Hermann C. Raebel papers, 1865-1997

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Online finding aid last updated 26 July 2017.
Title: Hermann C. Raebel papers
Collection number: 522
Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 1 oversize box
Date: 1865-1997
Abstract: Hermann C. Raebel Jr. (1848-1869) was born in Leipzig, Germany. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy (1866). While on maneuvers off the coast of Brazil in 1866, received a commission as ensign. He painted watercolors and wrote letters home while serving on several U.S. Navy ships along the west coast of South America (1866-69). The collection contains 46 about 10 x 6 watercolors of scenes from the east coast of South America, along with color photocopies.

Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. All requests to access special collections materials must be made in advance through our electronic paging system using the request button located on this page.

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Provenance/Source of Acquisition

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Hermann C. Raebel Papers (Collection 522). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Biography
Hermann C. Raebel Jr. was born in 1848 in Leipzig, Germany; at age 9, he came to the U.S. with his family; graduated from high school in 1862 in Cleveland, Ohio at age 14, then entered the U.S. Naval Academy, graduating in 1866; while on maneuvers off the coast of Brazil in 1866, received a commission as ensign; painted watercolors and wrote letters home while serving on several U.S. Navy ships along the west coast of South America, 1866-69; died on June 25, 1869 in the hospital ship Illinois in New York Harbor after contracting yellow fever in the Caribbean.

Biographical Narrative from original legacy finding aid
Hermann C. Raebel Jr. was born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1848 (exact date unknown). His family emigrated to the United States in 1857, when he was 9 years old. In 1862, at the age of 14, Raebel graduated from high school in Cleveland, Ohio. That same year he entered the U.S. Naval Academy, and graduated from there in 1866. On November 1, 1866, aged 18, and whilst on maneuvers off the coast of Brazil, Raebel received a commission as Ensign in the U.S. Navy from President Andrew Johnson. Reputedly that made him the youngest officer in the Navy at the time. Raebel painted his watercolors and wrote the letters that are recorded in the collection by his father whilst serving on several U.S. Navy ships up and down the coast of South America between 1866 and 1869. In 1869 Raebel caught yellow fever in the Caribbean and on June 25 died in the hospital ship Illinois in New York Harbor. He was 21 years old.

Scope and Content
Collection contains 46 about 10 x 6 watercolors of scenes from the east coast of South America, along with color photocopies. Also contains a letter to his sister, and a notebook in which his father copied his letters. These are in German, but a translation of them was done by family members in the late 1950s. Collection also contains photographs of Raebel, his obituary from a German-American newspaper, and his original 1866 commission from President Andrew Johnson to be an ensign in the U.S. Navy.

Scope and Content note from legacy finding aid
This is a small collection whose main features are 46 watercolors painted by Raebel on his journeys up and down the east coast of South America, and copies of his letters to his father about his journeys. The watercolors, all about 10 x 6, are mainly of views of the Brazilian coast and coastal towns. There are also several views of Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Rio Negro in Patagonia. Raebel wrote a series of letters to his father about his naval training and travels, which his father
copied in to a notebook which is in the collection. He letters were all in German, as that is all his father understood, but there is also a translation of them done by family members in the late 1950’s. Other items in the collection include photographs of Raebel, alone and with Navy colleagues, and his original commission from President Johnson.

**Organization and Arrangement**

Arranged in the following series:

1. Watercolors (Box 1).
2. Photographs (Box 1).
3. Correspondence (Box 1).
4. Obituary (Box 1).
5. Family history (Box 2).
6. Navy commission (Box 2).

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Raebel, Hermann C., 1848-1869--Archives.
Diaries.
United States. Navy Department--Officers--Archives.
Watercolorists--United States--Archives.

**Watercolors**

Box 1, Folder 1  
Sketches. H.C. Raebel. 2 ships rolling in heavy seas. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 2  
Heidelberg Castle. December 1865.

Box 1, Folder 3  

Box 1, Folder 4  

Box 1, Folder 5  
[No caption] Sailors in a ship's rigging. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 6  
[No caption] Sailors manning a ship's cannon. January 8, 1866.

Box 1, Folder 7  

Box 1, Folder 8  
Cobras Island. Rio de Janeiro. (?) January 15, 1866

Box 1, Folder 9  
Embrassons-nous encore! Botafoga Bay - Rio. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 10  
Characteristic scene in the streets of Rio. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 11  

Box 1, Folder 12  
Anhatonurim Island. St. Catherine, Brazil. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 13  
Santos - Brazil. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 14  
The Haunted House at Santos. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 15  

Box 1, Folder 16  
Montevideo, Uruguay. S.A. . March 14, 1866

Box 1, Folder 17  
Rio Tigrí Buenos Ayres. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 18  
Rio Tigrí Buenos Ayres. April 18, 1866.

Box 1, Folder 19  

Box 1, Folder 20  
Martin Garcia' Island. [Uruguay] April 19, 1866.

Box 1, Folder 21  
(Higueritas) Gaucho’s domicile. Nueva Palmyra April 22, 1866.

Box 1, Folder 22  

Box 1, Folder 23  
[No caption] U.S. ship tied up at dock.

Box 1, Folder 24  

Box 1, Folder 25  
Colonía. Uruguay. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 26  

Box 1, Folder 27  
Bahia, Brazil.

Box 1, Folder 28  
[No caption] Sailors in rowing boat. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 29  
Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust! Isla Grande. Brazil. October 1, 1866.

Box 1, Folder 30  

Box 1, Folder 31  

Box 1, Folder 32  

Box 1, Folder 33  
Light House on the Breakwater in Pernambuco, Brazil. n.d.

Box 1, Folder 34  
Shipping a sea on board U.S.S. Nipsic. n.d.
Patagonas - North side of Rio Negro. n.d.
South side of Rio Negro - Patagonia. n.d.
Mont Cerro - Montevideo. n.d.
Road leading to the [?], July 10, 1868. Union [?] Road.
The cascatina in Petropolis, Brazil. July 10, 1868.
Scene from the Grand Cascatina. Also an unfinished sketch of the same area. July 12, 1868.
[No caption] Armored warship in bay. n.d.
[No caption] View of bay and mountains from the sea. n.d.
[No caption] View of bay from the sea with fortress on hill in background. Signed:
H.C. Raebel.
Inundation. n.d.
[No caption] Sailing ship with moon. n.d.
Carte-de-visite portrait of Hermann Raebel in naval uniform.
Carte-de-visite photographs (2) of Raebel and two fellow naval officers.
Carte-de-visite photograph of an unidentified warship.
Letter from Raebel, at the U.S. Naval Academy in Newport, to his sister. n.d.
Notebook into which Gustav Raebel copied his son Hermann's letters about his naval training and trips to South America.
Translation of Hermann's letters to his father by family members in the 1950s.
Scope and Content Note
Also, color photocopies of all Raebel's watercolors.
Raebel's obituary from a Cleveland, Ohio German-American newspaper.
2 copies of Raebel's family tree.
Raebel's commission from President Andrew Johnson to be an ensign in the U.S. Navy. December 20, 1866.