
Guide to the William Heath Davis Papers

Collection number: MS Vault 86

California Historical Society

North Baker Research Library
San Francisco, California

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Scope and Content

A collection of letters and receipts of William Heath Davis are dated between August 17, 1838 and March 13, 1871, as follows:

- **Date:** August 17, 1838.
- John C. Jones of Santa Barbara addresses a handwritten letter on one page of a folded sheet to William Davis of San Francisco. (The letter was sent to William Davis in care of Mr. Nathan Spear, San Francisco and with the name of Mr. Larkin in the lower left corner of the address fold on the reverse, accompanied by a red sealing wax closure). Jones acknowledges receipt of Davis' letters from Monterrey (sic) and from San Francisco, and marvels that he has learned to write English so well. Jones says he has also heard from Mr. Spear, who thinks he can find a job for Davis on the coast, and advises Davis to stay in San Francisco and listen to Spear's wise advice. However, if Spear can not find Davis a job, Jones suggests Davis come to him in Santa Barbara with Capt. Paty. Jones recommends that Davis always be honest and honorable, and promises to do all he can to help Davis in the future.
- **Date:** March 12, 1840.
- J. A. Sutter, writing from Neuva Helvetia on the Sacramento River, sends a handwritten letter on one page of a folded sheet to W. Davies (sic) of Yerba Buena. (The letter was addressed to W. Davies (sic), Yerba Buena on the reverse.) Sutter acknowledges Davis' letter of February 27. He says he is returning the earrings because they are too expensive. He thanks Davis for all the news contained in his letter, particularly about the Schooner Morse being in Yerba Buena. Sutter asks Davis to write to him as often as possible with whatever news there might be. Sutter says Mr. Sinclair sends his best to Davis and to Capt. Paty, Mr. Norton and A. Talman. He asks Davis to tell Alexander to write to him about his voyage.
- **Date:** April 4, 1846.
- William E. P. Hartnell signs a custom's receipt, written in Spanish, in Monterey indicating that Guillermo Davis has paid a total of \$37.50 (\$25.00 for off-loading cargo from the brig Euphemia and \$12.50 in dock fees). An official seal has been stamped in the upper left corner.
- **Date:** June 10, 1846.
- A letter to Guillermo Davis is handwritten in Spanish from "Angeles" by Pio Pico. Pico asks Davis to order five measures of corn and one of beans and to deliver them to the Sub-Prefect of Santa Barbara. Pico tells his friend that he is sorry to cause him such bother.
- **Date:** June 27, 1846.
- Hiram Grimes, writing from Honolulu, addresses a letter of introduction, handwritten on a folded sheet, to William H. Davis. (The letter was addressed on the reverse simply to William H. Davis, Esquire, Coast of California.) Grimes is introducing Mr. Brannan, leader of the "new colony", and asks that Davis provide Brannan with information "concerning the country, etc.".
- **Date:** October 8 and 10, 1846.
- A series of six receipts, handwritten on a folded sheet, are for armaments which Davis purchased from various people in Yerba Buena for the government. Each receipt is signed by the seller; five of them have been witnessed by another party. The receipts are as follows: \$35 for a rifle bullet mould, pouch and powder horn purchased from William H. Ide; \$8 for a pair of pistol holsters purchased from E. Ward Pell; \$30 for a rifle bullet mould, powder horn and leather pouch purchased from William Mast; \$50 for a rifle bullet mould, shot pouch and powder horn purchased from William B. Brown; \$35 for a rifle bullet mould and powder horn purchased from John Sullivan; and \$38 for a rifle bullet mould and powder horn purchased from John Paty.
- **Date:** October 22, 1846.
- Thomas. O. Larkin, writing from Yerba Buena, addresses a handwritten letter to W. H. Davis. Larkin tells Davis that some of the papers he is leaving with him are valuable. He asks Davis to deliver the papers to Messrs. Rivera, Vallejo and Leace via responsible persons and to record the name of the persons to whom these papers are entrusted for delivery. Larkin instructs Davis to send the smaller letter to Don Guadalupe, "filling up the blanket". A note at the bottom of the page dated October 28, 1846 indicates that the first three letters were taken by W. H. Davis and Mr. J. Belden. A further note dated November 15 says that a letter directed to Vallejo was sent by Portsmouth's boat with a "Russian Bill".
- **Date:** March 11, 1847.
- Thomas O. Larkin, writing from Monterey, addresses a handwritten letter to William H. Davis. Larkin asks Davis to keep to himself the information he told Larkin about another person having a deed for the land of which they had spoken. Larkin says he has reason to believe that Davis' title to the lot behind Larkin's Vallejo land is not valid. He thinks that Hinckley's title died with him. Larkin advises Davis to innocently ask for his title from the Alcade and says this will cost \$16. Larkin says he has been given possession of his land near Davis' by Alcade Bartlett. A translation of this title was given to Surveyor O. Farnet last year along with orders to survey the land. Larkin asks Davis to urge Farnet to get on with the survey. Larkin also says he hears that some brickmaking is going on on his land. He asks Davis to see that Mr. Sherman enter into a contract with the brickmakers to earn Larkin as close to 5% of their proceeds as possible for the privilege of extracting clay and firewood from his land. In a postscript, Larkin asks Davis to send him a blackboard.
- **Date:** September 25, 1847.
- A handwritten receipt, signed by R. R. Buckelew in San Francisco, indicates that W. H. Davis has subscribed to the *Californian* from August 28, 1847 for one year for \$5.

