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## **Riggin/Pettyjohn Family Papers: Finding Aid**

Finding aid prepared by Brooke M. Black, January 29, 2002.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Manuscripts Department

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## Overview of the Collection

**Title:** Riggin/Pettyjohn Family Papers

**Dates (inclusive):** 1841-1874

**Collection Number:** mssHM 27960-27963, mssHM 63287-63326

**Extent:** 114 items.

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**Abstract:** This collection chiefly contains correspondence of the Pettyjohn family and correspondence between tavern owner James C. Riggin in Yuba County, California, and his wife, Rebeca Jane Pettyjohn. The letters tell of the journey to California along the Oregon Trail, and discuss, in detail, Fort Kearny; Fort Laramie; Fort Des Moines and Keokuk, Iowa; and Sacramento and Yuba County, California. The letters also describe life in a California gold mining town including gold discoveries, prices of supplies, and rumors of murders in the area.

**Language:** English.

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### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item]. Riggin/Pettyjohn Family Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

### Provenance

The collection is made up of material from three separate acquisitions. Several of the items were purchased from Rebecca P. Tait in February 4, 1965; the rest of the collection was the gift of Robert A. Lewellen in October 2000 and September 2001.

### Cataloger's Notes

1. The collection contains several items that were previously located in the California File (HM 27960-HM 27963).
2. Although James C. Riggin spells his wife's name the more traditional way, Rebecca with two "c"'s, her name is listed as Rebeca with once "c" because that is how she signs her own name.

### Biographical Note

James C. Riggin and Rebeca Jane Pettyjohn were married in March 1849. James, along with some friends and relatives, left Missouri for California in May 1850; his wife Rebeca and their infant daughter, Sarah Elizabeth, remained at home. Riggin briefly attempted mining but eventually ended up running a tavern and boarding house in the gold camp Oregon House in Yuba County. By the time he left California to return to Missouri in the fall of 1851, he had enough money saved up to build a new house for his wife and child. Riggin, who later became Sheriff of Andrew County, Missouri, died in 1858. Rebeca's brothers, William, Washington, and Columbus Pettyjohn also came to California to mine gold.

### Scope and Content

The collection contains 43 pieces of correspondence, one half of which is letters between James C. Riggin and his wife, Rebeca Jane Riggin. His letters give great detail regarding his journey to California along the Oregon Trail, including the physical conditions, hardships, and fellow emigrants he encountered along the way. He often advises his family against making the journey; he says that it is not worth the trouble. His letters also discuss his life in a gold mining camp, including gold discoveries near him, prices for supplies, and rumors of murders taking place in the area. The other half of the correspondence consists of letters written by or to members of the Pettyjohn family, including Rebeca Riggin's parents, Nide and Elizabeth Pettyjohn, and her three brothers, William, Washington, and Columbus Pettyjohn. Some of the locations discussed in the letters are: Andrew County, Missouri; Fort Kearny; Fort Laramie; Keokuk, and Fort Des Moines, Iowa; and Sacramento, Lewiston, Red Bluff, San Jose, and Oregon House, California. HM 27960 and HM 63308 are written on pictorial

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lettersheets, "A View of the Elephant," published by Cooke & Le Count, and "View of Coloma, the Place Where the First Gold was Discovered," published by Forrest & Borden. One letter discusses Fort Des Moines, Iowa (James C. Lourey letter to James C. Riggin, 1849 March 11, HM 63288).

The collection also includes 67 pieces of ephemera including one account book, bills, receipts, and canceled checks.

#### **Arrangement**

The collection is arranged chronologically and contains 43 pieces of correspondence. The rest of the collection consists of ephemera.

#### **Indexing Terms**

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

#### **Subjects**

Frontier and pioneer life -- California.

Gold mines and mining -- California -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.

Overland journeys to the Pacific.

California -- Gold discoveries.

Fort Des Moines (Iowa) -- Description and travel.

Fort Kearny (Neb.) -- Description and travel.

Fort Laramie (Wyo.) -- Description and travel.

Keokuk (Iowa) -- Description and travel.

Sacramento (Calif.) -- Description and travel.

