
Register of the Winkley (John W.) "Major Pierson Barton Reading, California Pioneer"

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Collection number: Mss167

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Biography

Pierson Barton Reading (1816-1868) came to California with Peter Burnett's party (1843). Upon arrival he applied for lands at the north end of the Central Valley on the west side of the Sacramento River between Cottonwood Creek and Flat Creek totaling about twenty-six thousand acres. The grant was the northernmost Mexican land grant, known as Rancho Buena Ventura, now in Shasta County. Reading worked for Capt. Sutter until it became probable that war would be declared against Mexico (1845). He then enlisted under John C. Fremont and was appointed paymaster of the California Battalion with the rank of major. He was at Sutter's Fort in March 1848 and quickly returned to his own lands to search for gold. In the latter part of March he discovered gold and it was reported that he took out \$80,000 worth of the precious metal. In the fall of 1849 Major Reading fitted out an expedition to discover the bay into which the Trinity and Klamath rivers must empty. The bark Josephine, in which the party sailed, was driven by a storm to Vancouver Island. He then engaged in business in Sacramento with Hensley and Snyder (1849-1850).

In 1850 Major Reading visited Washington to settle his accounts as Paymaster of the California Battalion. In 1851 Reading was nominated Whig Candidate for governor but was defeated. In 1854 Reading again went east for a hearing before the

U.S. Supreme Court on his land grant claims. There he met and married Fanny Wallace Washington. Reading then returned (1856) with his bride by steamship, remaining on his Shasta County ranch and devoting his attention to agricultural pursuits until his death.

Scope and Content

Manuscript biography by John Winkley of the prominent northern California pioneer, Major Pierson Barton Reading (1816-1868). Winkley accessed three collections in his research for this biography: the Reading family papers in the possession of Major Reading's grand-daughter, Eleanor Lee Reading-Templeman of Arlington, Virginia; a file at the California State Library in Sacramento; and, papers at Sutter's Fort, Sacramento. The family collection includes letters, personal notations, newspaper clippings from Shasta City, Sacramento, San Francisco, and other towns and a biographical manuscript on Major Reading by his daughter, Alice Reading. Sutter's Fort holds a diary kept by Mrs. Pierson B. Reading (1861-1862). The State Library holds Reading's correspondence.

BOX 1: WINKLEY BIOGRAPHY of PIERSON B. READING

1.1: STAFF RESEARCH FILE

-**"Pierson B. Reading" in A Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California Chicago, Lewis Publishing Company, 1891, pp. 791-792. [photocopy]**

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