Finding Aid for the Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company records, 1889-1991

Processed by Courtney Dean in the Center for Primary Research and Training (CFPRT), with assistance from Jillian Cuellar, November 30, 2012; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

The processing of this collection was generously supported by Arcadia funds.

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company records
Date (inclusive): 1889-1991; Bulk, 1908-1922
Collection number: 1993
Creator: Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company
Extent: 4 document boxes (23.4 linear ft.) 2 half document boxes, 1 flat box, 3 oversize flat boxes, 9 oversize map boxes

Abstract: The Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company was formed by Herman Henry Kerckhoff in Los Angeles in 1912. The company owned 2,450-acres of mining property in the Avawatz Mountains, located in the Mojave Desert of San Bernardino County. In 2011 the Wilderness Land Trust, a Colorado non-profit corporation, purchased the Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company and donated the land to the United States Bureau of Land Management for preservation. The collection contains a rich assortment of corporate document books, ledgers, and stock books; geologic and economic reports; mining-related government publications and newspaper articles; and geologic, structural, property, and railroad maps, tracing the history of this early southern California mining enterprise. Materials date from 1889 to 1991, with the bulk of the collection dating from 1908 to 1922.

Language: Finding aid is written in English.
Language of the Material: Materials are in English.
Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.
Los Angeles, California 90095-1575

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

Restrictions on Access
Open for research. STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.

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Provenance/Source of Acquisition
This collection was donated by the Wilderness Land Trust in 2012.

Processing Note
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Preferred Citation
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Biography/History
The Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company was formed in June of 1912 by Herman Henry Kerckhoff, a member of the prominent Los Angeles Kerckhoff family. Avawatz Salt and Gypsum was the final amalgamation of several earlier companies including the Death Valley Chemical Company (1908-1911), Avawatz Salt Company (1911-1912), and Avawatz Gypsum Company (1910-1912). The company owned 2,450 acres of land on the northeast edge of the Avawatz Mountains, at the southern end of Death Valley. This included, as of 1917, 50 mining claims and mineral deposits of gypsum, rock salt, and celestite. Kerckhoff intended to transport gypsum, the main ingredient in cement and wall plaster, from the Avawatz mines to nearby Los Angeles where it could be utilized in the ongoing building boom. To this end, the Amargosa Valley Railroad Company was formed in 1917 to construct a sixteen mile line connecting the Avawatz mines to the main railway leading to Los Angeles. Despite the Avawatz Company’s large investment in engineering reports and land surveys, the outbreak of World War I made securing financing for the railroad difficult and it was never completed. Without the railroad connecting the remote mines to Los Angeles, Avawatz Company activity was for the most part halted. In 2011 the Wildness Land Trust, a Colorado nonprofit which buys and protects wilderness land, purchased the Avawatz Salt and Gypsum
Company from the Kerckhoff family and subsequently donated the land to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management. The land is now part of the Death Valley Wilderness Study Area and falls within the boundaries of land which will be permanently preserved by Senator Diane Feinstein’s pending California Desert Protection Act.

Scope and Content
This collection contains an assortment of corporate document books, ledgers, stock books, legal documents, and occasional correspondence from the Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company and its separate but related corporations - the Death Valley Chemical Company, Avawatz Salt Company, Avawatz Gypsum Company, Avawatz Sales Company, and the Amargosa Valley Railroad Company. Also included are mining-related government publications and newspaper articles; and a wealth of large geologic, structural, property, and railroad maps illustrating Avawatz land and the proposed Amargosa Valley Railroad. Particularly notable are several Avawatz commissioned economic and geologic reports featuring financial projections, photographs of the land, and detailed maps. Materials date from 1889 to 1991, with the bulk of the collection dating from ca. 1908 to 1922.

Organization and Arrangement
Arranged in the following series:
- Series 1: Business records, 1889-1991
- Series 2: Reports and resource materials, 1908-1989
- Series 3: Maps, 1911-1989

Series 1 is arranged chronologically by creating agency. Series 2 and 3 are arranged alphabetically.

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

Subjects
Wilderness Land Trust.

