Wells, Fargo & Company Records: Finding Aid

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The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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Overview of the Collection
Title: Wells, Fargo & Company Records
Dates (inclusive): 1839-1911
Bulk dates: 1883-1906
Collection Number: mssWF Boxes 1-35
Creator: Wells, Fargo & Company.
Extent: 2,254 pieces in 35 boxes and 11 volumes
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Abstract: This collection consists mainly of letters to and from Wells, Fargo & Company official Hosmer Benjamin Parsons (1846-1908), who joined the company in 1867 and later became president of its bank in New York. The papers deal with company business and company's relationships with railroad lines and competing express firms. Some of the papers relate to the personal business affairs of Hosmer B. Parsons, including his investments in Mexico.
Language: English.
Access
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Preferred Citation
Provenance
Purchased from William P. Wreden, May 1961.
Historical Note
Wells, Fargo & Company was founded in New York in 1852 through the amalgamation of several companies by Henry Wells (1805-1878) and William George Fargo (1818-1881). It was expanded in the wake of the Gold Rush to handle the growing express business in the West. Henry Wells is not represented in the collection, nor is William G. Fargo, but there are a few letters from or about his brothers James Congdell Fargo and Charles Fargo who were active in Wells, Fargo & Company and the American Express Company. In 1872, Lloyd Tevis (1824-1899) became president of Wells, Fargo & Company followed in 1892 by John Joseph Valentine (1840-1901).
Scope and Content
The collection consists mainly of letters to and from Hosmer Benjamin Parsons (1846-1908) who joined Wells, Fargo & Company in 1867 and successively held the positions of cashier, assistant secretary, vice-president and president of the company bank in New York. The papers deal chiefly with the express business--relationships with competing express companies (such as American Express, Pacific Express, Northern Pacific Express, Texas Express, etc.), with railroad companies (Northern Pacific Railroad Company, Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company, Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs Railroad Company and others), matters of shipments, rates, and routes. There are also papers that relate to the personal business affairs of Hosmer B. Parsons.
Includes contains original letters, press copies (and press copy letter books), and duplicated copies of letters.
Persons represented by 50 letters or more:
- Hancock, W. J. (325 pieces)
- Parsons, Hosmer Benjamin (52 pieces + 11 letter books)
- Tevis, Lloyd (127 pieces)
- Valentine, John Joseph (1,071 pieces)
Some notable items include: one to three letters each from Marcus Daly, James Ben Ali Haggin, George Hearst (plus 9 stock orders), Phoebe (Apperson) Hearst (plus scattered letters addressed to her in the letter books beginning in 1891), James Heron, and Collis Potter Huntington.

**Arrangement**

Arranged in the following manner: 1. General correspondence (Boxes 1-33); 2. Investments in Mexico (Box 34); 3. Business papers of Hosmer B. Parsons, photographs, ephemera, printed items (Box 35); 4. 11 letter books.

**Indexing Terms**

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

**Subjects**

Parsons, Hosmer Benjamin, 1846-1908.
Wells, Fargo & Company.
Banks and banking -- United States.
Coaching (Transportation) -- West (U.S.) -- History -- Sources.
Express service -- West (U.S.) -- History -- Sources.
Investments, American -- Mexico.
Postal service -- United States.
Railroads -- United States.
West (U.S.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.

**Forms/Genres**

Business records -- West (U.S.)
Letter books -- West (U.S.)
Letters (correspondence) -- West (U.S.)

**Alternate Authors**

Daly, Marcus, 1841-1900.
Haggin, James Ben Ali, 1822-1914.
Hancock, W. J.
Hearst, George, 1820-1891.
Hearst, Phoebe Apperson, 1842-1919.
Heron, James, active 1875-1886.
Huntington, Collis Potter, 1821-1900.
Parsons, Hosmer Benjamin, 1846-1908.
Tevis, Lloyd.
Valentine, John J. (John Joseph), 1840-1901.

**General Correspondence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>A-B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 2</td>
<td>Campbell-Cooper, E. M. (to Parsons, 1884 April 22-1886 June 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3</td>
<td>Cooper, E. M. (to Parsons, 1886 July 7-1888)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 4</td>
<td>Cooper, E. M. (to Tracy) - Evans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 5</td>
<td>F-Hancock, W. J. (to Parsons, 1883-1885 February 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 6</td>
<td>Hancock, W. J. (to Parsons, 1885 March-September 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 7</td>
<td>Hancock, W. J. (to Parsons, 1885 September 24-1886 October)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 8</td>
<td>Hancock, W. J. (to Parsons, 1886 November 2-1887 July)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 9</td>
<td>Hancock, W. J. (to Parsons, 1887 August-1888 January, and R-T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 10</td>
<td>Hancock, W. J (to V-Z)-Heron, James</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 11</td>
<td>Hewson-Messersmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12</td>
<td>Milford-Parsons, Hosmer B. (to B-Ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 13</td>
<td>Parsons, Hosmer B. (to Hi-Y)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 14</td>
<td>S-Tevis, Lloyd (to Parsons, 1874-1884)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 15  Tevis, Lloyd (to Parsons, 1885-1886)
Box 16  Tevis, Lloyd (to Parsons, 1887-1889)-Titus
Box 17  Tracy-Valentine, J. J. (to Banks-Langtry)
Box 18  Valentine, J. J. (to M-Parsons, 1869-1883 May 20)
Box 19  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1883 May 21-November 14)
Box 20  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1883 November 15-1884 January 31)
Box 21  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1884 February-May)
Box 22  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1884 June-October)
Box 23  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1884 November-December 26)
Box 24  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1884 December 27-1885 January 31)
Box 25  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1885 February 2-March 14)
Box 26  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1885 March 15-April 25)
Box 27  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1885 May 3-July 9)
Box 28  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1885 July 10-August 31)
Box 29  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1885 September 1-1886 October 28)
Box 30  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1886 November -1887 June 13)
Box 31  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1887 June 14-August 19)
Box 32  Valentine, J. J. (to Parsons, 1887 December 20-1898 July 11, and P-Z)
Box 33  W-Y

Investments in Mexico
Chiefly correspondence about investments that appear to have been personal investments on the part of Hosmer B. Parsons and others).

Box 35  Business papers of Hosmer B. Parsons; Photographs (copies only); Ephemera; Printed Items
Note
There are also personal business papers of Parsons scattered throughout the collection and in the letter books.

Letter books
Eleven letter books containing press copies of letters written by Hosmer B. Parsons. The volumes contain letters addressed to Phoebe (Apperson) Hearst, Lloyd Tevis and others.

Volume 1  Letter book. 1879, Dec. 11-1882, May 18
Volume 2  Letter book. 1890, June 10-1891, May 20
Volume 3  Letter book. 1892, Jan. 28-Dec. 30
Volume 4  Letter book. 1893, Jan. 7-Nov. 29
Volume 6  Letter book. 1895, Apr. 22-1896, Jan. 9
Volume 7  Letter book. 1896, Jan. 11-Nov. 23
Volume 8  Letter book. 1896, Nov. 27-1898, Dec. 23