

Bancroft Family Papers

Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego

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9500 Gilman Drive

La Jolla 92093-0175

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URL: <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/collections/sca/index.html>

Descriptive Summary

Languages: English

Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego

9500 Gilman Drive

La Jolla 92093-0175

Title: Bancroft Family Papers

Creator: Bancroft family

Identifier/Call Number: MSS 0039

Physical Description: 1.15 Linear feet(4 archives boxes and 1 art bin item)

Date (inclusive): 1844-1882

Abstract: A small collection of family papers of book dealer and historian Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832-1918). The collection consists of letters from his first wife, Emily Ketchum, to her family, 1859-1869; and to her sister, Mrs. Coit, 1860-1869. It also includes the journal of Bancroft's daughter, Kate, 1874, describing her travels to the California missions and her visit to the Vallejo family in Sonoma in 1874, and correspondence and documents relating to the Civil War activities of General Henry Clay Pleasants and Lt. Charles Israel Pleasants.

Scope and Content of Collection

A small collection of family papers of book dealer and historian Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832-1918). The collection consists of letters from his first wife, Emily Ketchum, to her family, 1859-1869; and to her sister, Mrs. Coit, 1860-1869. It also includes the journal of Bancroft's daughter, Kate, 1874, describing her travels to the California missions and her visit to the Vallejo family in Sonoma in 1874, and correspondence and documents relating to the Civil War activities of General Henry Clay Pleasants and Lt. Charles Israel Pleasants.

Arranged in three series: 1) CORRESPONDENCE & PORTRAIT, 2) KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL, and 3) PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS.

Biography

Hubert Howe Bancroft (1832-1918) was a Pacific Coast historian, book dealer, bibliophile, and entrepreneur. Having no formal schooling, Bancroft educated himself through travel and reading. A native of Granville, Ohio, he began his career as a bookstore clerk in Buffalo, New York. He came to California in 1852, and in 1856 he opened a successful bookstore in San Francisco with his brother Albert. By 1870 Bancroft had purchased a five-story building and had enlarged his business to include the selling of sheet music, pianos, and organs. His business also included facilities for printing, engraving, lithography, and bookbinding. At one time Bancroft's business was the largest and foremost bookselling concern west of Chicago.

The entire fifth floor of Bancroft's San Francisco store was occupied by his library, which eventually contained over 60,000 works pertaining to Pacific Coast History. Drawing on these and other resources, Bancroft set out to write a comprehensive history of the Western United States. To assist him with this task he hired researchers and writers, some of whom authored works that appeared under Bancroft's name. When completed, Bancroft's 39-volume history became a standard reference source, and included *Native Races of the Pacific States* (5 volumes, 1874-1876), and *History of the Pacific States of North America* (21 volumes, 1882-1890). In 1905 the University of California acquired the author's vast library, which became the nucleus of the present-day Bancroft Library.

Bancroft married Emily Ketchum of Buffalo, New York, in 1859, and the couple had one daughter, Kate, born in 1860. Emily died in 1869, and Bancroft married Matilda Coley Griffing in 1876. This second marriage produced four children: Paul, Griffing, Howe, and Lucy. Hubert Howe Bancroft died in 1918 in Walnut Creek, California, two days after being struck by a street car.

Bancroft's great-granddaughter, Ruth Lineaweaver Swisher, a descendant of Bancroft's daughter Kate, deposited the Bancroft Family Correspondence at the UCSD Library in 1970.

Publication Rights

Publication rights are held by the creator of the collection.

Preferred Citation

Bancroft Family Papers. MSS 39. Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego.

Acquisition Information

Deposit, 1971.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Diaries -- 19th century
California -- Description and travel
Missions -- California
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Description and travel
Bancroft family -- Archives
Pleasants family -- Archive
Bancroft, Emily Ketchum -- Correspondence
Bancroft, Kate -- Correspondence
Pleasants, Henry, 1833-1880
Pleasants, Charles Israel -- Correspondence
Bancroft family -- Correspondence
Bancroft, Hubert Howe, 1832-1918 -- Correspondence
Bancroft, Matilda Griffing -- Correspondence

CORRESPONDENCE & PORTRAIT

Scope and Content of Series

Series 1) CORRESPONDENCE & PORTRAIT: Bound volumes of letters and one portrait. The first group contains letters from the first wife of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Emily, to her family. The first volume of letters date from 1844-1868, the period prior to and after Mrs. Bancroft's marriage. Topics covered in the letters include Emily's schooling at Miss Porter's in Farmington, Connecticut, and Emily's married life in California. Included is a sample of Mrs. Bancroft's calling cards and sketches of floor-plans of her various homes.

