Princeton University Library Collection of Western Americana
Miscellaneous Manuscripts 1840-1901: Finding Aid

Summary Information

Call number: C1446
Repository: Princeton University Library. Special Collections.
Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 0.4 linear feet
1 box
Language(s) of Material: English
Abstract: Consists of miscellaneous source material--letters, documents, and other separate, unbound manuscript items--pertaining to the history of the American West and Southwest acquired by the Library beginning in 2013.
Location: This collection is stored onsite at Firestone Library.
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Description

The collection consists of miscellaneous source material—letters, documents, and other separate, unbound manuscript items—pertaining to the history of the American West and Southwest in the 19th century, largely from the perspective of white settlers. Subjects include American Indians, overland travel, settlement, mining, railroads, and business ventures. A number of items relate to the California Gold Rush.

The Princeton Collections of Western Americana were born with the 1947 gift of the collection of imprints and manuscripts focused on overland narratives, the cattle trade, and the Rocky Mountain West gathered by Philip Ashton Rollins, Class of 1889, and his wife, Beulah (Pack) Rollins. Their gift not only reoriented all previous acquisitions in the subject at Princeton, but remains a lodestone attracting other Western collections. This miscellaneous collection provides a way for locating additional small accessions of Western Americana-related material that the Library has acquired since 2013.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged in the order in which they were accessioned.

Access and Use

Access

The collection is open for research use.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Provenance and Acquisition

This open collection was formed as a result of a Departmental practice of combining into one collection material of various accessions relating to a particular person, family, or subject, and consists of various accessions acquired via multiple purchases, beginning in 2013.

Appraisal

No materials were removed during processing.
Preferred Citation
Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Princeton University Library Collection of Western Americana Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Box and Folder Number; Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Encoding

Descriptive Rules Used
Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Subject Headings

- Mohawk Indians.
- Gold mines and mining -- West (U.S.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
- Frontier and pioneer life -- West (U.S.) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
- Overland journeys to the Pacific -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
- Pacific railroads -- Explorations and surveys -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
- Whites -- West (U.S.) -- Relations with Indians -- 19th century -- Sources.
- West (U.S.) -- History -- Sources.
- Diaries -- 19th century.
- Correspondence -- 19th century.
- Photographs -- 19th century.
- Western Americana
Contents List

Charles August Cooke Outgoing Letter, 1901 May 1
accessionnumber: AM 2013-98
Size: 1 folder
Description: Three-page letter by Charles August Cooke to an unidentified recipient about Onkweonwe (Mohawk for "Aboriginal people," a Mohawk language newspaper conceived, compiled, edited, and published by Cooke) and a grammar dictionary of the Mohawk language.

James Russell Cutter Letter to Cyrus Cutter, His Father, 1851 February 11
accessionnumber: AM 2016-86
Size: 1 folder
Description: Cutter, reporting to his father in West Cambridge, Massachusetts, from Soldier's Gulch [California] about his experiences in the mining camp.

Benjamin P. Taylor Letter to C. M. Lockwood, 1900 July 9
accessionnumber: AM 2016-97
Size: 1 folder
Description: Letter from Taylor written while on site in Nome, Alaska, to Lockwood with detailed documentation about the first months of the gold rush there.

Biography/History: Ben Taylor had travelled to Nome from Oregon with journalist Fred Lockley. Together, they were appointed Nome and also Alaska's first mailmen on June 21, 1900.

G. A. Thomas Diary Concerning California Gold Rush and Photographs, 1850-1851
accessionnumber: AM 2016-116
Size: 1 folder
Description: Diary documenting Thomas's experiences panning for gold in the Sacramento area that includes detailed information about his experiences, extraction and mining processes and techniques, and local events. Also included are two photographs. One is small studio photograph of Thomas by J.H. Lamson Photographer of Portland, Maine. The other is a group photograph by George H. Hastings of Boston, Massachusetts. Handwritten on verso: "Washing gold in Cal. 1850. Three of the group from Milton- George and Sewall Reed and Edwin D. Wadsworth, the latter is the youngest of the company".
Biography/History: George Albert Thomas (1819-1904) was a lawyer from Portland, Maine, who joined the gold rush to California in 1850, where he worked in the mines, before returning to Maine in 1855 to supervise his estates.

