John Sproston Papers: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Katie Richardson, October 9, 2008.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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Overview of the Collection
Title: John Sproston Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1856-1885
Collection Number: mssSproston papers
Creator: Sproston, John.
Extent: 454 items in 3 boxes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: This collection contains papers of Nevada and California mine stockholder and insurance agent John Sproston (1832-approximately 1881) and includes diaries and account books kept by Sproston and clients (1856-1879); business and personal letters (ca. 1875-1883); financial records, indentures, and stock certificates (1860-1885); and some photographs and ephemera.
Language: English.

Access
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Preferred Citation

Provenance

Removed or Separated Material
Three daguerreotypes from the Sproston Papers were transferred to the Photo Archives: photDAG 85, woman wearing poke bonnet with cloth ties and cloth roses; and photDAG 86 and 87, unidentified images of young man (in one image, he is smoking a cigar).

Biographical Note
John Sproston (1832-approximately 1881) was born in Gibraltar or Spain, in 1832. His background information is somewhat unclear but census records indicate that he lived in both San Francisco, California, and Virginia City, Nevada. He was married to Mary E. (1847-1911) who was born in New Jersey, but the year of their marriage is unknown. They had at least three children. Hannah, the eldest (1854-1891), was born in Nevada and later married to William H. McClave in 1876. May was born in 1870 and received a diploma from the State of California, Department of Public Instruction in 1895 to teach grammar school. Virginia Nevada was born in Virginia City, Nevada on June 10, 1864. She died from unknown causes on January 27, 1867. Sproston made his living in the life insurance industry. He also owned stock in various gold and mining companies like Allison, Bonny, Consolidated Cedar Hill, Dardanelle, Durgan, Harrison, MaryAnn, and Wells Fargo. He even served as a trustee for the Argonaut Gold and Mining Company of San Francisco and owned a substantial amount of the company’s shares. Based on San Francisco city directories, which list John Sproston in 1880 and Mary Sproston as a widow in 1882, Sproston presumably died around 1881.

Scope and Content
This collection contains papers of Nevada and California mine stockholder and insurance agent John Sproston. The Diaries/Account Books series consists of holographic account books and diaries kept by Sproston and/or his clients from 1856-1879.

The Correspondence series (ca. 1875-1883) includes business and personal letters that Sproston received and sent to others. The series also includes correspondence between clients and a small amount of letters that are addressed to Mary E. Sproston.
The Legal Documents series is divided into three subseries: Financial Records, Indentures, and Stock Certificates. The Financial Records subseries ranges from 1868 to 1885 and includes receipts, account statements, billheads, checks, and money orders in regards to the estate of F. J. (Frances Joseph) Hammell, a client of Sproston. The subseries also includes receipts regarding the tuition payment of Hannah Sproston's education and room and board, as well as a receipt verifying the payment of Sproston's life insurance policy. The Indentures subseries (1860-1880) includes legal agreements, deeds, and bill of sales in regards to mining grounds from F.J. Hammell's estate and Sproston's personal agreement with the Argonaut Mill and Mining Company. The Stock Certificates subseries dates from 1863 to 1879. Certificates within the subseries are for various gold and mining companies including Allison, Bonny, Consolidated Cedar Hill, Dardanelle, Durgan, Harrison, MaryAnn, and Wells Fargo.

The Ephemera series (1865-1885) contains a biography of Virginia Nevada, empty envelopes, announcements, invitations, a miscellaneous note, a baptism certificate, and a diploma earned by May Sproston.

The Photograph series is arranged alphabetically by folder title and contains family photographs of the Sprostons and the Hammells. There are also images of family friends, the Lewishan Church, Bow Bridge, Flores Peak, a pulled wagon, and unidentified men and women. Within this series are cabinet cards, tin types, cartes-de-visite (card photographs), and cyanotypes.

**Arrangement**

Arranged in the following series:

1. Diaries(Account Books (Box 1)
2. Correspondence (Box 2)
3. Legal Documents (Box 2)
4. Ephemera (Box 2)
5. Photographs (Box 3).

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](https://www.huntington.org).

**Subjects**

Hammell, F.J. (Francis Joseph Hammell)
Sproston, John -- Archives.
Argonaut Gold and Mining Company.
Gold mines and mining -- California.
Gold mines and mining -- West (U.S.)
Life insurance -- United States -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Silver mines and mining -- California.
Silver mines and mining -- West (U.S.)
San Francisco (Calif.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.

**Forms/Genres**

Diaries -- United States.
Financial Records -- United States.
Journals (accounts) -- United States.
Letters (correspondence) -- United States.
Personal Papers -- United States.
Photographs -- United States.
Professional Papers -- United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>Account Books/Diaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Sproston, John. Pocket Ledger (1856-1857). 1 item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Sproston, John. Diary (1868). 1 item.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Folder 4

Folder 5

Folder 6
Bryant, John. Diary (1872). 1 item.

Folder 7

Folder 8
Sproston, John. Pacific Diary (1873). 1 item.

Folder 9
Sproston, John. Pocket Diary (1874). 1 item.

Folder 10
Gold Hickox and Spear in account with J. Sproston (1875 -1877). 1 item.

Folder 11
Memorandum of effects of F. J. Hammell (1875-1876). 1 item.

Folder 12
Sproston, John. Diary (1876). 1 item.

Folder 13
Sproston, John. Coin Hickox and Spear, bankers, in account with John Sproston (1877 Nov. 16). 1 item.

Folder 14

Box 2
Correspondence, Legal Documents, and Ephemera

Folder 1
Baldwin, A. 1 letter (1860, Jan, 21) to John Sproston.

Folder 2
Bloom, J. E. 1 letter (1880, Jan. 15) to John Sproston.

