William Norton Collection: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Brooke M. Black, April 17, 2002.
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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URL: http://www.huntington.org
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Overview of the Collection

Title: William Norton Collection
Dates (inclusive): 1661-1979
Bulk dates: 1840-1890
Collection Number: mssHM 63620-63637
Creator: Norton, William.
Extent: 41 items in 1 box and 3 oversize items
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Abstract: This small collection contains correspondence of William Norton (died 1908) regarding his voyage to California from Massachusetts in 1849 and his time in the gold mines, as well as 17th and 18th century items regarding the Massachusetts ancestors of Norton and some other miscellaneous documents.

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]. William Norton Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance
Gift of Ruth E. Bacon, Helen N. Bacon, and Eunice Bacon Pippart, February 20, 1986.

Biographical Note
William Norton (died 1908) left Lynn, Massachusetts, for California in 1849 on the ship “Argonaut.” Norton first settled in Maxwell’s Creek (also called Coulterville), Mariposa County, and later moved to Big Oak Flat, Tuolumne County. Norton returned to Massachusetts in 1855. He later invented the Norton Clasp for shoes, and with the money he earned in California, opened the Norton Clasp Shoe Company. He was a member of the Society of California Pioneers of New England and the Associated Pioneers of the Territorial Days of California. Norton died in 1908 at the age of 76.

Scope and Content
The manuscripts include a variety of material including several 17th and 18th century land deeds and wills related to William Norton’s ancestors in Massachusetts. There is one letter from Norton’s voyage on the ship “Argonaut” and four letters from his years spent living in California. In these letters Norton gives details about specific mines in California, the towns in which he lives, and his fellow miners. There is also a list of passengers of the ship “Argonaut.” The oversize items include William Norton’s membership certificate for the Society of California Pioneers of New England, and a sketch and painting of the ship “Argonaut,” both by Oliver Clark. The ephemera is made up of both printed material and realia and includes military records, such as discharge papers and pension certificates for Simon M. Nudd and Charles Walton, both of whom fought in the Civil War; a booklet for a meeting of the Associated Pioneers of the Territorial Days of California; a list of the members of and badge for the Society of California Pioneers of New England; and a lock and pocket compass which both belonged to William Norton.

Arrangement
Arranged in the following order:
- Manuscripts (organized chronologically)
- Oversize items (organized alphabetically)
- Ephemera (organized alphabetically)
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

Subjects
Norton, William.
Argonaut (Ship)
United States. Army. Maine Infantry Regiment, 24th (1862-1863)
United States. Army. New Hampshire Infantry Regiment, 6th (1861-1865)
Gold mines and mining -- California -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Mines and mineral resources -- California -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Travelers' writings, American.
Voyages to the Pacific coast.
Coulterville (Calif.) -- Description and travel.
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Sources.
Massachusetts -- Genealogy.

Forms/Genres
Artifacts -- United States.
Certificates -- United States.
Deeds -- United States.
Drafts (negotiable instruments) -- United States.
Family papers -- United States -- 19th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- United States -- 19th century.
Military records -- United States Civil War, 1861-1865.
Paintings.
Wills -- United States.

Box 1 Manuscripts and Ephemera

Manuscripts

Will of John Norton, 1661, Jan. 14. HM 63620
Land Deed of John Smith, 1675, Feb. HM 63621
Land Deed of George Harley, 1690, June 3. HM 63622
Will of John Sanders, 1739, Nov. 17. HM 63623
Property Agreement of Jonas Sanders, 1798, Apr. 20. HM 63624
Warrant for Highway Repairs, Sharon, New Hampshire, 1819, Apr. 21. HM 63625
Walton, Charles. 1 letter to Jeremiah Fiske, 1846, May 9. HM 63626
List of Passengers of ship Argonaut, 1849, Oct. 31. HM 63627
Norton, William. 1 letter to “Parents,” 1850, Jan. 24-27. HM 63628
Norton, William. 1 letter to “Parents,” 1853, June 3. With envelope. HM 63629
Spurr, George G. 1 letter to William Norton, 1891, Oct. 25. HM 63633
-----_. Talk regarding William Norton Collection, [c.1979]. HM 63634

Ephemera

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Finding Aid
Appointment of Charles Walton to Fourth Sergeant in Company K of the Sixth Regiment of Volunteers of New Hampshire, 1861, Nov. 30.
Badge for “Society of California Pioneers ’49 of New England.”
Check from Alliance Bank, London, 1889, July 29.
Discharge Papers of Simon M. Nudd, 1863, Aug. 25. Discharge Papers of Charles Walton, 1863, Mar. 4.
Drafts (negotiable instruments) from Welles, Fargo & Co., 4 items.
  • 1860, Jan. 28, Columbia, Cal., for $50.00
  • 1860, Apr. 2, Columbia, Cal., for $350.00
  • 1861, June 14, Columbia, Cal., for $50.00
  • 1865, Apr. 12, Victoria, Vancouver Island, for $100.00.

Knowlton, G. W. Genealogical Notes [after 1892].
Highway Tax Form, Sharon, New Hampshire, 1844, Apr. 19.
Label for painting of ship “Argonaut” (HM 63635) by Clark Oliver.
Lock, with inscription: “Wm. Norton 46 Exchange St. Lynn, Mass.”
Pocket Compass
Receipt of Returned Army Coats, 1862, Oct. 10.
Reward of Merit for Sarah Fiske, 1829, Feb. 15.
Special Orders No. 3, 1862, Sep. 30.
“Thirteenth Annual Meeting and Dinner of The Associated Pioneers of the Territorial Days of California:” booklet, 1888, Jan. 9 and 18.

Oversize Items

Painting of ship “Argonaut” by Clark Oliver. HM 63636
Sketch of ship “Argonaut” by Clark Oliver. HM 63637