A guide to the John C. Brethauer journal of the 1887 voyage of the Vanderbilt (built 1867; schooner, 2m), 1887

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A Guide to the John C. Brethauer journal of the 1887 voyage of the Vanderbilt (built 1867; schooner, 2m)

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Abstract: The John C. Brethauer journal of the 1887 voyage of the schooner Vanderbilt consists of a handwritten journal of an able seaman engaged in an illegal seal hunting expedition, and 14 pressed botanical specimens removed from the pages of the journal.
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Acquisition Information
SAFR-02232
The Journal was kept in the possession of the family of until its donation by the creator's grand niece in 2012.

Historical or Biographical Note
The John C. Brethauer journal of the 1887 voyage of the VANDERBILT is a semi-daily account of the life and work of the captain and crew of a schooner in the Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean and Bering Strait, engaged in an illegal seal hunting expedition in the spring and summer of 1887.

John C. Brethauer's personal journal of his nine month illegal seal hunting expedition aboard the American schooner VANDERBILT, sailing from San Francisco in the spring and summer of 1887, is an extremely interesting and valuable look into the day to day operations of American seal hunters at the turn of the nineteenth-century. It includes graphic descriptions of the killing of seals, and sea-lions, and the methods of the hunt. It also includes the ship's efforts to avoid detection, and personal reflections of Brethauer on his shipmates, two of whom lose their life, when their small hunting boat is lost in the fog and storms of the Bering Sea. The journal also describes a near mutiny of the crew, and the cruelty of the Captain who at one point holds a gun to Brethauer's head when he imagines a slight. The journal also describe a hand
to hand knife fight between the Captain and the cook at the end of the voyage when the ship is nearly out of provisions and the crew is starving. It is not all gloom however, as Brethauer describes the beauty of Victoria, British Columbia where the seal skins were sold, and the daily life at sea for a sailor with a weather eye. He also records the chanteys that the men sing, describes the operations of a sailing ship, and captures the essence of life aboard a hard working schooner in the North Pacific in the 1880s. Born in 1862, Brethauer was a native New Yorker. He had done some whaling and fishing in the Northern Atlantic, but came to California as a teenager in order to experience the Bering Sea. After this voyage, he returned to New York, got his Harbor Pilot’s license and eventually retired to Tampa Florida, where he lived until 1956.

**Collection Scope and Content**

The John C. Brethauer journal of the 1887 voyage of the schooner Vanderbilt consists of a handwritten journal of an able seaman engaged in an illegal seal hunting expedition, and 14 pressed botanical specimens removed from the pages of the journal.

The Journal is in poor condition, and is contained in an envelope, its 101 individual pages, including the cover, and each of the botanical specimens have been digitally photographed. The photographs are stored on a CD-Rom available for review.

**Collection Arrangement**

Housed in one box containing the journal in one envelope, 14 botanical specimens in another envelope and one CD-Rom, available for review, in a four flap envelope.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Fur Trade--Bering Strait Region--History--19th century
Seal hunting ships
Brethauer, John C.
Vanderbilt (built 1867; schooner, 2m)
Bering Sea
Diaries Journals (accounts)
Sailors
Sailing