
Ralph P. Bieber Photographs of the Overland Trail: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Jane Apostol and Diann Benti.

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

Photo Archives

1151 Oxford Road

San Marino, California 91108

Phone: (626) 405-2191

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URL: <http://www.huntington.org>

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Overview of the Collection

Title: Ralph P. Bieber Photographs of the Overland Trail

Dates (inclusive): 1950s-1960s

Collection Number: photCL 469

Creator: Bieber, Ralph P. (Ralph Paul), 1894- photographer.

Extent: 726 photographs in 13 boxes + 3 pieces of ephemera in 1 envelope.

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Abstract: The collection contains photographs by historian Ralph P. Bieber (1894-1891) documenting the central overland route to California as it appeared in the 1950s. The images show the route through Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and California that was used by pioneers and gold seekers beginning in the mid-19th century. Bieber also created categories such as "Donner Party sites," "Gold Discovery Sites," and "Sites associated with John C. Fremont."

Language: English.

Note:

Finding aid last updated on April 8, 2015.

Access

Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Ralph P. Bieber Photographs of the Overland Trail, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Provenance

Gift of Ralph P. Bieber's son, William P. Bieber, in 1986.

Custodial History

Transferred from the Manuscript Department, December 2004.

Processing/Project Information

Photo Archives volunteer Jane Apostol rehoused the collection and prepared the container list portion of the finding aid in 2005. Diann Benti updated and created and created a machine readable version of the finding aid in March 2015.

Biographical Note

Ralph P. Bieber (1894-1981) was a historian of the American West who served on the faculty of Washington University in St. Louis for many years. Between 1931 and 1940, Bieber edited the Southwest Historical Series for publisher Arthur H. Clark. As a result of his editorial duties, Bieber became increasingly fascinated with the great migration to California during the Gold Rush era. He ultimately began a project of his own to document the overland experience during the critical first year of the Gold Rush. He ferreted out thousands of sources, taking voluminous and highly-detailed notes that comprise the manuscript portion of his collection. He also made several trips along the central route to California, and the photographs here are the result of trips taken in the 1950s.

Scope and Content

This collection contains photographs by historian Ralph P. Bieber documenting the central overland route to California as it appeared in the 1950s. Bieber visited the sites in conjunction with a project to record every aspect of the trails and circumstances associated with the migration of people to California during the Gold Rush years and subsequently. The images document the route through Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and California. Bieber organized and annotated the photographs himself, and his original order, based primarily on print size, has been maintained. Additionally, Bieber created photographic categories such as "Donner Party Sites," "Gold Discovery Sites," and

"Sites associated with John C. Frémont." Note that Bieber did not arrange the photographs geographically.

Related materials in the Huntington Library

The Huntington also holds a large collection of research files (approximately 50 boxes) assembled by Ralph P. Bieber in the course of editing the Southwest Historical Series for the Arthur H. Clark Company and undertaking a book (never completed) on the first year of the California Gold Rush. Researchers who wish to obtain more information about the research files should contact the H. Russell Smith Foundation Curator of Western Historical Manuscripts.

Arrangement

The collection is organized first by size of the photograph (8 x 10 in., 11 x 14 in., 3.5 x 5.5 in.) and then alphabetically by location name within each size.

Indexing Terms

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

Subjects

Overland journeys to the Pacific -- History -- Photographs.

California -- Gold Discoveries -- History -- Photographs.

Overland Trails -- Photographs.

Forms/Genres

Photographs.