Folder 3
Bohemian Club (San Francisco, Calif.). 2 letters (1876-1880) to John Sproston.

Folder 4
Deal, W.E.F. 1 letter (1881, Sep. 9) to Mary E. Sproston.

Folder 5
Dickerson, R. 1 letter [undated] to John Sproston.

Folder 6
Eickhoff, Henry. 2 letters (1880, Apr.-July) to John Sproston.

Folder 7
Gahagan. 1 letter (1860, Jan. 23) to John Sproston.

Folder 8
Gillig, John. 21 letters (1875-1883) to John Sproston.

Folder 9
Hammell, Elizabeth A. 3 letters (1875-1878) to John Sproston.

Folder 10
Hammell, Harriet. 2 letters (1875-1876) to “dear Brothers.”

Folder 11
Hickox & Spear. 1 letter (1878, Jan. 7) to Elizabeth A. Hammell.

Folder 12
Hill, William H. 1 letter (1884, Sep. 14) to Mary E. Sproston.

Folder 13
Homans, Harry S. 1 letter (1870, June 8) to John Sproston.

Folder 14
Homer, Fred. 4 letters (1880, Apr.-July) to “Dear Gus.”

Folder 15
Homer, Fred. 16 letters (1880, Mar.-Apr.) to John Sproston.

Folder 16
Lewis, James and Deal, W.E.F. 5 letters (1875-1879) to John Sproston.

Folder 17
Marge, George. 2 letters (1874, Aug- Oct.) to F. J. Hammell.

Folder 18
McClave, Hannah Moore Sproston. 1 letter (1876) to John Sproston.

Folder 19
Mitchell, R.B. 1 letter (1883, Sep. 12) to James M. West.

Folder 20
Moitz, M. 1 letter (1877, Sep. 10) to Elizabeth A. Hammell.

Folder 21
Mother. 1 letter [undated] to unidentified addressee.

Folder 22
Neumann, Paul. 1 letter (1880, Feb. 16) to John Sproston.

Folder 23
Pearson, George. 1 letter (1877, Dec. 29) to Elizabeth A. Hammell.

Folder 24
Sproston, John. 1 letter (1875, Oct. 21) to Elizabeth A. Hammell.

Folder 25
Sproston, John. 4 letters (1880) to Fred Homer.

Folder 26
Stevens, Simon. 3 letters [ca. 1880] to John Sproston.

Folder 27
Stewart, Chauncey. 1 letter (1877, May 17) to John Sproston.

Folder 28
Waters, J. W. 1 letter (1881, Aug. 11) to Mary E. Sproston.

Folder 29
Winston, F. S. 1 letter (1876, Mar. 2) to John Sproston.

Folder 30
Woodburn & Mitchell. 2 letters (1882) to Mary E. Sproston.

Folder 31

Folder 32

Folder 33

Folder 34
Indentures: John Sproston (1880). 7 items.

Folder 35
Stock Certificates: Allison Gold and Mining Company (1863, May 19). 1 item.

Folder 36
Stock Certificates: Bonny Gold and Silver Mining Company (1863, May 15). 7 items.

Folder 37
Stock Certificates: Consolidated Cedar Hill Gold and Silver Mining Company. (1863, May 4) 2 items.

Folder 38
Stock Certificates: Dardanelle Gold and Silver Mining Company (1863, May 5). 2 items.

Folder 39
Stock Certificates: Durgan Gold and Silver Mining Company (1863, May 6). 3 items.

Folder 40
Stock Certificates: Harrison Gold and Silver Mining Company (1863, Apr. 1). 1 item.

Folder 41
Stock Certificates: Mary Ann Gold and Silver Min’g Company (1875, May 4). 8 items.
### Correspondence, Legal Documents, and Ephemera

| Folder 42 | Stock Certificates: Wells Fargo and Co. (1878-1879). 10 items. |
| Folder 44 | Ephemera: Biography of Virginia Nevada Sproston (1865-1867). 2 items, including a photograph. |
| Folder 45 | Ephemera: Empty Envelopes (1877-1885). 35 items. |
| Folder 46 | Ephemera: Invitations and Announcements (1865-1871). 18 items. |
| Folder 47 | Ephemera: Miscellaneous note [undated]. 1 item. |
| Folder 48 | Ephemera: State Educational Diploma awarded to May Sproston (1894-1895). 1 item. |

### Photographs

| Folder 1 | Berry, Celia [undated]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 2 | Black and white photograph- Flores Peak the hideout of Juan Flores the Bandit, captured & hanged by Gen. Andres Pico in 1857 [1857]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 3 | Cyanotype- horse pulled wagon [undated]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 4 | Hammell, Lewis A. [undated]. 2 photos. |
| Folder 5 | Hammell, Mary [undated]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 6 | Miller, Pearl and Rita [1870, Mar. 27]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 7 | Lewisham Church, Bow Bridge, and Unidentified Man [undated]. 3 photos with envelope. |
| Folder 8 | Sproston, John [ca. 1877]. 10 photos. |
| Folder 9 | Sproston, Mary E. (1866-1880). 10 photos. |
| Folder 10 | Sproston, John and Mary (1862, Dec. 7). 3 photos. |
| Folder 11 | Sproston, Mary and unidentified female [ca. 1866]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 12 | Sproston, Virginia Nevada [ca. 1866]. 9 photos. |
| Folder 13 | Straus, M. [undated] 1 photo. |
| Folder 14 | Unidentified Family [undated]. 1 photo. |
| Folder 15 | Unidentified Females [undated]. 36 photos with envelope. |
| Folder 16 | Unidentified Males [undated]. 8 photos. |