Finding Aid for the Abel Stearns [Letters], 1861-1865

Cataloged by Citlali Sosa-Riddell, with assistance from Laurel McPhee; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Abel Stearns [Letters]
Date (inclusive): 1861-1865
Collection number: 170/590
Creator: Stearns, Abel, 1798-1871
Extent: [22], 484 leaves : paper ; 27.5 x 22 cm
Abstract: This manuscript contains copies of correspondence from cattleman Abel Stearns, dated 1861 to 1865. Stearns, an American who married into a Californio family, had a unique perspective on the relationship between Mexico and the United States. The letters relate to his personal, political and commercial life, and the lives of his relatives, the Bandinis.
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
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Provenance/Source of Acquisition
Gift of John Walton Caughey.
Processing Note
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Preferred Citation
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Biography
Abel Stearns (1798-1871) was born in Lunenberg, Massachusetts. As a young man he spent some years at sea, taking part in the trade with South America and China. About 1826 he arrived in Mexico, and during his residence there, he became a naturalized citizen. Stearns moved to Los Angeles in 1829, and became a central figure in commerce and the political life of the pueblo. Stearns expanded his trading and merchandizing activities into cattle ranching, mining, and politics, and became a wealthy and influential landholder. Stearns became known for his efforts to annex San Pedro to Los Angeles, and connecting a stage route between the two areas. Highlights of his political career include his service as the first alcalde, or mayor, of Los Angeles during the Mexican period, and President of Los Angeles under American rule. Stearns's commercial and social interests were enhanced by his marriage to Arcadia Bandini, a member of the land-rich Bandini family of California. However, the severe drought of 1862-1864 debilitated his ranching enterprises. By 1868, Stearns had suffered such financial losses that he was forced to sell most of his land holdings to the trust controlling the Stearns Ranchos Company. Stearns died in 1871.
Scope and Content
Copies of approximately 327 letters from Abel Stearns, documenting his personal, political, and commercial activities in Los Angeles and Los Alamitos during the Civil War. The letters are badly faded, and many are illegible. Correspondents include Pio Pico, Honorable J.A. McDougall, and Jose Thompson. Letters are bound into the manuscript chronologically, from January 1861 to August 1865.
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Genres and Forms of Material
Related Material

Bound Manuscripts Collection (Collection 170). Available at UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.