W. H. Holabird Papers: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Erik Altenbernd, September 2, 2010.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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Overview of the Collection
Title: W. H. Holabird Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1889-1973
Bulk dates: 1889-1919
Collection Number: mssHM 73863-73892
Creator: Holabird, W. H.
Extent: 40 items.
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: This collection contains 40 items primarily related to the work of Southern Pacific Railroad agent and California Development Company receiver W.H. Holabird (1845-1921), as well as some personal and ephemeral items. Business correspondence and documents chiefly date from 1909 to 1918 and include reports for the Southern Pacific Railroad on the properties of Miller and Lux (1909) and the economic resources in Siberia, Manchuria, and the Philippines.

Language: English.

Access
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Preferred Citation

Provenance

Biographical Note
Railroad agent and California Development Company receiver W.H. (William Hyman) Holabird (1845-1921) was born in Shelburne, Vermont, on September 29, 1845. In 1858, Holabird emigrated with his family to Macon, Missouri, and later, Atchison, Kansas. In Kansas, Holabird worked for the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad as an office clerk and passenger agent distributing newspapers. After the outbreak of the Civil War, Holabird returned to Vermont and enlisted in the 18th Vermont Infantry Regiment and subsequently participated in the Battle of Gettysburg; Holabird also served in the U.S. Navy as a fireman aboard the first USS Monadock (an ironclad monitor) as well as Acting Assistant Paymaster. After the war, Holabird found employment with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, where he served as a confidential agent to AT&SF president, Allen Manvil, and supervised the railway’s survey of the Tejon Pass (Tehachapi Mountains, Calif.).

After Manvil’s death, Holabird worked for the Southern Pacific Company and served for many years as the field agent of E.H. Harriman (1848-1909), president of the Southern Pacific Railroad. As Harriman’s agent, Holabird traveled extensively throughout California—in 1909, for instance, Holabird surveyed for the Southern Pacific the extensive land holdings of Miller and Lux, a large San Francisco-based ranching firm—as well as the Philippines, Japan, Manchuria, and Siberia. Holabird concluded his professional life by serving as receiver and general manager of the California Development Company (CDC) from 1909-1916; closely tied to the Southern Pacific, the CDC was engaged in diverting water from the Colorado River for the purposes of irrigating the deserts of Imperial County, California. Under Holabird’s direction, the CDC turned profits and returned to solvency. Holabird died due to multiple cerebral hemorrhages in Sierra Madre, California, on March 1, 1921.

Scope and Content
This collection contains forty items primarily related to the work of railroad agent and California Development Company receiver W.H. Holabird (1845-1921), as well as some personal and ephemeral items.

The first and largest series (HM 73863-73875) is comprised of 13 items including correspondence and one report related to Holabird's survey of Miller and Lux's property for Southern Pacific in 1909. Holabird's surveys were in response to the
Southern Pacific's interest in purchasing Miller and Lux and its various holdings. Includes one letter by Henry Miller to Holabird.

Series 2 (HM 73876-73878) contains 3 documents related to Holabird's time as receiver and general manager of the California Development Company.

Series 3 (HM 73879-73884) is made up of various reports Holabird wrote during and after his trips to the Philippines, Manchuria, and Siberia while working for E.H. Harriman and the Southern Pacific Railroad. This section also includes related correspondences regarding Manchuria with New York City-based journalist George Kennan (1845-1924).

The final series (HM 73885-73892) contains 12 miscellaneous and personal items including a photograph of Holabird, biographical and autobiographical materials, letters, and World War I-era essays written by Holabird regarding nationalism and communism; it also includes a folder of ephemera with two copies of the Los Angeles Times announcing Holabird's death and a newspaper clipping written by Holabird on agriculture and irrigation in the Imperial Valley.

- Frank F. Latta Collection: Miller & Lux papers, 1858-1939 (Call number: mssLatta Miller and Lux)

Arrangement

This collection has been organized into 4 series:

1. Miller and Lux survey materials (HM 73863-73875)
2. California Development Company materials (HM 73876-73878)
3. Southern Pacific Railroad materials (HM 73879-73884)
4. Miscellaneous and personal items (HM 73885-73892)

Indexing Terms

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

Subjects

Harriman, Edward Henry, 1848-1909.
Holabird, W. H.
California Development Company.
Miller & Lux.
Southern Pacific Company.
Agriculture -- California -- Imperial County.
Ranches -- California.
Water-supply -- California -- Imperial County.
Colorado River (Colo.-Mexico)
Imperial County (Calif.)
Imperial Valley (Calif. and Mexico)

Forms/Genres

Essays -- California -- 20th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- California -- 20th century.
Reports -- California -- 20th century.

Additional Contributors

Kennan, George, 1845-1924.
Miller, Henry, 1827-1916.


[1909?]. Note on Miller and Lux letterhead. HM 73875.

California Development Company materials. [1915?]-1918

1918. Holabird, W.H. SHALL AND ALL AMERICAN CANAL with a heading at LAGUNA DAM be built? Includes author’s handwritten notes and edits. HM 73878.

Southern Pacific Railroad materials. 1905-1917 and undated

1906-1917. Holabird, W.H. 1 letter to George Kennan, 1845-1924. Included: Referenced, untitled essay beginning, “Manchuria is likely to occupy a very prominent place....” HM 73879.

Miscellaneous and personal items. 1889-1973 and undated

[1914?]. Biography of W.H. Holabird. HM 73887.

Physical Description: 4 items.