Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee Papers.

Finding aid prepared by Katrina Denman.
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee Papers.
Dates: 1884-1887
Collection Number: Consult repository.
Creator: Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee.
Extent: 21 boxes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: Collected incoming correspondence to the Los Angeles law firm of Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee, which existed from 1885-1887.
Language of Material: The records are in English.
Access
Collection is open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, please go to following web site.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Acquisition Information
Purchased from The Lloyd Osendorf Collection of Lincolniana at Bonhams and Butterfield auction, November 23, 2004.
Biography
The Los Angeles-based law firm of Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee existed as such from 1885 to 1889, and consisted of Guilford Wiley Wells, Walter Van Dyke, and Bradner Wells Lee. It was preceded by Brunson, Wells, and Lee (1883-1885) and succeeded by Wells, Guthrie, and Lee (1889-1890).
Guilford Wiley Wells was born in Conseus Center, New York, on February 14, 1840. He attended Genesee Wesleyan Seminary and College in Lima, New York, until the outbreak of the Civil War, when he volunteered for the First New York Dragoons. Wells was wounded in combat several times, most seriously in February 1865, as a result of which he was discharged from the army and left with a permanently disabled left arm. Following the war, Wells attended law school at Columbia College in Washington, D.C., graduating in 1867. In 1869 he began practicing law in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and President Grant appointed him United States District Attorney for northern Mississippi in 1870. While in Mississippi, Wells helped secure the first decision against the Ku Klux Klan rendered in the southern states and was elected United States Congressman for the Second Mississippi District in 1876. In 1877 Wells was appointed consul general to Shanghai, China, a post he resigned in 1878 (he also refused appointment as consul to Hong Kong). Wells and his wife, Katy C. Fox, had traveled through California on their way to Shanghai and decided to settle in Los Angeles permanently in 1879. In Los Angeles, Wells was a partner in a succession of successful law firms, including Brunson and Wells; Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee (1883-1885); Wells, Guthrie, and Lee (1889-1890); Wells, Monroe, and Lee (1890-1893); Wells and Lee (1893-1896); and Wells, Works, and Lee (1896). He also served as Special Attorney for Mission Indians. Wells retired from practicing law in 1896. He died in Santa Monica, California, on March 21, 1909.
Walter Van Dyke was born in Tyre, New York, on October 3, 1823. In 1846 he traveled to Cleveland, Ohio, to study law, and was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1848. In 1849 Van Dyke joined the California Gold Rush, arriving in San Francisco in 1850. He spent some time as a gold prospector before being elected District Attorney of Klamath County in 1851 and District
Attorney of Humboldt County in 1854, the same year he married Rowena Cooper (their son, Edwin C. Van Dyke, became a noted entomologist). Van Dyke also served in the California State Senate from 1862-1863, and as a strong supporter of Abraham Lincoln became known as the “Father of the Union Party in California.” He practiced law in San Francisco from 1863-1864, and in Los Angeles with the firm of Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee from 1885-1889. In 1874 he was elected United States Attorney for California (he was re-elected in 1894), and he served as Justice of the Supreme Court of California from 1898 until December 1903. Van Dyke died in 1905.

Bradner Wells Lee, a nephew of Guilford Wiley Wells, was born in East Groveland, New York, on May 4, 1850. He studied law at Wells’ law office in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and was admitted to the bar of the United States District Court for northern Mississippi in 1871. In the same year he was also made Assistant District Attorney for northern Mississippi, a post he held until 1879. Lee married Helena Farrar in Philadelphia in 1883, and then traveled to Los Angeles and joined his uncle’s law firm of Brunson, Wells, and Lee (1883-1885). He also worked with the firm’s various successors, including Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee (1885-1889); Wells, Guthrie, and Lee (1889-1890); Wells, Monroe, and Lee (1890-1893); Wells and Lee (1893-1896); Wells, Works, and Lee (1896); and Works and Lee (1896-1908). Lee served as attorney and executor for the estate of E.J. “Lucky” Baldwin and also as general counsel for the Murphy Oil Company. He declined an appointment as Superior Judge of Los Angeles County in 1905, and continued to practice law alone and later with two of his sons. Lee served as president of the California Bar Association from 1919-1920, and was also active in the California Republican Party. He died on April 28, 1925.