Related Material
- Bodie Consolidated Mining Company Collection. California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, California.
- Mining Companies Miscellany, California State Library. Box Number: 930-933
- Patterson Mining Collection- Maps, 1848-1936. The Society of California Pioneers.


Scope and Content
Items comprising this series date from 1889-1991, with the bulk of the material dating from before 1922. The series consists of business records from The Death Valley Chemical Company, Avawatz Salt Company, Avawatz Gypsum Company, Avawatz Sales Company, and their amalgamation - the Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company. Records primarily take the form of bound volumes and include by-laws, meeting minutes, stock books, corporation books, ledgers, and journals. Also included are several volumes of legal abstracts from the San Bernardino Abstract Company, compiled at the request of the Death Valley Chemical Company in 1909. Additional loose documentation encompasses legal and financial papers such as deeds, location notices, proof of labor notices, real estate agreements, and correspondence.

Box 1, Folder 1
- Death Valley Chemical Company: By-laws. 1908.

Box 1, Folder 2
- Death Valley Chemical Company: Copy of by-laws. 1908.

Box 1, Folder 3
- Death Valley Chemical Company: Legal documents, resolutions, and other material. 1908-1911.

Box 7
- Death Valley Chemical Company: Meeting minutes. 1908-1911.

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 8

Box 1, Folder 5
- Death Valley Chemical Company: Stock ledger. 1908-1911.

Box 1, Folder 6

Box 1, Folder 7

Box 2, Folder 1

Box 2, Folder 2
Box 2, Folder 3  
**Avawatz**: Proof of labor. 1908-1922.

Box 2, Folder 4  
**Avawatz**: Legal documents and correspondence. 1909-1917.

Box 2, Folder 5  
**Avawatz**: Location notices. 1909-1917.

Box 2, Folder 6  
**Avawatz Salt Company**: Corporation book. 1910-1912.

**Scope and Content**
Contains inserted journal entries from Avawatz Gypsum Company.

Box 5, Folder 1  
**Avawatz Salt Company**: Letter sent. 1911 April 28.

Box 2, Folder 7  
**Avawatz Sales Company**: Corporation book. 1912-1913.

Box 9  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Cash records. 1912-1913.

Box 9  

Box 3, Folder 1  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Financial records. 1913-1914.

Box 5, Folder 2  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Deed to Big Nitre and Gypsum King. 1917 August.

Box 5, Folder 3  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Original location notices. 1917 August.

Box 10  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Stock book. 1917.

Box 10  

Box 10  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Journal 1-A. 1917-1921.

Box 3, Folder 2  
**Avawatz Salt and Gypsum Company**: Real estate agreements. 1919.

Box 3, Folder 3  

Box 3, Folder 4  
**Amargosa Valley Railroad Company**: Legal documents and report. 1917-1919.

**Series 2: Reports and resource materials. 1909-1975.**

**Scope and Content**
This series consists of reports and resource materials dating from ca. 1908-1989, including government-issued bulletins and mineral reports, a book on mining law, and a magazine on excavation, as well as a collection of mining-related newspaper clippings. Also included are several early Avawatz commissioned geologic and economic reports which contain financial projections, photographs, and maps. Of particular note is the Lewis and Johnson Report (Box 8) for which many of the large maps in the collection were created. Later reproductions of some of these reports are also present and feature slightly different enclosures.

Box 5, Folder 4  
**American Mining Law.** 1931.

Box 3, Folder 5  

Box 3, Folder 6  

Box 5, Folder 5  
**Department of the Interior: Bulletins.** 1917-1923.

Box 5, Folder 6  
**Department of the Interior: Mineral resources.** 1910-1936.

Box 5, Folder 7  
**Excavating Engineer** magazine. 1939 February.

Box 4, Folder 4  
**Fault map of California.** 1975.

Box 5, Folder 8  
**Government publications.** 1939-1942.

Box 8  
Lewis and Johnson Report. 1911.

Box 5, Folder 9  

Box 3, Folder 7  

Box 3, Folder 8  

Box 5, Folder 10  

Box 3, Folder 9  
**Resume of Information and Reports on Properties.** circa 1914.

Box 6, Folder 1  
**Scrapbook of newspaper clippings.** 1911-1942.