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- **Date:** January 11, 1848.
 - A handwritten receipt, signed by Joseph Lanman, directs Mr. Sherman to pay \$19.95 to Governor Mason for tonnage duty for the Hawaiian brig Euphemia. A further receipt on the same page from the Customs House in Monterey indicates that \$19.95 was received by R. B. Mason on the same date.
 - **Date:** January 18, 1848.
 - A printed shipping receipt is signed in Monterey by Thomas Andrews, master of the ship Charles, bound for Honolulu. It indicates that W. H. Davis entrusted \$500 in gold to Andrews and directed it be delivered to Messrs. Kenway & Robertson. By his signature, Andrews agreed to carry out this directive, "the dangers of the seas only excepted".
 - **Date:** May 12, 1848.
 - W. Rickanden (?) of Sausalito writes to W. H. Davis to order 4 or 5 bags of salt and 4 of good sugar. He says that his launch will "be over with anchors for the government". He asks Davis to deliver the order to Jim, who will be in charge of the launch. Rickanden sends regards to Mrs. Davis. In the bottom left corner, he has written: 3 doz. spool cotton, 1/2 yd. silk (?) and 2 lbs. Almaden.
 - **Date:** May 20, 1848.
 - A printed invoice and receipt from the "Civil Government of California" is signed by E. R. Falkner and by Capt. Joseph L. Folsom, Assistant Quartermaster for the Port of San Francisco. Folsom states that he received a safe valued at \$350 and Falkner indicates that Folsom paid him \$350 for same.
 - **Date:** January 15 to June 10, 1848.
 - A handwritten bill, signed by S. Brannan, indicates that W. H. Davis paid him \$73.75 for ads of varying sizes for merchandise, new goods, hams and shingles placed during this period and repeated from one to 18 times.
 - **Date:** December 30, 1848.
 - A printed shipping receipt is signed in San Francisco by Benjamin Hill, master of the ship Rhome, bound for China. It indicates that W. H. Davis shipped one bag containing \$2,000 in gold dust on Hill's ship and directed that it be delivered to J. M. Finley. By his signature, Hill agrees to carry out this directive, "the dangers of the seas only excepted".
 - **Date:** September 12, 1849.
 - P. C. Lauder, Collector, signs this blue printed licensing form No. 7, indicating that William H. Davis paid \$100 for a license to run "a wholesale jobbing and retail business on Montgomery Street" for a period of three months, ending on December 11, 1849.
 - **Date:** November 3, 1849.
 - R. Semple signs this bill of sale for a house, indicating that he has transferred ownership of it to James C. Ward of San Francisco for the sum of \$2,000. The "framed house" is identified as the ferry house on the south side of the Carquinez Straits in the town of Martinez. W. Robinson and Eltoon (sic) Pfister sign as witnesses. A notation on the reverse indicates that the bill of sale was recorded on July 3, 1850 over the signature of Thomas A. Brown, Contra Costa County Recorder.
 - **Date:** December 1, 1849.
 - Anthony Ten Eyck writes this letter from Honolulu to William H. Davis in San Francisco. (A printed letterhead identifies Ten Eyck as the former U. S. Commissioner to the Sandwich Islands and, since October 1849, a real estate attorney in San Francisco.) Ten Eyck tells Davis that ever since he returned to Honolulu from San Francisco last summer, news has been delivered almost weekly that Mr. Eanus (?), his replacement, was about to arrive. Members of the American community in Honolulu are urging Ten Eyck not to leave until Eanus arrives. Now Ten Eyck has heard from the ship Massachusetts that Eanus will not be coming at all. Ten Eyck says he had expected to be in San Francisco by the past October (see letterhead described above) at which time he sent his books on the brig Lawrence. If he waits for a replacement, Ten Eyck says he would have to stay in Honolulu for another three to six months. Not willing to do this, he has decided to leave as soon as he can after January 1, 1850 -- whether or not a replacement appears. Ten Eyck asks about the "Contra Costa speculation", hopes Davis has been successful in purchasing it and, if not, that he will do so immediately. Ten Eyck says he was sorry to hear about Spear's death. He asks Davis to have an office ready for him in San Francisco by February 1. He sends regards to Mrs. Davis and Mr. Lynds.
