Register of the Stockton Fire Department Precursor Records, 1856-1905

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Collection number: Mss50

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Stockton Fire Department Precursor Records,
Date (inclusive): 1856-1905
Collection number: Mss50
Creator:
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
[Identification of item], Stockton Fire Department Precursor Records, Mss50, Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library

Biography
The formation of the Weber Bucket Brigade began organized volunteer fire protection in Stockton before a city government was established. Stockton’s first big fire (December 23, 1849) destroyed the entire business district and demonstrated the need for both fire and police protection. The result was the establishment (June 26, 1850) of the Weber Engine Company and the authorization to purchase Stockton’s first small hand engine. After a second major fire (May 5, 1851) the City Council approved the purchase of a new engine and the organization of the Protection Hook and Ladder Company (November 15, 1851). Two years later (June 2, 1853), the Eureka Company was formed. Competition between the Weber and Eureka Companies led to them being reorganized into one department (February 7, 1854) under the control of a single chief. The San Joaquin Company was established the following month (March 4, 1854). Later that same year a new engine was added.
Mechanization and professionalization of Stockton's Fire Department proceeded slowly over the next half-century. In 1862 the City purchased its first steam engine, but not until 1870 were horses used to pull engines for the first time. The San Joaquin Company added a chemical engine in 1873—the first in the state. Fire hydrants eventually replaced underground cisterns throughout the city in 1891, and a year later the City installed a steam whistle to replace the fire bell atop the Eureka Fire House that had been used for the previous forty years. Full mechanization began in 1913 and was completed in 1924 when the last horses were retired. In the meantime, professional firefighters began to replace volunteers by 1888 when the first paid department was organized and scheduled for around-the-clock service.

Scope and Content
This collection includes correspondence, financial and legal documents and miscellaneous papers of the Stockton Fire Department, 1856-1887 (headquarter unit) and from five divisions: Eureka Fire Company, 1856-1905; San Joaquin Fire Company, 1856-1887; Weber Fire Company, 1875-1886; Protection Hook and Ladder Company, 1880-1887; and Exempt Firefighters Company, 1903-1905.

BOX 1: STOCKTON FIRE DEPARTMENT RECORDS, 1856-1905

1.1 STOCKTON FIRE DEPARTMENT, 1856-1887
1) FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS
   - annual and semi-annual reports, Feb 1880-Aug 1885:
   - special interest, Dec 1859-Sep 1887:
   - receipts, Feb 1850-Jun 1886:
   - checks, Jun 1870-Jun 1884
2) CORRESPONDENCE
   - general, June 1856-June 1886:
   - special interest, Sept 1868-Feb 1880:
3) LEGAL DOCUMENTS
   - Exempt Certificates, Death Certificates & book list, Nov 1872-Apr 1886:
   - Contracts and Oaths of Office, Sep 1884-Jan 1886
   - Certificate of five years for Thomas Cunningham, July 1862 (in oversize MS)
4) MISCELLANEOUS
   - list of officers; tally sheet; etc., n.d.

1.2: EUREKA FIRE COMPANY, 1856-1905
1) FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS
   - quarterly reports, Apr 1864-Aug 1865:
   - inventory, Nov 1864:
   - receipts, Dec 1856-May 1860:
   - do., Jan 1864-Jul 3, 1865:
   - do., Jul 4, 1865-Jul 3, 1865:
   - do., Jan 1866-Jun 1871:
   - do., Nov 1878-Dec 1880:
   - do., Jan 1881:
   - do., Jun 1882
2) CORRESPONDENCE
   - general, Dec 1858-Oct 1864:
   - do., Nov 1864-Jun 1865:
   - do., Jul 1865-May 1905
3) LEGAL DOCUMENTS
   - Exemption/Death/Resignation Notices, etc., Aug 1884-Feb 1886:
   - Contracts, 1859
4) MISCELLANEOUS
   - election results; list of dead members; etc., June 1860-Nov 1902:
   - ball tickets, Dec 1880

1.3: SAN JOAQUIN COMPANY, 1856-1887
1) FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS
   - balance sheets, Aug 1863-Jan 1870:
   - receipts, Mar 1858-Feb 1859:
   - do., Jan 1860-Oct 1866:
Container List

Register of the Stockton Fire Department Precursor Records, 1856-1905

- do., Feb 1868-May 1869
- do., Jul 1869-Dec 1871
- do., Jun 1876-May 1, 1881
- do., Nov 1882-Oct 1885
- do., Mar 1886-Dec 1887
- checks, Oct 1856-Dec 1857
- do., Jan 1858-Nov 1859

2) CORRESPONDENCE
- general, Apr 1860-Jun 1880
- special interest, May 1882-Jun 1887
- meeting notes, Nov 1876-Nov 1886

3) LEGAL DOCUMENTS
- By-Laws; Exemption/Death Notices; new member requests, etc., 1884-Jun 1887
- special interest, Jun/Jul 1876

1.4: WEBER FIRE COMPANY, 1875-1886
1) FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS
- receipts, Jul 1875-Jun 1876
- do., Jul 1876-Oct 1876

2) CORRESPONDENCE
- general, 1885 (see under SFD/Folder 1/Annual Report)
- meeting notes, Dec 1876-April 1886

1.5: PROTECTION HOOK and LADDER COMPANY, 1860-1886
1) CORRESPONDENCE
- general, 1860 (see under SJC/Correspondence)
- do., 1885 (see under SFD/Folder 1/Annual Report)
- meeting notes, Nov 1860-May 1886

2) LEGAL DOCUMENTS
- Oath of Office, Dec 1885

3) MISCELLANEOUS
- active member list, Jul 1880

1.6: EXEMPT FIREFIGHTERS COMPANY, 1903-1905
1) FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS
- balance sheet, n.d.
- receipts, Feb 1905
- checks, Feb 1905

2) MISCELLANEOUS
- liquor license, Jul 1903
- Internal Revenue Service receipt, Jul 1903
- list of members, n.d.