Guide to the Alexander W. Chase Overland Journal

Collection number: MS-R 61

Special Collections and Archives
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Descriptive Summary
Title: Alexander W. Chase overland journal,
Date (inclusive): 1861
Collection number: MS-R061
Creator: Chase, Alexander W. (Alexander Wells), 1843-1888
Extent: 0.2 linear feet (1 box)
Repository: University of California, Irvine. Library. Special Collections and Archives.
Irvine, California 92623-9557
Abstract: The illustrated holograph journal of Alexander W. Chase documenting his family's overland journey from Iowa to California by covered wagon from May to August 1861. The illustrations include both pencil sketches and watercolors. The journal is accompanied by 43 loose watercolor illustrations by Chase that correspond to events or scenery described in the journal. As a first-hand account of a pioneer journey over the Great Plains in mid-nineteenth-century America, the journal provides both textual and visual documentation on the landscape, wildlife, and Native American population of this time period. An informal transcription of the journal produced by UCI staff is available for consultation.
Language: English.
Access
Collection is open for research.
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Preferred Citation

Guide to the Alexander W. Chase Overland Journal, 1861

For the benefit of current and future researchers, please cite any additional information about sources consulted in this collection, including permanent URLs, item or folder descriptions, and box/folder locations.

**Acquisition Information**


**Processing History**

Initial processing by Special Collections staff. Processing completed by Su Kim Chung in 1998.

**Biography**

Born in 1843, Alexander Wells Chase was 18 years old at the time he made the overland journey across the Great Plains with his family. In 1874 Chase married Isabel Frances Dickerson, and they had two children, Bertha Griffith Chase and Alexandra Wells Chase. He died in 1888.

A family genealogy and a scanned photograph of Alexander Chase provided by the donor are available in folder 5 of the collection. Printouts of digital (JPEG) files of Chase family photos supplied by the donor are in folder 4 of the collection.

**Collection Scope and Content Summary**

The illustrated holograph journal of Alexander W. Chase documenting his family’s overland journey from Iowa to California by covered wagon from May to August 1861. The illustrations include both pencil sketches and watercolors. The journal is accompanied by 43 loose watercolor illustrations by Chase that correspond to events or scenery described in the journal. As a first-hand account of a pioneer journey over the Great Plains in mid-nineteenth-century America, the journal provides both textual and visual documentation on the landscape, wildlife, and Native American population of this time period. An informal transcription of the journal produced by UCI staff is available for consultation.

Geographic features described in the journal include the Platte River, Black Hills, Rocky Mountains, Sweetwater Mountains, Castle Rock, Fort Laramie, American Falls, Snake River, Blackfoot River, Soda Lakes, Carson River, Humboldt River, and the Humboldt Mountains. The author also describes encounters with local wildlife such as antelope, buffalo, elk, prairie dogs, wolves, and coyotes. Flora and fauna of the Great Plains, including sage, prickly pear, gooseberries, and a wide variety of trees, are mentioned in Chase's narrative as well. The family’s encounters with Native American tribes such as the Pawnee, Sioux, Cheyenne, Shoshone, and Digger Indians are also documented.

Contemporary historical events are also documented in the journal. Chase's narrative begins with a preamble mentioning the Civil War, and some entries describe news the family has received on the war's progress during the course of the journey. Other entries describe encounters with the Mormon wagon trains traveling over the Great Plains, while yet another entry notes the sudden appearance of a comet on the horizon.

The accompanying loose watercolors depict persons, events, and geographic features that correspond with various journal entries. Chase’s descriptive captions on the individual watercolors were used to formulate the container list.

**Related Collections**


**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Overland journeys to the Pacific--Archival resources.
Frontier and pioneer life--Great Plains--Archival resources.
Indians of North America--Great Plains--Archival resources.
Great Plains--Description and travel--Archival resources.
California--Description and travel--Archival resources.
West (U.S.)--Description and travel--Archival resources.

**Genres and Forms of Materials**

Overland journals.
Watercolors.
Guide to the Alexander W. Chase
Overland Journal, 1861

MS-R061

Collection Contents

Box : Folder 1 : 1

Journal, 1861

Box : Folder 1 : 2

Watercolor drawings, 1861.

Physical Description: 43 items.

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 1. When the shore is won at last . . .

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 2. Sketch book, 1861

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 3. The overland route to California

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 4. Camped

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 5. Buffalo hunt

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 6. Pawnees

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 7. Castle Rock

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 8. Court House Rock

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 9. Ancient bluff ruins

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 10. Chimney Rock

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 11. Sioux lodges

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 12. Fire in the Black Hills

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 13. Red Buttes

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 14. Drowning and midnight burial of the drowned man

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 15. Sweetwater

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 16. Sweetwater Mountains

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 17. Independence Rock

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 18. Devil's Gate

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 19. Bald Mountain

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 20. Sweetwater Peaks

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 21. Sweetwater Gap and Castles

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 22. Rocky Mountains

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 23. Wind River Mountains

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 24. Mountain cascade

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 25. Mountain camp

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 26. Green River Mountains

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 27. Salt River Valley

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 28. American Falls

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 29. Battlement Rocks

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 30. City of Rocks

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 31. Devil's Sugar Bowl

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 32. Devil's Pulpit

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 33. Devil's Arbor

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 34. Humboldt Mountains

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 35. Red Rocks on Humboldt Sink

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 36. Crossing the desert

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 37. Lake Bigler [i.e., Lake Tahoe]

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 38. Lake Bigler from the Summit

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 39. Slippery Rocks

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 40. California sketches

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 41. Implements of the trade

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 42. Monte Diabolo from Sacramento River, Lancaster, and Sacramento before the flood

Box : Folder 1 : 2

No. 43. Petaluma

Box : Folder 1 : 3

Transcript of journal, unedited draft.

Physical Description: 47 pages.

Box : Folder 1 : 4

Printouts of digital (JPEG) files of Chase family photographs supplied by donor, ca. 1840-ca. 1920.

Physical Description: 9 items.

Box : Folder 1 : 5

Genealogy for and photocopy of a scanned photograph of Alexander Wells Chase