 - **Date:** July 17, 1850.
 - A notice from Denis McCarthy, Street Commissioner, printed on small blue folded paper and addressed to William H. Davis, notifies him that the street opposite his property on Stockton Street will be graded, planked and otherwise improved. If Davis has any objections, he must register them within ten days.
 - **Date:** October 1850.
 - A tax assessment bill, printed on small blue paper, is made out to William H. Davis, indicating payment of a total of \$2,019 and signed by William M. Irwin, City Collector. On the reverse, this total is broken down into a listing of properties: lot 93 on Stockton Street, lot 2 on Clay Street, lot 26 on Montgomery Street, lot 1166 on Leavenworth Street, lot 1262 on Hyde Street and lot 256 on Harrison Street; beach water lots 229, 230, 231 and 587 on Front Street; the brick Custom House and a frame building; and personal property.
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- **Date:** October 4, 1850.
 - A printed notice from J. E. Durinoge (?), Assistant Secretary of the First California Guard, notifies W. H. Davis of a meeting at the Armory on October 5 at 8 p.m.
 - **Date:** October 5, 1850.
 - An assessment signed by Joseph Weed, Collector of Assessments for the Street Commissioner's Office, indicates that Whlliam H. Davis paid \$1,796.43 for grading and planking Clay Street from Montgomery to Kearney. Davis' assessment, figured at the rate of 13.06 and 1/2¢ per foot, was for 137 and 1/2 feet on the north side of Clay Street.
 - **Date:** October 7, 1850.
 - A tax assessment bill, printed on large folded blue paper, is made out to W. H. Davis, indicating payment of a total of \$2,069 and signed by David N. Chauneay, County Treasurer. The total is broken down in a listing of properties it covers: lots on Clay at Montgomery, on California at Montgomery, on Stockton at Jackson plus lots 1116, 1262, and 256; and water lots 229, 230, 231 and 587.
 - **Date:** December 3, 1850.
 - A printed Page, Bacon & Co. check for \$1272.35 is made out to John Parrott and signed by Charles W. Lawton, attorney for William H. Davis.
 - **Date:** January 13, 1853.
 - A handwritten directive, signed by William H. Davis in San Francisco and addressed to Messrs. Sanders & Brenham asks the latter to pay Edward Visher \$600 and charge this to Davis' account. The reverse has been signed by Visher.
 - **Date:** February, 1855.
 - A letter handwritten on folded and lined blue paper is addressed to William H. Davis from John Parrott in San Francisco. Parrott asks Davis to "come over to this City" as soon as possible with all available funds Davis can gather. Parrott says he makes this demand because of "the extraordinary state of affairs existing at present in this City" and because of his involvement in these affairs. Parrott ends by saying he hopes Davis will come to San Francisco this afternoon or tomorrow at the latest. (This letter was given to California Historical Society in memory of George D. Lyman by Mrs. Lyman in 1951.)
 - **Date:** February 13, 1856.
 - An bill, filled in by hand on a blue printed form, is addressed to William H. Davis from Taaffe, M'Cahill & Co. (purveyors of staple and fancy dry goods, clothing, etc.), located in a fire-proof building on Front Street at the corner of Sacramento Street. The bill is for \$37.13 worth of unspecified merchandise purchased on January 1, 1854. (This bill was given to California Historical Society by James Abajian in February 1952.)
 - **Date:** March 13, 1871.
 - A bill, filled in by hand on a printed form, is addressed to William H. Davis and signed by C. A. Hughes, Purser of the steamship Moses Taylor. (An engraving of the Moses Taylor under full steam, sail and with paddlewheel spinning, appears on the top left.) The bill is for a total of \$4.72, representing \$4.50 for four packages measuring 30 feet plus 22¢ for 5% "primage".