Box 6, Folder 2  
**State Mineralogist reports.** 1930-1946.

Box 3, Folder 10  

Scope and Content
Maps comprising this series were presumably commissioned by the Avawatz Company and include a number of large geologic, structural, property, and Union Pacific Railroad maps of Avawatz land. Also included are blueprints for proposed alterations to Herman Henry Kerckhoff’s Laguna Niguel home in the 1970s. The majority of the items are in rolls, but a smaller amount of legal and letter size copies are also present, as are slides of the Union Pacific maps. Maps primarily date from 1911 or 1955, with reproductions dating into the 1980s. The 1911 maps accompanied the Lewis and Johnson Report (Box 8) of the same year.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements
Maps appear in several formats including white paper, linen, blueprint, negatives, auto positives, van dyke prints, transparencies, and photo prints. Some maps contain color.

Box 11
31655 Crystal Sands Drive alterations. circa 1972.
Scope and Content
Contains annotated blueprints and notes for additions to H.H. Kerckhoff Jr.’s home. 12 items.

Box 11
Alteration Laguna Niguel. 1970s.
Scope and Content
Contains blueprints and notes for H.H. Kerckhoff Jr.’s home. 6 items.

Box 12
Avawatz entire property. circa 1942.
Scope and Content
10” x 19” small tracing on linen showing claim boundaries. 10” x 19” black negative, transparency copy, copy of positive showing whole property with section lines. Reductions of full size map including dimensions and section lines. 8 items.

Box 12
Avawatz map of Valley and Boston. 1942.
Scope and Content
Linen. Final revision April 17, 1942. 1 item.

Box 3, Folder 11
Avawatz maps (assorted copies). 1980s.
Scope and Content
Includes copies of drilling logs.

Box 4, Folder 1
Avawatz maps: Boston-Valley. 1970s.
Scope and Content
Includes newspaper clippings.

Box 4, Folder 2
Avawatz maps: Outline. 1980s.
Scope and Content
Includes draft correspondence and newsletter.

Box 4, Folder 3
Avawatz property map. undated.
Scope and Content
Folded large reproduction. 1 item.

Box 15
Avawatz Union Pacific maps. circa 1955.
Scope and Content
Colored prints and auto positives. 11 items.
Box 11
Cross section structural and geologic map- Lewis and Johnson Report. 1911 June.
Scope and Content
White paper-blue line and black negative maps as used with the Lewis and Johnson report. Dated June 1911 but most likely reproductions. 3 items.

Box 11
Geologic and structural map- Lewis and Johnson Report. 1911 June.
Scope and Content
Original print 8.5" x 18" from June 1911. Photo print copy 12" x 24", undated. 2 items.

Box 19
Lewis and Johnson prints of negatives, entire property and cross sections. 1911 June.
Scope and Content
Linen and white prints, negative, and transparency. Dated June 1911 but may be reproductions. 15 items.

Box 13
Map of entire property showing section lines. undated.
Scope and Content
Black and white copies. 2 items.

Box 17
Maps of entire Avawatz properties- original and autopsitive. undated.
Scope and Content
Avawatz properties full size black line on white, auto positive, and van dyke print for wet blue line. 6 items.

Box 19
Original tracing structural sections accompanying report of Lewis and Johnson. 1911 June.
Scope and Content
White paper-blue line. 2 items.

Box 13
Print of original map (old). circa 1931.
Scope and Content

Box 6, Folder 3
Slides of Union Pacific Railroad map. 1979 April.

Box 16
Survey of proposed railroad. undated.
Scope and Content
Linen. 1 item.

Box 16
Uncolored map- Lewis and Johnson Report. 1911 June.
Scope and Content
Structural sections, geologic and structural, and structural sections small with color. Dated June 1911 but most likely reproductions. 3 items.

Box 18
Union Pacific Railroad prints of colored drawings and Jumbo Salt Basin. 1955.
Scope and Content

Box 14
Union Pacific Report full size prints, no coloring. 1955.
Scope and Content
Includes D-1 Salt Basin, D-2 Boston-Valley (colored), D-3 Jumbo, D-4 West End, D-5 West End Celestite. Dated 1955 but may be reproductions. 20 items.