Nathaniel and Mary Coe Letters to Sophia H. Coe, 1859 May-1860 March 23

accessionnumber: AM 2017-50

Size: 1 folder

Description: Two letters from Nathaniel and Mary Coe, written from their farm in Hood River, Wasco County, Oregon Territory, to Nathaniel's sister, Sophia H. Coe in Ohio. Consists of one letter, dated May 29th, 1859, in Nathaniel's hand with notes by Mary, and another in Mary's hand that lists two dates: May 1859 and March 23, 1860. The letters describe pioneer life in Oregon, including notes on the relationship between white settlers and indigenous peoples during the American Indian Wars of the 1850s, the productivity of the Coe's fruit farm, Mary's role as a homeopathic doctor, and family matters. Mary also writes at length regarding her concerns about the treatment of a family member named Marion at the Hartford Retreat, an institution for the care of people with mental illness in Connecticut.

Biography/History: Nathaniel Coe (1788-1868) and Mary Coe (1801-1893) settled in the Oregon Territory on a 319-acre government land grant along the Columbia River at the site of the future town of Hood River. The Coes were some of the first white settlers to plant fruit trees in the Hood River Valley. Mary Coe was also the sole doctor in the vicinity.

Sylvester Mowry Letter to His Father, 1853 November 27

accessionnumber: AM 2017-50

Size: 1 folder

Description: Eight-page letter detailing the survey expedition for the Northern route of the Pacific Railroad across the Cascade Range in July-November 1853. Mowry's letter provides a thorough account of the expedition from its departure from Fort Vancouver on July 27th, 1853, until its return four months later on November 18th. He describes crossing the Cascade Range at the 46th latitude; surveying the Yakima River basin where they found a French Catholic mission; trips to Fort Dalles, Fort Okanogan, up the Okanagan River to British territory, and to the Great Okanagan Lake; meeting in Fort Colville with Governor Isaac Stevens, the head of the Northern Pacific Survey; and returning down the Columbia River via Fort Walla Walla and Fort Dalles. Mowry mentions other expedition members, including Lieutenant Duncan (3rd Artillery, astronomer, topographer, and draughtsman) and Lieutenant Hodges (4th Artillery, quartermaster, and commissary); describes the newly surveyed territory, mentioning volcanic activity and discovery of gold in the Cascades; and shares his opinion on railway construction and other uses of the land. The year on the letter appears to be 1883, though this is likely an erratum based on the letter's author and content.
Biography/History: Sylvester Mowry (1830-1871) was a member of the Northern Pacific Railroad Survey expedition up the valley of the Columbia River and its tributaries across the Cascade Range. He later participated in surveying activities in the Southwest before becoming the proprietor of the Mowry Silver Mine in Arizona.

W. C. Winston Letters to His Father, 1849 June 5-1849 February 19

accessionnumber: AM 2017-78
Size: 1 folder

Description: Two letters from Virginia man W.C. Winston to his father, A. Winston at Culpepper Court House in Virginia. The letters describe the younger Winston's overland journey from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in April and May 1849 during the California Gold Rush, as well as the various business transactions made in preparation for the journey. The letter from June 5th offers an account of the trip from Arkansas to New Mexico, and Winston writes in great detail about the landscape and lack of game encountered along the way. Winston also offers details on the hardships on the journey and his optimism for the future once the group arrived in New Mexico. The other letter, written in Baltimore on February 19, 1849, details various financial and commercial dealings W.C. Winston completed prior to his journey.

Frank Lockwood Letter to His Mother, 1866 June 2

accessionnumber: AM 2017-79
Size: 1 folder

Description: Letter from Connecticut pastor Frank Lockwood to his mother describing his dealings with parishioners around his home in Litchfield County. Lockwood also reflects upon the local Schaghticoke Indians and the possibility of them losing their reservation to the encroaching white settlement.

Letter from a California Gold Miner to His Sister, 1856 July 31

accessionnumber: AM 2017-79
Size: 1 folder

Description: Letter from a Prairie City, California, Gold Rush miner to his sister reporting on the difficult conditions of his mining venture, as well as his lack of success. The letter also mentions the public hanging of two men in San Francisco by the Vigilance Committee.

Ben Holladay Letter to James Denver, 1857 December 20

accessionnumber: AM 2017-79
Size: 1 folder

Description: Letter from stagecoach magnate Ben Holladay to former United States Congressman James Denver. Holladay had formed a working
relationship with Brigham Young and established a freight line to Salt Lake City. In his letter, he describes his frustration with Mormon business practices.