Yuba County (Calif.) -- Description and travel.

#### **Forms/Genres**

Letters (correspondence) -- West (U.S.) -- 19th century.

Pictorial lettersheets.

Family papers -- West (U.S.) -- 19th century.

#### **Additional Contributors**

Pettyjohn family.

Riggin family.

Riggin, James C.

Riggin, Rebecca Jane Pettyjohn.

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Box 1

#### **Documents**

**[Between 1841 and 1848]. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to Washington T. Pettyjohn.**

HM 63287.

**1849, Mar. 11. James C. Lourey letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63288.

**1849, May 13. John Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63289.

**1849, May 24. John Riggin letter to James C. Riggin, Rebeca Jane Riggin et al.**

HM 63290.

**1849-1859. James C. Riggin, Account book and miscellaneous bills, receipts, etc., 67 items.** HM 27963.

**1850, May 16. James C. Riggin, William A. Pettyjohn, Abram Hays, and George Crow letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63291.

**1850, June 12. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63292.

**1850, June 14. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63293.

**1850, June 26. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63294.

**1850, July 21. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63295.

**1850, Sep. 3. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63296.

**1850, Sep. 15. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63297.

**1850, [Sep.?]. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 63298.

**1850, Oct. 13. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63299.

**1850, Nov. 10. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63300.

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- 1850, Nov. 17. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63301.  
**1850, Dec. 7. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63302.  
**1850, Dec. 23. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 27960.

Letter is written on pictorial letterhead, "A View of the Elephant," published by Cooke & Le Count. Also includes carte-de-visite photograph of James Riggin, one tintype of James Riggin, and one copy print of a photograph of Rebeca Riggin.

- 1850, Dec. 25. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin. Incomplete.** HM 63303.  
**1851, Jan. 23. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin and Friends.** HM 63304.  
**1851, Mar. 24. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 63305.  
**1851, Apr. 4. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63306.  
**1851, Apr. 7. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 63307.  
**1851, Apr. 27. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 63308.

Letter is written on pictorial letterhead, "View of Coloma, the Place Where the First Gold was Discovered," published by Forrest & Borden.

- 1851, May 7. Rebeca Jane Riggin letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63309.  
**1851, May 8. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 27961.  
**1851, July 10. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 63310.  
**1851, July 23. James C. Riggin letter to Rebeca Jane Riggin.** HM 63311.  
**[After 1851]. Richard A. McClure letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63312.  
**[18]53, Apr. 4. Acanthus Hinchman letter to James C. Riggin, Rebeca Jane Riggin, and Cousin.** HM 63313.  
**[18]53, June 3. John D. Musser letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63314.  
**1853, July 2. Columbus C. Pettyjohn letter to Nide Pettyjohn and Elizabeth Pettyjohn.** HM 63315.  
**[18]53, July 5. John D. Musser letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63316.  
**1853, Aug. 17. Acanthus Hinchman letter to James C. Riggin, Rebeca Jane Riggin, John Riggin, and Cousins.** HM 63317.  
**1854, Jan. 29. Acanthus Hinchman letter to James C. Riggin, Rebeca Jane Riggin, and Cousin and Friends.** HM 63318.  
**1854, Mar. 10. Columbus C. Pettyjohn letter to "Dear Friends."** HM 63319.  
**[18]54, Apr. 12. John D. Musser letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63320.  
**1854, May 25. Joshua Dennis and Columbus C. Pettyjohn letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63321.  
**[18]54, June 3. John D. Musser letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 63322.  
**[18]55, Apr. 15. Thomas Reber letter to James C. Riggin.** HM 27962.  
**1871, Feb. 13. S. B. Pettyjohn letter to Nide Pettyjohn.** HM 63323.  
**1872, Jan. 15. S. B. Pettyjohn letter to Nide Pettyjohn and Elizabeth Pettyjohn.** HM 63324.  
**1874, Jan. 8. H. B. Hays letter to Nide Pettyjohn and Elizabeth Pettyjohn.** HM 63325.  
**[18]74, Nov. 8. "Sum and Roxie" letter to Nide Pettyjohn and Elizabeth Pettyjohn.** HM 63326.