Collection

Prints

[Detailed list of prints](#)

8 x 10 in. prints

[Detailed list of 8 x 10 in. prints](#)

Box 1	Prints 1-146
Item 1-7	Ash Hollow, Nebraska
Item 8	Bannock Creek, Idaho. A few miles west of Portneuf River
Item 9	Baptist Mission to the Potawatomi Indians.
Item 10-12	Bear River, California
Item 13	Bear River, Wyoming
Item 14	Beer Spring, Idaho
Item 15-19	Benicia, California
Item 20-22	Bidwell Bar, California, and Feather River
Item 23-24	Brady's Hot Springs, Nevada
Item 25-26	California Trail Deaths
Item 27	Camp Creek California, west of Leek Spring
Item 28-47	Carson Pass, Carson Canyon, Carson River, Carson Sink
Item 48	Castle Rock. South of the North Platte River
Item 49-50	Chimney Rock, south of North Platte River
Item 51-67	City of Rocks, Idaho
Item 68-71	Coloma, California
Item 72	View of Courthouse Rock (right) and Jail Rock (left), Nebraska
Item 73-79	Devil's Gate, Wyoming
Item 80-91	Donner Party sites
Item 92-96	Fort Hall, Idaho
Item 97-101	Fort Laramie, Wyoming
Item 102-109	Sites associated with John C. Frémont
Item 110-117	Gold discovery sites
Item 118-121	Green River and Sublette Cut-off

Item 122-124	Hastings Cut-off
Item 125-126	Hooper Spring, Idaho
Item 127	Horseshoe Spring, Idaho.
Item 128-130	Hot Springs (Thousand Springs), Nevada
Item 131-135	Humboldt River and Humboldt Sink
Item 136-140.4	Independence, Missouri
Item 141-146	Independence Rock, Wyoming. (A short distance west of present Casper, Wyoming.)
Box 2	Prints 147-275
Item 147	Jackson Cemetery, Jackson, California
Item 148	Jackson Hole
Item 149	(Johnson's Ranch.) Bear River (dry bed), near Wheatland, California (Butte County)
Item 150-151	Kansas River
Item 152	Kelsey, California
Item 153	Little Goose Creek, Nevada
Item 154	(Lassen's Cut-Off.) Black Rock Desert, near Sulphur, Nevada
Item 155	Leek Spring, California
Item 156	Long Bar, California
Item 157-178	John Marsh home, near Mt. Diablo, California.
Item 159-159.1	Martinez, California, city cemetery
Item 160-166	Missouri River
Item 167-168	Mokelumne River, California, at Big Bar
Item 169-170	Monterey, California
Item 171-175	Mormon Bar, Mormon Island Memorial Cemetery
Item 176-179	Mount Ophir, California
Item 180-186	Names Hill, Wyoming. (South of LaBarge, north of Mormon Ferry of Green River.)
Item 187-189	North Platte River
Item 190-192	Pacific Creek and Pacific Spring, Wyoming
Item 193-194	Placerita Canyon, California
Item 195	Portneuf River, Idaho
Item 196-198	Presidio, San Francisco, 1776-1846
Item 199-201	Raft River, Idaho
Item 202	Red Buttes, Wyoming
Item 203-206	Register Cliff, Wyoming
Item 207-208	Rocky Ford Crossing of the Kansas River
Item 209-212	Ruts of the California Trail (Wyoming)
Item 213	Sacramento, California
Item 214-218	Sacrament, Gravestones in City Cemetery
Item 219	St. Joseph, Missouri, cemetery
Item 220-222	Scotts Bluff, Nebraska
Item 223-226	Shawnee Methodist Mission, Kansas
Item 227-228	Sheep Rock, Idaho
Item 229	Sierra Nevada, California
Item 230	Smiths Fork River, Wyoming
Item 231-232	Snake River, Idaho
Item 233	Range, Humboldt County, Nevada
Item 234	Sonora Cemetery, Sonora, California
Item 235	Fork of the American River, at Sacramento, California
Item 236-237	South Pass, Wyoming
Item 238-242	South Platte River, Nebraska
Item 243-245	Split Rock, Wyoming
Item 246-247	Stanislaus River, California
Item 248-249	Sublette Cut-Off
Item 250-252	Sutter's Fort, Sacramento
Item 253	Sweetwater River, Wyoming
Item 254-255	Tragedy Spring, California

Item 256-257	Truckee River, California
Item 258-260	Wall Defile (Carlin Canyon), Nevada
Item 261-264	Warm Spring, Wyoming
Item 265-266	Wells, Nevada
Item 267-268	Wind River Mountains, Wyoming
Item 269-271	Woods Creek, Tuolumne County, California
Item 272-275	Woods Crossing