Scope and Content
The collection primarily consists of incoming correspondence to the Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee law firm from their various clients and legal colleagues. The content of the cases represented is mainly civil, most heavily focused on divorces, estate settlements, and patents, as well as some correspondence on Mission Indian land cases, suits against railroads, water rights, and mining disputes. There are also a variety of advertisements from publishers, typewriter merchants, and other business connections, as well as a very few outgoing letters from Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee and limited personal correspondence. In addition to facts regarding specific cases, the letters provide an overview of general social issues, law fees and practices, property laws, patent laws, the status of women, child custody laws, divorce laws, and prevailing views of divorce in 1880s California.

Some interesting or notable items include:

• Correspondence from Frederic Hall, James Johnston, John McCallum, H.H. Markham, and J.D.C. Atkins regarding Mission Indians land rights.

• Letters from Henry M. Burr (WVL 218) and D.H. Wittemore and W.H. Sears (WVL 1369) on the moral implications of divorce.

• A letter from Van Ness and Roche (WVL 1392) regarding E.J. Baldwin’s claims against the Southern Pacific Railroad for negligence.

Some notable correspondents represented in the collection include:


• Cobb, Moses G, b.1820. Organized the Boston Light Artillery (1853-1858) and led Cobb’s Battery during the Civil War. Prominent attorney in San Francisco.

• Coney, A.K. (Alejandro K.), b. 1847. Consul General of Mexico at San Francisco.

• Fisher, John Alonzo. Noted theologian and author of A Select Bibliography of Ecclesiastical History (1885).


• Markham, Henry Harrison, 1840-1902. U.S. Representative from California, 1885-1887; Governor of California, 1891-1895.

• McIntire, William Cranch, 1841-? Prominent patent lawyer in Washington, D.C.

• Porter, James David, 1828-1912. United States Assistant Secretary of State under President Grover Cleveland and Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard, 1885-1887. Governor of Tennessee, 1875-1879.

• Sickels and Hickcox. Law firm. Consisted of D.K. Sickels, a prominent land attorney, and J.H. Hickcox, who went into the practice law after leaving his position at the General Land Office.
• Thomas, B.F. (Benjamin Franklin), 1860-1914. Tennessee lawyer who purchased bottling rights to Coca-Cola in 1899. Known as a “Cole pioneer;” founded the Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

• Unruh, Hiram A. Nephew of E.J. Baldwin’s first wife Sarah Ann Unruh (Baldwin and Sarah divorced in 1862). Baldwin’s ranch manager and business agent; executor of Baldwin’s estate. Served on Arcadia City Council from 1904-1912.

• Van Dyke, William M. Son of Walter Van Dyke. Attended the University of California, Berkeley. Served as Clerk of the U.S. Circuit Court, Southern District of California, in the 1880s.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged alphabetically by author. Items with an unknown creator are located at the beginning of the collection.

A detailed container list is available through the Manuscripts Department.

Personal Names
Baldwin, Elias Jackson, 1828-1909.
Hitchcock, Henry, 1829-1902.
Lee, Bradner, 1850-1925.
Porter, James D. (James Davis), 1828-1912.
Van Dyke, Walter, 1823-1905.
Wells, G. Wiley (Guliford Wiley), 1840-1909.

Corporate Names
Southern Pacific Railroad Company.
Wells, Van Dyke, and Lee.

Subjects
Custody of children -- United States
Divorce -- Costs
Divorce -- Law and legislation -- California
Indians -- Land tenure.
Law firms.
Lawyers -- Fees -- United States
Mining claims -- United States
Patent laws and legislation -- United States -- Cases
Probate laws and practice -- California
Railroads -- California
Water rights -- California
Women -- California

Geographic Areas
California -- History -- 1850-1950
Los Angeles (Calif.) -- History

Genre
Letters (correspondence) -- California -- 19th century.
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<th>Correspondence: Heath-Jones</th>
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