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## **Inventory of the Halleck, Peachy & Billings Collection, 1837-1861**

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Halleck, Peachy & Billings Collection,

**Date (inclusive):** 1837-1861

**Creator:** Halleck, Peachy & Billings

**Extent:** 80 pieces

**Repository:** The Huntington Library

San Marino, California 91108

**Language:** English.

### Provenance

Purchased from the Argonaut Book Shop, December, 1946

### Access

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### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Halleck, Peachy & Billings Collection, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

### History

Halleck, Peachy & Billings was one of the most prestigious law firms on the Pacific Coast, headquartered in San Francisco and specializing in land cases. It was organized by Frederick Billings and Alexander Carey Peachy in 1849, who were joined soon after by Henry Wager Halleck. In 1853 Halleck built the Montgomery Block in San Francisco, and the partnership became permanently located there. The firm handled over half of the land claim cases in California immediately following the enactment of the Land Act of 1851. Although Halleck wrote the land title report that helped draft the Land Act of 1851, he did not support the Land Commission, and the firm of Halleck, Peachy & Billings defended many land titles against the Commission. It has been said that Halleck handled the preparation of the briefs for the cases, Peachy the oratory, and that Billings brought in the business. The firm was dissolved in 1861.

Henry Wager Halleck (1815-1872) was a West Point graduate (1839) and a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He was sent to California at the beginning of the Mexican War, and was involved in military operations in Lower California

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and for a brief time was Lt.-Governor of Mazatlan. In 1847 he was made a captain and sent to Monterey where he became Secretary of State and Auditor of Revenues to the military governor of California, Colonel Richard B. Mason. In 1848 Halleck wrote a report on land titles which was based on land grant settlements made by the United States in Florida. After the termination of the law firm, Halleck became a general in the Civil War. He was a top aide to Abraham Lincoln and was present with those in the room at the time of Lincoln's death.

Frederick Billings (1823-1890) is supposed to have been the first lawyer to begin practice in San Francisco. He was graduated from the University of Vermont in 1844, admitted to the bar in 1849, and appointed legal advisor of California Territory under Governor Mason. At this time he became acquainted with Henry W. Halleck. In 1863 Billings was an important political figure and was credited by some with saving the state of California for the Union. After returning to Vermont in 1866, Billings reorganized the troubled Northern Pacific Railroad and was elected its president in 1879.

The third member of the firm, Archibald Carey Peachy (1820-1883) was a native of Virginia who came to California in 1849, became a member of the California Assembly in 1852 and of the state senate in 1860. It is said that his sympathy with the cause of the South in the Civil War was a contributing factor in the dissolution of the firm of Halleck, Peachy & Billings.

#### **Subject Matter**

The major part of the collection consists of legal documents written chiefly by Henry W. Halleck relating to the California Land Cases-copies of land titles, drafts of briefs, and opinions used in establishing the legal titles of some 36 different land grants. There are also notes on Spanish land laws and a few papers relating to other legal cases in California.

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HM 42959 **Almaden Mines. Case 366**  
HM 42943 **Bolsa de Chamisal Rancho (San Luis Obispo Co.) Case 312**  
HM 42944-42945 **Callayomi Rancho (Sonoma Co.) Case 40**  
HM 42941 & 43001 **Campo de los Franceses (San Joaquin Co.) Case 255**  
HM 42942 **Cañada de los Capitancillos (Santa Clara Co.) Case 744**  
HM 42961-42962 **Cañada de los Osos, Pecho y Islay (San Luis Obispo Co.) Case 218**  
HM 42963-42966 **Cañada de Pogolomé (Marin Co.) Case 19**  
HM 42943 **Chamisal, Bolsa de (San Luis Obispo Co.) Case 312**  
HM 43005 **Los Coches Rancho (Santa Clara Co.) Case 167**  
HM 42944-42945 **Collayomi Rancho (Sonoma Co.) Case 40**  
HM 42946-42947 **Corral de Piedra Rancho (Sacramento Co.) Case 190**  
HM 42948 **Cosumnes Rancho (Sacramento Co.) Case 228**  
HM 42963 **Estero del Americano Rancho (Sonoma Co.) Case 136 (see Cañada de Pogolomé)**  
HM 42949-42954 **Guadalasca Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 31**  
HM 42955 **Guenoc Rancho (Sonoma Co.) Case 12**  
HM 42956-42957 **Jesús María Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 528**  
HM 42958 **La Laguna Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 217**  
HM 43004 **Llano Seco Rancho (Butte Co.) Case 289**  
HM 42959 **New Almaden Mines. Case 366**  
HM 42960 **Ojo de Agua de Figueroa Rancho (San Francisco Co.) Case 310**  
HM 42961-42962 **Osos, Pecho y Islay, Cañada de (San Luis Obispo Co.) Case 218**  
HM 42963-42966 **Pogolomé, Cañada de (Marin Co.) Case 19**  
HM 42974 **Las Posas Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 296**  
HM 42967-42971 **El Potrero de San Carlos Rancho (Monterey Co.) Case 271**  
HM 42972-42973 **Potrero de Santa Clara Rancho (Santa Clara Co.) Case 8**  
HM 42974 **Las Pozas Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 296**  
HM 42975 **Rincón de las Salinas Rancho y Potrero Nuevo (San Francisco Co.) Case 30**  
HM 42976 **Rinconada del Zanjón Rancho (Monterey Co.) Case 532**  
HM 42977-42978 **Río de Santa Clara Rancho (Santa Clara Co.) Case 225**  
HM 42979 **San Bernardino Rancho (San Bernardino Co.) Case 316**  
HM 42980 **San Buenaventura Mission (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 51**  
HM 42981 **San Diego Mission (San Diego Co.) Case 175**  
HM 42982 **San Francisco, City of. Case 280**  
HM 42983 **San Julián Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 13**  
HM 42984-42986 **San Luis Obispo Co. (Calif.) Case 39**  
HM 42987-42988 **San Luis Obispo Mission (San Luis Obispo Co.) Case 224**

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HM 42989 **Santa Ana Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 494**  
HM 42990 **Santa Barbara (City). Case 543**  
HM 42991 **Santa Clara Mission**  
HM 42992-42993 **Santa Rosa Island (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 117**  
HM 42994 & 43006 **Simi Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 103**  
HM 42995 **Sotoyomé Rancho (Sonoma and Mendocino Co.) Case 16**  
HM 42996 **Tequepis Rancho (Santa Barbara Co.) Case 88**  
HM 42997 **Los Tularcitos Rancho (Monterey Co.) Case 195**  
**Miscellaneous legal papers**