12 x 14 in. prints

[Detailed list of 12 x 14 in. prints](#)

Box 3

Prints 276-344

Item 276	American Falls of the Snake River, Idaho
Item 277	Ash Hollow, Nebraska
Item 278-279	Bear River and Bear River Valley, California
Item 280	Benicia Cemetery, Benicia, California
Item 281-282	Bidwell's Bar, California
Item 283	Big Bar of the Mokelumne River, California
Item 284-285	Black Rock Desert
Item 286	Carquinez Straits, California
Item 287-292	Carson Canyon and Carson Pass, California; Carson River and Carson Sink, Nevada
Item 293-284	Chimney Rock, Nebraska
Item 295-299	City of Rocks, (near Almo, Cassia County, Idaho)
Item 300	Courthouse Rock, Morrill County, Nebraska
Item 301-302	Devil's Gate, Wyoming
Item 303-305	Fort Hall, Idaho
Item 306-307	Fort Kearny, Nebraska
Item 308-309	Fort Laramie, Wyoming
Item 310-312	Gold Discovery Site (January 24, 1848)
Item 313	Gold Hill, California.
Item 314-315	Goodyear's Bar, California
Item 316-319	Gravelly Ford of the Humboldt River
Item 320-321	Hot Springs, Nevada
Item 322-326	Humboldt River and Humboldt Sink, Nevada
Item 327-328	Independence Rock, Wyoming
Item 329	Jackson Creek, at Jackson, California
Item 330	Jail Rock, Morrill County, Nebraska
Item 331-332	Jefferson City, Missouri
Item 333	Kansas River
Item 334	Laramie Peak
Item 335-338	Lassen Cut-Off and Lassen's Ranch
Item 339-341	Little Goose Creek, Nevada
Item 342	Long Bar, California, on North Fork of Feather River
Item 343-344	Mariposa, California

Box 4

Prints 345-396

Item 345-346	Home of John Marsh [Contra Costa County, California]
Item 347	Martinez, California, City Cemetery
Item 348-351	Missouri River
Item 352-353	River, California
Item 354-356	Mount Ophir, California
Item 357	Placerita Canyon historical marker on the site of the gold discovery here on March 9, 1842
Item 358	Platte River, Nebraska
Item 359-360	Presidio of San Francisco, California
Item 361-362	Saint Louis, Missouri, river front
Item 363-364	Sheep Rock, Idaho
Item 365	Sonoma Range, Nevada
Item 366-367	South Fork of the American River

Item 368-369	South Fork of the Yuba River
Item 370-373	South Pass, Wyoming
Item 374	South Platte River, Nebraska
Item 375-376	Stanislaus River, California
Item 377	Sublette Cut-Off. Green River, at site of Mormon Ferry
Item 378-379	Sullivan's Creek, California
Item 380	Sutter's Fort, Sacramento, California
Item 381	Table Mountain, California
Item 382-387	Truckee Pass and Truckee River
Item 388	Tuolumne River at Jacksonville, California
Item 389-390	Wall Defile (Carlin Canyon), Nevada
Item 391	Webber Creek. Southeast of Coloma, California
Item 392-393	Wells, Nevada
Item 394	Wind River Mountains, Wyoming
Item 395	Woods Creek Crossing, south of Jamestown, California
Item 396	Yankee Hill, California, from its base
Box 5	Prints 397-411

Antrim illustrations: Tampico to Mazatlan**Scope and Content Note**

Photographs of watercolor paintings and black and white drawings in Antrim, Journals, 1849, of Scenes in Journey of Antrim Across Mexico (Tampico to Mazatlan) in 1849, on way to gold mines of California. Originals in Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress. (Negatives on file at Huntington.)

From watercolor paintings

Item 397	Main plaza of Tampico, looking north.
Item 398	Part of the main plaza of San Louis Potosi.
Item 399	Main plaza of Guadalaxhara.
Item 400	The harbour and part of the city of Mazatlan, looking southwest.