This manuscript contains two of William Heath Davis' account books, both in boxed enclosures, one from 1842 and the other from 1843-45, described as follows:

- **Date:** 1842.
This account book is sewn into a soft leather cover on which has been written "Account Book / May 25th 1842 / William H. Davis". On the flyleaf in pencil is written:
 - "Sailed from Oahu May 31st 1842, in the Barque Don Quixote for the Coast of California. Commenced services on board Barque Don Quixote June 1st 1842 40\$ pr. month"
 - "Sailed from Sta. Barbara Feb. 14th for Oahu arrived at Oahu Mch 15th. Sailed from Oahu May 2, 1843 at 10 minutes past one P. M. for California"
 - "Commenced services with Bark Don Quixote July 17th 1843 60\$ per month".
- Following this introduction are facing pages listing purchases from and payments to W. H. Davis by the following customers: E. J. H. Grimes, Stephen Reynolds, Robert G. Davis, Eugenio Montenegro, Thomas O. Larkin, Mrs. Kinlock, the ship's carpenter, Thomas Jones, Nathan Spear, Mr. Rae's clerk, Mrs. Fuller, Juana Briones, Robert Ridley, Mrs. Ignacia Lopes, Eli Southworth, Robert Birnei, John C. Jones, Antonio Pacheco, J. P. Thompson, D. M. Howard, Capt. Henry D. Fitch, William S. Hinckley and William G. Rae. Most of the items listed as purchases in this account book are clothing (jackets, gloves, handkerchiefs, suspenders, stockings), yard goods including lace or animal hides.
On the last page is written: "Sailed from Oahu in Brig Euphemia, Thomas Russom master, Febry 23, P. M. 1846 for Monterey coast of California".
- **Date:** 1843-45.

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- This account book has been hard-bound. Inside on the first page is written "William Heath Davis / Accounts Book / Yerba Buena, 1843-45". In the body of the book are facing pages listing purchases from (and in a few instances, payments to) W. H. Davis by the following customers: Guillermo Castro, Ygnacio Martines, José Martines, Vicente Martines, Hilaria Reed, Francisco de Harro, Ygnacio Peralta, Jaukin (sic) Carrillo, José Anto. Alvisu (sic), Jesus Ma. Castro, Guillermo Richardson (the man who built the first house in Yerba Buena), Manuel Sanchez, Charles Weber, Joseffa Benevides, Juan Prado, Anto. Armijo, Juana Estudillo, José Ma. Amador, Doça Carmen, Francisco Peralta, Jesus Noe, Victor Castro, Anto. Ma. Castro, Tibucio Vasques, Paula Sanchez, Ygnacio Pacheco, Domingo Sais, Ignacio Miramontes, Ysidro José Sanches, Victor Prudon, Joaquin Castro, Marcus Baca, Vicente Peralta, Domingo Peralta, José Peça, José de la Cruz Sanchez, Francisco Sanches, Bruno Valencia and wife, Rodulfo Miramontes, Vicente Miramontes, Ygnacio Lopez, Thimoty (sic) Murphy, Ygnacio Alviso, George Yunt (sic), Ma. E. Soto de Bernal, Chino Sanches, Domingo Felis, Salvador Valejo (sic), Gregorio Breones, Robert Livermore, Juan C. Galindo, Dr. Edward Bale, Antonio Ma. Peralta, Antoneo (sic) Soto, Guadalupe Mesa de Peça, Elias Barnett, Julia Sanches and Antonio Pacheco.

As in the earlier account book, most of the items listed as purchases are clothing (shirts, caps, shoes, pantaloons, shawls, trousers), yard goods and related notions (silk, cotton, muslin, thread, buttons, hooks and eyes, scissors), cigars and tobacco, food (rice, almonds, sugar, beans, spice, wine), hardware (files, latches, brads, knives), feed for animals and animal hides.