Biography/History: Benjamin Holladay (1819-1887) was an American businessman responsible for creating a stagecoach empire, specifically the Overland Stage to California during the 1849 Gold Rush. Known as the "Stagecoach King", Holladay also worked as a private courier to General Alexander Doniphan of Missouri. Through his working relationship with Brigham Young, he was able to secure profitable freighting contracts to Salt Lake City.

Daniel Roberts Letter to Jacob Holman, 1852 January 18
accessionnumber: AM 2017-79  
Size: 1 folder  
Description: Letter from Daniel Roberts to Major Holding (Jacob Holman), the U.S. Indian Agent at Salt Lake City. In the letter, Roberts describes Brigham Young's public denunciation of two federal officials.

George T. Williams Letters to John Williams, His Father, 1851 April 2-3
accessionnumber: AM 2018-19  
Size: 1 folder  
Description: Two letters from settler and entrepreneur George T. Williams, in San Diego, California, to his father, John Williams Esq., in Boston, Massachusetts. Williams settled in New Town, San Diego, which eventually became the downtown of contemporary San Diego. His letters discuss the arrival of the steamer Oregon and a Captain Wilson, who was ill; his business dealings, including selling coal to a steamer; his difficulties communicating in Spanish with inhabitants of Old Town; the discovery of gold mines ten miles south of San Diego; an apparently unsuccessful enterprise on the construction of an artesian well in the town; and the health of various family members. Despite complaining about the lack of business, Williams's letters show him as optimistic about his future prospects.

A. M. Ferguson (Mrs. Yates Ferguson) Letter to Miss G. E. Wilson, Her Sister, 1855 June 30-August 9
accessionnumber: AM 2018-19  
Size: 1 folder  
Description: Four-page letter, from A. M. Ferguson, in Greenwood Valley, El Dorado County, California, to her sister, G. E. Wilson in Katonah, Westchester County, New York. Originally from Westchester County, New York, Ferguson settled in California with her husband, Yates Ferguson, who became a gold miner. Ferguson's letter contains entries written on June 30th, July 13th, and August 9th, 1855, in which she mentions her brothers-in-law Emory Canda Ferguson (1833-1911) and Clark Ferguson (1835- ), both of whom were gold miners in California and British Columbia. While both brothers eventually made homes in Washington State (where Emory Canda Ferguson founded
the settler town Snohomish), at the time, they were mining at the Slap-Jack Bar in Greenwood Valley. There are also notes about socializing with Mr. and Mrs. Rosteen (Rothstein), the founders of "Buckeye Exchange," the first settler hotel in Greenwood; Fourth of July celebrations in Greenwood Valley; and her husband's visits to Sacramento and San Francisco, California. Her letter is lively, remarking on gossip about various family members and acquaintances back home, the inconsistency of the mail service, having "nothing to do," dancing with her husband at a party, and reading Don Quixote. The envelope is closed with a wax seal impressed with California gold dust.

Silas Patterson Letters to Robert Patterson, 1865 February 9-August 24

accessionnumber: AM 2018-37
Size: 1 folder
Description: Two letters from Silas Patterson to his brother Robert Patterson in Washington County, Pennsylvania, during Silas Patterson's emigration west. The letters are written from Rock Bluff, Nebraska, on February 9, 1865, and Bitter Creek, Wyoming, on August 24, 1865. The letters recount Patterson's travels via Steubenville, Ohio; Rochester, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; St. Joseph, Missouri; Nebraska City and Rock Bluff, Nebraska; and Bridger Pass, Laramie, and Bitter Creek, Wyoming, towards Salt Lake City, Utah. Patterson's letters describe multiple violent encounters with Native Americans in Wyoming, the physical condition of various members of his party, and harsh environmental conditions.

Elijah Wood Letters to Sally Ann Wood, 1850 May-September

accessionnumber: AM 2019-38
Size: 1 folder
Description: Two letters from gold miner Elijah Wood to Sally Ann Wood, his wife who was back in Wisconsin. The letters recount his experiences on the California Trail and the hardships of labor during the California Gold Rush. Wood's letters, written from Fort Laramie, Wyoming, and California, describe his recent "journey through a barren howling wilderness" on the California Trail, including a story about one man in his group who "was shot by an Indian while he was guarding the horses" near the head of Humboldt River. Wood also describes his work in the gold fields at the Middle Fork of the American river (a tributary of the Sacramento river), which, he explains, "is said to be the richest in California." He lists the people working around him, mentions the wages, and describes the construction of levees.