From black-and-white drawings

Item 401	Camp, guards &c., on the north bank of Paneuco River, looking west by southwest. [At Tampico, Mexico.]
Item 402	Entering the city proper of San Louis Potosi. Looking South.

Aerial views of Union County, New Mexico

Item 403	Union County.
Item 404	McNee's Crossing.
Item 405-406	Round Mound, Santa Fe Trail.
Item 407	East of Round Mound. Scale 2"=1 mile.
Item 408	East of Round Mound. Enlarged to 8"=1 mile.

U.S.G.S. Topographic Maps

Item 409	California Colfax Sheet, edition of June 1892.
Item 410	Colfax Quadrangle, edition of 1938; reprinted 1941.
Item 411	Placerville Sheet, edition of July 1893; reprinted 1931.

3.5 x 5.5 in. prints**Note**

The 3.5 x 5.5 inch prints have corresponding negatives (in boxes 12-13), except as noted in the detailed list of prints.

Box 6

Prints, Items 412-695

[Detailed list of 3.5 x 5.5 in. prints](#)

Items 412-416	Kansas, Missouri (Bieber: Roll 1)
Items 417-422	Kansas, Nebraska (Bieber: Roll 2)
Items 423-428	Wyoming (Bieber: Roll 3)
Items 429-434	Wyoming (Bieber: Roll 4)
Items 435-440	Wyoming, Idaho (1959)(Bieber: Roll 5)
Items 441-446	Idaho, Nevada (Bieber: Roll 6)

Items 447-452	Nevada (Bieber: Roll 7)
Items 453-458	Nevada and Unidentified (Bieber: Roll 8)
Items 459-464	Unidentified landscapes (Bieber: Roll 9)
Items 465-470	Unidentified landscapes (Bieber, Roll 10)
Items 471-472	Jacksonville, California and Unidentified landscape (Bieber: Roll 11)
Items 473-478	California (Bieber: Roll 12)
Items 479-484	Stanislaus River, California (Bieber: Roll 13)
Items 485-498	[Old Oregon Trail]
Items 499-506	[Hudspeth's Cut-Off, Idaho]
Items 507-511	Southwest Indian Country
Items 512-531	Arizona (Monument Valley, Wupatki National Monument,
Items 532-572	New Mexico (Acoma Indian Pueblo, Aztec Ruins National Monument, Chaco Canyon: Pueblo Bonito, El Morro National Park: Inscription Rock, Zuni, and unidentified Pueblo ruins)
Items 573-596	Head Start graduation ceremonies for Pueblo children
Items 597-600	Churches
Items 601-604	Unprinted, unidentified negatives
Items 605-635	Wyoming (addenda)
Items 636-639	Miscellaneous unidentified buildings and people
Items 640-649	Color prints: Arizona
Items 673-695	Color prints: New Mexico

Rolled film negatives and prints

Note

Each item number for Boxes 7-11 corresponds to a box containing roll of 135 mm film and an accompanying 3.5 x 5 in. uncut roll of prints.

Box 7	Items 696-701: Kansas and Nebraska
Item 696	Alcove Spring, Kansas
Item 697	Alcove Spring, Kansas
Item 698	Alcove Spring, Kansas
Item 699	Wakarusa and Little Wakarusa, Kansas. August 1961.
Item 700	Little Blue River (Kansas and Nebraska)
Item 701	Kansas and Nebraska
Box 8	Items 702-707: Kansas and Nebraska
Box 9	Items 708-713: Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and California
Box 10	Items 714-719: New Mexico and California

Note

#719: negatives only.

Box 11	Items 720-726: New Mexico and California
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3.5 x 5.5 in. film negatives

Box 12	Negatives for 412-559
Box 13	Negatives for 560-695

Ephemera

Envelope 1	Ephemera
Item eph. 1	List of pictures taken on 1957 Western trip: Missouri to Wyoming; also California. (31 handwritten pages of notes. 1 page marked 1959.)
Item eph. 2	Handbook on Fort Laramie National Monument, Wyoming.
Item eph. 3	Photographic copy of poster, "Emigration to California."
