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## **Finding Aid for the California land claims, v. 1-24, and miscellaneous volumes, undated**

Processed by UCLA Library Special Collections staff; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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### **Descriptive Summary**

**Title:** California land claims, v. 1-24, and miscellaneous volumes

**Date (inclusive):** undated

**Collection number:** 170/136

**Extent:** 28 leaves : paper ; 25 x 20 cm

**Abstract:** This is an augmented index to the California Land Claims, v. 1-24, a record of claimants and briefs for ranchos in the 1850s and 1860s.

**Language:** Finding aid is written 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 the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

#### **Restrictions on Access**

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE AT SRLF: Open for research. Advance notice required for access. Contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.

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#### **Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], California land claims, v. 1-24, and miscellaneous volumes (Collection 170/136). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

#### **UCLA Catalog Record ID**

UCLA Catalog Record ID: [4230403](#)

#### **Biography**

When the United States took possession of California and other Mexican lands in 1848, it was bound by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to honor the legitimate land claims of Mexican citizens residing in those captured territories. In order to investigate and confirm titles in California, American officials acquired the provincial records of the Spanish and Mexican governments in Monterey. Those records, most of which were transferred to the U. S. Surveyor General's Office in San Francisco, included land deeds, sketch-maps (diseños), and various other documents. The Land Act of 1851 established a Board of Land Commissioners to review these records and adjudicate claims, and charged the Surveyor General with surveying confirmed land grants.

Additionally, to determine the validity of Spanish and Mexican land grants in California, Congress set up a Board of Land Commissioners. Unless grantees presented in two years evidence supporting their title, the property would automatically pass into the public domain. Although the Land Commission eventually confirmed 604 of 813 claims, the cost of litigation forced most Californios to lose their lands. Government attorneys appealed 417 claims, out of a total of 813. Some cases were appealed several times; appeals prolonged each litigation process for an average of seventeen years. Questions of title were settled by the Federal courts, and authority to segregate claims judicially confirmed was vested in the proper executive officers of the United States.

The remainder of privately owned Mexican territory annexed to the United States was settled under the the eighth section of the act of July 22, 1854, which made it the duty of the surveyor-general to ascertain the origin, nature, character, and extent of all claims to lands under the laws, usages, and customs of Spain and Mexico and to report the conclusions to Congress. The law did not impose a limitation of time in the presentation of claims or a penalty for failure to present. In the next thirty years, more than one thousand claims had been filed with the surveyor-general, of which less than one hundred and fifty had been reported to Congress, and of that number, Congress acted upon seventy-one. Under the law, only copies of the original title papers were submitted to Congress. Of the 813 grants ultimately claimed, the land commission approved only 553.

#### **Scope and Content**

This short, edited index contains an alphabetized list of land claimants, with the corresponding name of the rancho that he or she claimed to own in their brief. Additional notations in red ink and pencil have been added to the typed text, with a note on the title page explaining the meanings of the marks. These notations include: an indicator that the rancho in question has a corresponding map in a collection called "California land claims maps"; United States Land Commission

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numbers, as listed in the Appendix to Ogden Hoffman's Reports of Land Cases; and Supreme Court numbers. Starting on page 24, the index also lists miscellaneous public lands, including swamps, water front property, and school areas, with references to dated legal documents that pertain to each type of land.

**Indexing Terms**

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

**Subjects**

Land grants--California.

Land titles--California.

**Genres and Forms of Material**

Manuscripts.

**Related Material**

[Bound Manuscripts Collection \(Collection 170\)](#) . Available at the UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

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