J. Cleveland Letter to J. Emory Cleveland, 1853 April 23

accessionnumber: AM 2019-38
Size: 1 folder
Description: Two-page letter from J. Cleveland, a preacher in Sacramento during the California Gold Rush, to his brother J. Emory Cleveland in
Masonville, New York. Cleveland's letter describes the circuit he made as a preacher in the region, visiting a place with "forty families and nearly one thousand inhabitants" and another with "twenty families and five hundred inhabitants" and explains that "there will be a large emigration this season." He reflects on the development of Sacramento by white settlers, noting that "four years ago, this was a wilderness which white people had seldom visited." In particular, he outlines the cost of building a church which was constructed by Catholic reverend Augustine Anderson and finished in 1854. He also describes the area as "infested with Spanish robbers of the most daring and dangerous description," mentions his experience with disease, and ends his letter explaining that he has "enclosed several specimens of gold."

Dixon Stansbury Miles Letter to M. A. Gordon, 1857 April 4

accessionnumber: AM 2019-38

Size: 1 folder

Creator: Miles, Dixon Stansbury, 1804-1862

Description: Consists of a letter by Lieutenant-Colonel Dixon Stansbury Miles (1804-1862), who was then the commanding officer at Fort Thorn, a United States settlement and military post in New Mexico, to M. A. Gordon, who was apparently an official in the War Department in Washington, D.C. His letter details military expeditions against the Apache and other Native American peoples from the area surrounding the Gila River. Miles also remarks on several American political figures during the years leading up to the American Civil War, including General Winfield Scott (1786-1866), President Franklin Pierce (1804-1869), and Jefferson Davis (1808-1889).

Henry B. Holmes Letters to Southwork Barnes and Lydia Holmes, 1852 June 13- August 15

accessionnumber: AM 2019-68

Size: 1 folder

Description: Two letters from recent California emigrant Henry B. Holmes to his uncle, Southwork Barnes, and mother, Lydia Holmes, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, about his prospects in Sonoma, having recently arrived there in 1852. Holmes had moved to Sonoma from Mokelumne Hill, having been unsuccessful at gold prospecting. He writes of cheap land, good living conditions, and optimism that he will eventually make a fortune in California.

Hervey Benson Letter to Alanson P. Benson, 1850 June 23

accessionnumber: AM 2019-73

Size: 1 folder

Description: Three-page autograph letter from Hervey Benson in Cold Springs, Upper California, to his brother Alanson P. Benson in Delphi, Onondaga County, New York, regarding his experiences during the California Gold Rush. Benson writes his brother with news of his travels and current whereabouts.
He laments their separation and the death of his mother, and later describes in
great detail the particulars of his route to California, which included prospecting
for gold in the mountains near Taos and traveling overland to California via New
Mexico, Sonora, and San Diego, eventually taking the Steamer Oregon from
San Diego to San Francisco.

William Brantley Furman Letter to Dr. John H. Furman, 1852 September 27
accessionnumber: AM 2020-4
Size: 1 folder
Description: One-page autograph letter from William Brantley Furman in
Sonora, California, to his brother Dr. John H. Furman, in Milledgeville, Georgia.
In the letter, Furman thanks his brother for his advice to start a farm in California
and notes that his hay farm proved more lucrative than his previous endeavors,
likely gold mining.

Nathan Watkins Letter to Joseph Watkins, 1840 December 6
accessionnumber: AM 2020-12
Size: 1 folder
Description: Four-page letter from Nathan Watkins in Gonzales, Republic
of Texas, to Joseph Watkins in Pendleton, South Carolina, encouraging his
correspondent (possibly his brother) to join him in Texas. Watkins describes
the trees and soil in various parts of Texas; his prospects for making money,
including "trying to Monopolize the Santa Fe trade;" and interactions between
white settlers and Comanche people, including a mention of what is likely the
Battle of Plum Creek.

