Billington Crum Whiting Papers: Finding Aid

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Billington Crum Whiting Papers

Dates (inclusive): 1839-1948

Bulk dates: 1849-1869

Collection Number: mssHM 54459-54508

Creator: Whiting, Billington Crum, 1812-1881.

Extent: 66 items and 8 photographs in 1 box

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Abstract: This collection consists of letters written on the overland journey of New York lawyer Billington Whiting (1812-1881) to California in 1849 and life after his arrival. There are also memoirs written by his wife, Susan Whiting (1826-1913), who came to California via Panama in 1852. The collection also contains military papers related to Whiting’s service in the New York militia (1834-39) as well as genealogical records and 8 photographs.

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]. Billington Crum Whiting Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance


Biographical Note

Billington Crum Whiting (1812-1881), an Owego, New York, lawyer, joined the Ithaca and California Mining Company and traveled from Ithaca, New York, to the southern mines of California in 1849. He went by way of the Arkansas River, Pueblo (Colorado), Salt Lake City (where he stayed and worked for a time) and the Old Spanish Trail through Cajon Pass to Los Angeles. After going to Mariposa County, he was one of a group who organized a freight line from Stockton and ran a grocery store and restaurant. A short time later he left for San Francisco to practice law. In July 1852, his wife, Susan Helen (Colegrove) Whiting (1826-1913) sailed for California, coming by way of Panama. She arrived in San Francisco and soon the couple moved to Santa Cruz where Whiting owned a ranch, practiced law, and became State Senator for Monterey and Santa Cruz (1854-1855). For a time he had a law office in Sacramento with his brother-in-law, Cornelius Cole. From 1861 to 1867 he was U. S. District Attorney for the Southern District of California and from 1867 to 1873 he served as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in California. In 1873 he moved to Los Angeles, buying a small orchard and ranch on West Adams St. The couple had two daughters: Katharine Lucretia born in Santa Cruz in 1853 (later married to Albert James Howard, son of Volney Erskine Howard) and Lalla, born in Sacramento in 1856 (married James Johnson Mellus, son of Francis Mellus and grandson of Santiago Johnson).

Scope and Content

The collection contains Whiting’s letters written to his wife during his overland journey to California in 1849 and his early years in California, including a return trip by the still incomplete railroad and stage coach in 1869. The collection also includes some memoirs written by Susan Helen (Colegrove) Whiting in 1895 about her early years in California; a few military papers of B. C. Whiting from his time in the New York militia (1834-1839); genealogical papers of the Colegrove, Mellus, and Whiting families, and a few photographs. Subject matter includes: California - Overland journeys; California - Politics and government.
Persons represented by 5 or more pieces: Billington Crum Whiting (21 letters); Susan Helen (Colegrove) Whiting (7 manuscripts)

Arrangement
Arranged in chronological order.

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

Subjects
Whiting, Billington Crum, 1812-1881.
Whiting, Susan, 1826-1913.
Lawyers -- California -- Archives.
Ocean travel.
Overland journeys to the Pacific.
California -- Description and travel.
California -- Social life and customs -- 19th century.
New York (State) -- Militia.
Panama -- Description and travel.

Forms/Genres
Letters (correspondence) -- California.
Manuscripts -- California.
Photographs -- California.

Alternate Authors
Whiting, Susan, 1826-1913.

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