
Guide to the Alexander W. Chase Overland Journal, 1861

Processed by Su Kim Chung; machine-readable finding aid created by Brooke Dykman Dockter

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Note

Arts and Humanities--Fine Arts--DrawingHistory--History, California--GeneralGeographical (by Place)--California

Guide to the Alexander W. Chase Overland Journal

Collection number: MS-R 61

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Contact Information

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Processed by:

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Date Completed:

June 1998

Encoded by:

Brooke Dykman Dockter

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Alexander W. Chase overland journal,

Date (inclusive): 1861

Collection number: MS-R061

Creator: Chase, Alexander W. (Alexander Wells), 1843-1888

Extent: 0.2 linear feet (1 box)

Repository: University of California, Irvine. Library. Special Collections and Archives.
Irvine, California 92623-9557

Abstract: The illustrated holograph journal of Alexander W. Chase documenting his family's overland journey from Iowa to California by covered wagon from May to August 1861. The illustrations include both pencil sketches and watercolors. The journal is accompanied by 43 loose watercolor illustrations by Chase that correspond to events or scenery described in the journal. As a first-hand account of a pioneer journey over the Great Plains in mid-nineteenth-century America, the journal provides both textual and visual documentation on the landscape, wildlife, and Native American population of this time period. An informal transcription of the journal produced by UCI staff is available for consultation.

Language: English.

Access

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Alexander W. Chase Overland Journal. MS-R 61. Special Collections and Archives, The UCI Libraries, Irvine, California.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Gordon and Carole Cole in 1991.

Processing History

Initial processing by Special Collections staff. Processing completed by Su Kim Chung in 1998.

Biography

Born in 1843, Alexander Wells Chase was 18 years old at the time he made the overland journey across the Great Plains with his family. In 1874 Chase married Isabel Frances Dickerson, and they had two children, Bertha Griffith Chase and Alexandra Wells Chase. He died in 1888.

A family genealogy and a scanned photograph of Alexander Chase provided by the donor are available in folder 5 of the collection. Printouts of digital (JPEG) files of Chase family photos supplied by the donor are in folder 4 of the collection.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

The illustrated holograph journal of Alexander W. Chase documenting his family's overland journey from Iowa to California by covered wagon from May to August 1861. The illustrations include both pencil sketches and watercolors. The journal is accompanied by 43 loose watercolor illustrations by Chase that correspond to events or scenery described in the journal. As a first-hand account of a pioneer journey over the Great Plains in mid-nineteenth-century America, the journal provides both textual and visual documentation on the landscape, wildlife, and Native American population of this time period. An informal transcription of the journal produced by UCI staff is available for consultation.

Geographic features described in the journal include the Platte River, Black Hills, Rocky Mountains, Sweetwater Mountains, Castle Rock, Fort Laramie, American Falls, Snake River, Blackfoot River, Soda Lakes, Carson River, Humboldt River, and the Humboldt Mountains. The author also describes encounters with local wildlife such as antelope, buffalo, elk, prairie dogs, wolves, and coyotes. Flora and fauna of the Great Plains, including sage, prickly pear, gooseberries, and a wide variety of trees, are mentioned in Chase's narrative as well. The family's encounters with Native American tribes such as the Pawnee, Sioux, Cheyenne, Shoshone, and Digger Indians are also documented.

Contemporary historical events are also documented in the journal. Chase's narrative begins with a preamble mentioning the Civil War, and some entries describe news the family has received on the war's progress during the course of the journey. Other entries describe encounters with the Mormon wagon trains traveling over the Great Plains, while yet another entry notes the sudden appearance of a comet on the horizon.

The accompanying loose watercolors depict persons, events, and geographic features that correspond with various journal entries. Chase's descriptive captions on the individual watercolors were used to formulate the container list.

Related Collections

Alexander W. Chase Diaries, 1866-1869. Available at the Arizona Historical Society, Southern Arizona Division, Tucson, AZ 85719.

Indexing Terms

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

Subjects

Chase, Alexander W. (Alexander Wells), 1843-1999--Archives.

Overland journeys to the Pacific--Archival resources.

Frontier and pioneer life--Great Plains--Archival resources.

Indians of North America--Great Plains--Archival resources.

Great Plains--Description and travel--Archival resources.

California--Description and travel--Archival resources.

West (U.S.)--Description and travel--Archival resources.

Genres and Forms of Materials

Overland journals.

Watercolors.

Box : Folder 1 : 1	Journal, 1861
Box : Folder 1 : 2	Watercolor drawings, 1861. Physical Description: 43 items.
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 1. When the shore is won at last . . .

Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 2. Sketch book, 1861
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 3. The overland route to California
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 4. Camped
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 5. Buffalo hunt
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 6. Pawnees
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 7. Castle Rock
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 8. Court House Rock
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 9. Ancient bluff ruins
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 10. Chimney Rock
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 11. Sioux lodges
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 12. Fire in the Black Hills
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 13. Red Buttes
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 14. Drowning and midnight burial of the drowned man
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 15. Sweetwater
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 16. Sweetwater Mountains
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 17. Independence Rock
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 18. Devil's Gate
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 19. Bald Mountain
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 20. Sweetwater Peaks
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 21. Sweetwater Gap and Castles
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 22. Rocky Mountains
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 23. Wind River Mountains
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 24. Mountain cascade
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 25. Mountain camp
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 26. Green River Mountains
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 27. Salt River Valley
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 28. American Falls
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 29. Battlement Rocks
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 30. City of Rocks
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 31. Devil's Sugar Bowl
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 32. Devil's Pulpit
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 33. Devil's Arbor
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 34. Humboldt Mountains
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 35. Red Rocks on Humboldt Sink
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 36. Crossing the desert
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 37. Lake Bigler [i.e., Lake Tahoe]
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 38. Lake Bigler from the Summit
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 39. Slippery Rocks
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 40. California sketches
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 41. Implements of the trade
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 42. Monte Diabolo from Sacramento River, Lancaster, and Sacramento before the flood
Box : Folder 1 : 2	No. 43. Petaluma

Box : Folder 1 : 3 **Transcript of journal, unedited draft.**
Physical Description: 47 pages.

Box : Folder 1 : 4 **Printouts of digital (JPEG) files of Chase family photographs supplied by donor, ca. 1840-ca. 1920.**
Physical Description: 9 items.

Box : Folder 1 : 5 **Genealogy for and photocopy of a scanned photograph of Alexander Wells Chase**