Register of the Thomas Spalding Wylly Gold Rush Narrative, 1849-1853

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Register of the Thomas Spalding Wylly Gold Rush Narrative, 1849-1853

Collection number: Mss124

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Thomas Spalding Wylly Gold Rush Narrative,
Date (inclusive): 1849-1853
Collection number: Mss124
Creator: Thomas S. Wylly III
Extent: 0.5 linear ft.
Repository: University of the Pacific, Library. Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections
Stockton, CA 95211
Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.
Language: English.

Access
Collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation
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Biography
Thomas Spalding Wylly (1831-1922) was born and raised in coastal Georgia. As an adolescent he read Fremont's accounts of his exploits in the West and resolved to go there himself. His grandfather, Thomas Spalding, was a rich and powerful man who knew Fremont's father-in-law, Thomas Hart Benton. Spalding arranged for Wylly to meet Fremont at Benton's home in Independence, Missouri. When, in the spring of 1849, Wylly arrived at Independence, he found a cholera epidemic raging and both Benton and Fremont gone. Undaunted, he joined a wagon train and came to California by way of Utah and the Mojave Desert, arriving in April 1850.

For two years he mined on Weber Creek near Placerville. Wylly's account of these years is at once vivid, detailed and open-minded.

In 1853 he returned home by way of Nicaragua and resumed the life of a well-to-do cotton planter. Wylly lost his home and slaves during the Civil War and was, for a time, obliged to sell the timber on his lands to make ends meet. Slowly he
recouped his fortunes and ultimately lived a long, productive life, fathering six children and celebrating his sixtieth wedding anniversary in 1914.

Scope and Content
Wylly's 205 page narrative begins with his eighteenth year and ends with his return from Central America to Georgia (1853). His grandson, Thomas Spalding Wylly III, has provided another hundred pages or so of supplementary notes based partly on family oral tradition and partly on reading and on-site research. There are two typescript copies of the narrative. An unbound copy is con-tained in five numbered folders, while a second version, together with eight photographs, a map and Mr. Wylly III's notes, is bound in navy blue cloth with the title “Westward Ho --in '49': Memoirs of Captain Thomas S. Wylly" embossed in gold on the cover.

Box 1: Thomas S. Wylly Gold Rush Narrative, 1849-1853
Folder 1: Introduction & Biographical Sketch
Folder 2: NARRATIVE---pp. 1-63
   pp.1-3------preparation for departure to Independence
   pp.4-10-----trip to Independence
   pp.11-26----Independence to Ft. Laramie
   pp.26-39----Ft. Laramie to Sweetwater R. [w/ digressions back to S. Platte]
   pp.40-46-----South Pass to Salt Lake City
Folder 3: NARRATIVE---pp. 47-107
   pp.47-54-----Salt Lake City
   pp.55-99-----Salt Lake City to Mojave R.
   pp.100-107--Crossing of Mojave Desert
Folder 4: NARRATIVE---pp. 108-167
   pp.108-128--Southern California
   pp.129-139--Los Angeles to Sacramento via the coast
   pp.140-167--Mining at Weber Creek near Placerville
Folder 5: NARRATIVE---pp. 168-end
   pp.168-174--By ship from San Francisco to Nicaragua, 1853
   pp.174-194--Across Nicaragua to San Juan del Monte
   pp.195------By ship from San Juan to Chagres, Panama
   pp.196-199--Panama
   pp.200-201--By ship to New Orleans
   pp.202-205--From New Orleans to Georgia
Volume: NARRATIVE [bound copy]