Pierre-Sébastien Laurentie Letters to Pierre-Antoine Berryer, 1850 September
accessionnumber: AM 2020-13
Size: 1 folder
Description: Two letters from Pierre-Sébastien Laurentie to Pierre-Antoine
Berryer regarding the transportation of 5,000 French immigrants to California
during the California Gold Rush as part of the "loterie des lingots d'or," an effort
to send unemployed Parisians ("lingotiers") to the United States. In the letters,
Laurentie urges Berryer to intervene with the French Minister of the Interior
to give the contract for the lingotiers' transportation to L'Union Maritime, a
company in which his son-in-law had interests.

White Horse Woman, Louise, Letter to Wolf Ears, 1897 October 1
accessionnumber: AM 2020-19
Language(s) of Materials:
Size: 1 folder
Description: One letter written in Lakota by a woman from Wazí Aháŋhaŋ Oyáŋke (Pine Ridge Indian Reservation) in South Dakota, reporting on her father’s recovery after being in poor health.

Subject Headings:
· Lakota Indians -- South Dakota -- History -- 19th century.
· Lakota women -- 19th century -- Correspondence.

Acquisition and Appraisal: Gift of Ron Strauss in September 2019.

G. B. Worden Letters to Martha, His Niece, from Jacksonville, California, 1868 December 25-1869 November 10

accessionnumber: AM 2020-36

Size: 1 folder

Description: Two four-page letters from G. B. Worden to his niece Martha describing his life in Jacksonville, California, a 19th century mining town and trading post that is now fully submerged under the Don Pedro Reservoir. The first letter recounts a ball held in Jacksonville that was attended by about thirty women and three times as many men from neighboring towns, including Sonora, Columbia, Poverty Hill, Algerine, Jim Town, Scraperville, and Springfield. Worden offers vivid descriptions of women's clothing and the Grecian Bend, a dance he says was imported from Paris by way of Saratoga. The second letter discusses his work operating a ferry crossing on the Tuolumne River and observations on tourism in the Yosemite Valley. He remarks on the number of tourists from the Atlantic states (about 3,000) he transported to the Yosemite Valley that season; visits from famous figures including Vice President Schuyler Colfax Jr. and George Francis Train; and the weather, which included a drought and temperatures of 100-112 degrees in the shade over the summer of 1869.

Acquisition and Appraisal: Purchased from McBride Rare Books in October 2019.

J. Leavers Letter to Joseph Holt Ingraham, 1855 December 9

accessionnumber: AM 2020-43

Size: 1 folder

Description: Consists of a four-page letter from J. Leavers, an early white settler of Port Ludlow, Washington, to author Joseph Holt Ingraham (1809-1860) in Rockland, Maine. The letter describes conflicts between Native Americans and white settlers (including the death of "Lieutenant Slaughter"), a "gold excitement" in the region, and the early operations of the Sawyer Lumber Mill.

Acquisition and Appraisal: Purchased from Wayfarer's Bookshop in December 2019.

Subject Headings:
· Ingraham, J.H. (Joseph Holt), 1809-1860
Letter from C.M., a Female Resident of Satank, Colorado, to Her Mother, 1884  
September 6

accessionnumber: AM 2020-43

Size: 1 folder

Description: Consists of a two-page letter from a woman who signed her name as "C.M" in Satank, Colorado (a town which is no longer existant, near Carbondale, Colorado, in southeast Garfield County). The letter, which is addressed to the author's mother ("Ma"), pertains to personal matters and economic conditions in the region. C.M. describes two companions, Eliza and Davenport, the latter of whom she mentions works odd jobs until he can find work with the railroad. She also notes her own weight and that of Eliza, stating that they are not very "stout" that summer and that they are "both afflicted in the same way." She also remarks on the numerous "tramps" who beg for food but spend their money in the town saloons, the end of the Ute War, family life, difficult household work, and the success of her garden.

Acquisition and Appraisal: Purchased from Wayfarer's Bookshop in December 2019.

Subject Headings:

- Women -- Colorado -- 19th century -- Correspondence.

John Humphries Letter to John Wilson, 1849 April 30

accessionnumber: AM 2020-43

Size: 1 folder

Description: Consists of a three-page letter from John Humphries (Humphreys, 1783-1864), an Indiana landowner, to his "old friend and brother" John Wilson, Commander of the Escort to California at Fort Leavenworth, who was just appointed as the Indian Agent of the Salt Lake Agency. In the letter, Humphries inquires about the travel conditions for gold miners in California and describes the lives of various children and family members.

Acquisition and Appraisal: Purchased from Wayfarer's Bookshop in December 2019.