah -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Wisconsin -- Surveys.
Europe -- Description and travel.
Florida -- Description and travel.
Florida -- Surveys.
Georgia -- Description and travel.
Georgia -- Surveys.
Japan -- Description and travel.
Salt Lake City (Utah) -- Description and travel.
Salt Lake City (Utah) -- Surveys.
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives.
Utah -- Description and travel.
Utah -- Surveys.
West (U.S.) -- Description and travel.
West (U.S.) -- Surveys.
Wisconsin -- Description and travel.

Forms/Genres
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>Correspondence and manuscripts (1832-1896, 1926)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Genealogical Tree, Photographs in cases, Clippings, Typewritten Transcripts of</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence in Box 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gunnison House in Goshen, New Hampshire, with family members in front [cased photograph on glass, broken]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Portrait of Elizabeth Gunnison [cased photograph with printed obituary]</td>
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<td>Portrait of John Williams Gunnison [cased daguerreotype].</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Picture of Captain John W. Gunnison; Photograph of Honor Roll Plaque in Goshen, New Hampshire.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gunnison, John W. Newspaper clippings and 1 envelope.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Gunnison, John W.] Notes of a survey along St. Mary's River, Georgia, and St. John River, Florida. 1840 April 17-May 19 HM 17040</td>
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| Box 2 | Genealogical tree of Gunnison-Briard Families. [Approximately 1860-1892] HM 42638 |

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<tr>
<th>Box 3</th>
<th>Charles Andrew Gunnison. Journals, 1881-1894</th>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Journal of travel, chiefly in Bavaria. 1881-1882 HM 17034:01</td>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Journal of travels in Japan (1885 March-1886 January) and through Southern California and Texas to New Orleans, Louisiana, with Timothy Hopkins party (1886 February 12-April 1). 1885-1886 HM 17034:02</td>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Journal kept in San Francisco, California (1877 October 1-November 22), England, the Continent, and back to San Francisco. 1887-1889 HM 17034:03</td>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Journal. 1890-1894 HM 17034:04</td>
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<th>Box 4</th>
<th>Charles Andrew Gunnison. Volumes of Poetry, Scrapbook, Autograph Album, etc.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Robert Huntingford or Through the Valley of the Shadow, a story of California (1881) and Poems (1883) [2 volumes]. 1881-1883 HM 17033</td>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Autograph album. 1876-1882</td>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Account of travels, chiefly in Japan. 1887 HM 17035:01</td>
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<td>Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Scrapbook containing articles written by Charles A. Gunnison of his travels, chiefly in Japan. 1887-1890 HM 17035:04</td>
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| Volume | Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Sketch Book : A bit of American Travel [on the Northeast Coast of the U.S. and from Panama to California]. 1879 HM 17038:01 |

| Volume | Gunnison, Charles Andrew. Sketch Book : Northern California, Napa, and San Francisco. 1887-1888 HM 17038:02 |