The second volume contains letters from Emily Bancroft to her family, 1859-1869. Topics include daily events in family members' lives in Buffalo, the beginnings of the Civil War, and religious beliefs. Most letters reflect the extremely close relationship between Emily and her family. The letters in this volume are not in chronological order.

The third volume of letters are from Emily Bancroft to her sister, Mrs. Kate Coit, and date from 1860-1869. The letters detail Emily's life in California, her travels, and her illnesses. Included are such topics as home management, child-rearing, and Emily's love of singing lessons. Letters from 1866 to 1868 describe Emily's travels in Europe with her husband. In the last letters before her death, in December 1869, Mrs. Bancroft discusses her illness and her expectation of having a child in February of 1870. The letters in this volume were not bound in chronological order.

Another group of letters were written by Emily's daughter, Kate, to Kate's father, Hubert Howe Bancroft. These letters are bound into one volume and date from 1873 to 1882. An occasional letter to "Mama," Kate's stepmother (Mrs. Matilda Griffing Bancroft) can also be found in this volume. One undated letter addressed to "My Dear Darling Angel" may not have been intended for Kate's father or mother.

In the early letters, Kate describes her activities and schooling in San Francisco (1873), but the bulk of her letters were written during her two-year stay in Europe, 1880-1882. During this European tour Kate studied German, French, and voice. Her letters, which are most expressive, reveal Kate as an insecure young woman with little self-esteem, who worshipped her father and desperately sought his approval. Her letters also describe how her family (which included her aunt Liss and uncle Albert Bancroft, with whom she travelled much of the time) spied on and gossiped about her. Kate also discusses her tremendous desire to become a professional singer and reveals her budding romance. Included in this volume is a program from the Roman Carnival, ca. 1882.

The portrait is of an unidentified gentleman.

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- Box 1, Folder 1 **Letters from Emily Ketchum Bancroft to her Family 1844 - 1868**
 General note
 Bound Volume
- Box 2, Folder 1 **Letters to Emily Ketchum Bancroft from her Family 1858 - 1869**
 General note
 Bound Volume
- Box 3, Folder 1 **Letters from Emily Ketchum Bancroft to Mrs. Kate Coit 1860 - 1869**
 General note
 Bound Volume
- Box 4, Folder 1 **Letters from Kate Bancroft 1873 - 1882**
 General note
 Mostly to her Father, Hubert Howe Bancroft, bound volume
- Oversize AB-09-A01 **Portrait of a man undated**
 General
 Framed print of a black-and-white drawing. On deposit from the Bancroft family.

KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL**Scope and Content of Series**

Series 2) KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL: A bound volume divided into two parts. In the first part, Kate describes, often humorously, her travels through the line of missions in Southern California. On this trip, made in 1874, Kate accompanied her father, who collected historical data. In the journal Kate gives excellent descriptions of the mission towns, including San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Gabriel, and provides visual sketches of all the missions she visited. In the second part of her journal Kate details her trip to Sonoma and highlights her visit to the Vallejo family. Overall, Kate Bancroft's journal is an important source for the history of California.

- Box 4, Folder 2 **Journal 1874**  <https://library.ucsd.edu/speccoll/DigitalArchives/mss0039/m39b4f2.pdf>
 General note
 Original bound 2-part volume.

- Box 4, Folder 3-4 **Photocopies of original 1874 journal, Parts 1-2**
PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS

Scope and Content of Series

Series 3) The PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS: Contains photocopies and original documents relating to the Civil War activities of General Henry Pleasants and Lt. Charles Israel Pleasants. Among the materials are Israel's request for leave, his commission, a prescription for medication, and a letter to his "uncle" advising of Israel's death at the Battle of the Wilderness. Also included is a newspaper obituary for General Henry Pleasants.

The relationship between the Pleasants family and the Bancroft family is unclear.

- Box 4, Folder 5 **Pleasants Family Materials**