
Bancroft Family Correspondence

Mandeville Special Collections Library

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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Bancroft family

Title: Bancroft Family Correspondence,

Date (inclusive): 1844-1882

Extent: 1.00 linear feet(4 archives box)

Abstract: Papers of the family 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.

Repository: University of California, San Diego. Geisel Library. Mandeville Special Collections Library.

La Jolla, California 92093-0175

Collection number: MSS 0039

Language of Material: Collection materials in English

Access

Collection is open for research.

Acquisition Information

Not Available

Preferred Citation

Bancroft Family Correspondence, MSS 0039. Mandeville Special Collections Library, UCSD.

Publication Rights

Publication rights are held by the creator of the collection.

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.

Scope and Content of Collection

Accession Processed in 1988

The Bancroft Family Correspondence is arranged in three series: 1) CORRESPONDENCE, 2) KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL, and 3) PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS.

The CORRESPONDENCE consists of bound volumes of letters. 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.

KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL is 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.

The PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS contain 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.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

Bancroft family -- Correspondence
Bancroft family -- Archives
Pleasant family -- Archives
Bancroft, Emily Ketchum -- Archives
Bancroft, Kate -- Archives
Pleasants, Henry, 1833-1880
Missions -- California
California -- Description and travel
San Francisco (Calif.) -- Description and travel
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
Diaries -- 19th Century.
Letters -- 19th century.

Contributors

Bancroft, Hubert Howe, 1832-1918, -- correspondent
Bancroft, Kate, -- correspondent
Bancroft, Emily Ketchum, -- correspondent
Bancroft, Matilda Griffing, -- correspondent
Pleasants, Charles Israel, -- correspondent
Bancroft, Kate
Bancroft, Emily Ketchum
Pleasants, Charles Israel
Swisher, Ruth Lineaweaver, -- associated name

CORRESPONDENCE

- box 1, folder 1 **Letters from Emily Ketchum Bancroft to her Family 1844 - 1868**
 Note
 Bound Volume
- box 2, folder 1 **Letters to Emily Ketchum Bancroft from her Family 1858 - 1869**
 Note
 Bound Volume
- box 3, folder 1 **Letters from Emily Ketchum Bancroft to Mrs. Kate Coit 1860 - 1869**
 Note
 Bound Volume
- box 4, folder 1 **Letters from Kate Bancroft 1873 - 1882**
 Note
 Mostly to her Father, Hubert Howe Bancroft, bound volume

KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL

- box 4, folder 2 **Journal (Part I) 1874 - 1874**
 Note
 Bound Volume and Photocopies
- box 4, folder 3 **Journal (Part II) 1874 - 1874**
 Note
 Bound Volume and Photocopies
- box 4, folder 4 **Journal (Part III) 1874 - 1874**
 Note
 Bound Volume and Photocopies

PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS

- box 4, folder 5 **Pleasants Family Materials**

CORRESPONDENCE

KATE BANCROFT'S JOURNAL, 1874

PLEASANTS FAMILY MATERIALS