Starkweather Family Correspondence: Finding Aid

Processed by Huntington Library staff; supplementary encoding and revision supplied by Brooke Dykman Dockter and Diann Benti

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Overview of the Collection
Title: Starkweather Family Correspondence
Dates (inclusive): 1836-1888
Bulk dates: 1849-1859
Collection Number: mssHM 54689-54932
Creator: Starkweather (Family)
Extent: 242 letters plus copies of a few printed items in 3 boxes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: This collection consists of correspondence between Starkweather family members in Northampton, Massachusetts, and family members who came to California during the Gold Rush era. The bulk of the letters date from 1849 to 1859, and topics discussed in the letters include ocean voyages to California, agriculture and ranching in Stockton, and family news.
Language: English.
Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. Starkweather Family Correspondence, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
Biographical Note of the Starkweather family
Charles Graves Starkweather (1819-1906) came to California seeking gold in 1849. He was an officer in the Holyoke Company and left on February 5, 1849 from New York aboard the S.S. Crowell going first to Chagres, Panama, then up the river to Panama City. When they found no ship to take them to San Francisco, their company, along with others, bought the ship Copiapo, hired a captain, and after a 95-day voyage arrived in San Francisco on August 14, 1849. Charles went first to look for gold on the Yuba River, but finally settled in the Sacramento Valley. In 1851 he was joined by his brother, Alfred Starkweather (1826-1917), and together they bought a ranch near Stockton, California. The next year, another brother, Haynes Kingsley Starkweather (1822-1895), came to California via the Nicaragua route bringing his wife, Martha, and his son with him. After arriving at San Juan, they discovered that the ship North American, on which they were to take passage, had been shipwrecked and they were picked up by the Monumental City instead. After a difficult passage they arrived in San Francisco and made their way to Stockton, where he opened a drugstore. Charles made a visit to Northampton in 1854-1855 and brought his sister Roxana to California (where she met and married William Henry Nowell). Those family members at home were: their father, Haynes Kingsley Starkweather (1788-1866); mother, Almira L. (Merrick) Starkweather (d. 1861); brother, Rev. Frederick Merrick Starkweather (1820-1851); sister, Almira Starkweather (d. 1860); and sister, Elizabeth (Starkweather) Breck. As his father aged, he asked Charles to come home and take over the family farm. Charles went back in 1859; Haynes and Roxana and families also returned East.
Scope and Content
The collection consists of correspondence between Starkweather family members at home in Northampton, Massachusetts, and the four members who came to California during the Gold Rush era. Topics discussed in the letters include ocean voyages to California, agriculture and ranching in Stockton, and Starkweather family news. There is a hiatus in correspondence from 1866-1876. The letters after this period deal chiefly with business arrangements between Charles in Massachusetts and his brother Haynes, who had returned to California to be with his son.
Persons represented in the collection by five or more pieces include: Elizabeth Starkweather Breck (5 letters), Roxana Starkweather Nowell (20 letters), Alfred Starkweather (34 letters), Almira Starkweather (12 letters), Almira L. Merrick Starkweather (10 letters), Charles Graves Starkweather (12 letters and 4 account books), Frances Loomis Starkweather (6 letters), Frederick Merrick Starkweather (7 letters), Haynes Kingsley Starkweather (1788-1866) (24 letters), Haynes Kingsley Starkweather (1822-1895) (71 letters), and Martha Phelps Starkweather (9 letters).

**Arrangement**
Arranged chronologically in 3 boxes, with printed items filed at end of collection.

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

**Subjects**
Starkweather family.
Ocean travel.
Ranches -- California -- Stockton.
Voyages to the Pacific coast.
California -- Agriculture.
California -- Gold discoveries -- Personal narratives.
Northampton (Mass.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Stockton (Calif.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.

**Forms/Genres**
Family papers California 19th century.
Letters (correspondence) California 19th century.

**Alternate Authors**
Breck, Elizabeth Starkweather.
Nowell, Roxana Starkweather.
Starkweather, Alfred.
Starkweather, Almira.
Starkweather, Almira L. Merrick.
Starkweather, Charles Graves, 1819-1906.
Starkweather, Frances Loomis.
Starkweather, Frederick Merrick.
Starkweather, Haynes Kingsley, 1788-1866.
Starkweather, Haynes Kingsley, 1822-1895.
Starkweather, Martha Phelps.

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