



University Libraries Special Collections & University Archives

Piatt Family Letters

Collection Summary

Title:	Piatt Family Letters
Call Number:	MS 2002-04
Size:	0.25 linear feet
Acquisition:	Purchased at auction, 9-2001
Processed by:	TJH, 12-18-2001; MN, 3-2-2012
Restrictions:	None
Notes:	None

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Content Note

This collection contains letters involving the members of the Piatt family. The letters, dating from 1855 to 1877 and written to William Piatt by his younger brothers and other family members, relate day-to-day activities of life in the middle part of the nineteenth century. They also contain information on early California history, the cattle trade, and some description of traveling the western United States including Kansas. The majority of the letters are from Richard Piatt written from California. Some financial and general family documents are included in the collection.

Biography

William Piatt was born in Franklin County, Indiana, on October 23, 1816. He moved with his family to Illinois when he was twelve years old. William spent some time away from Illinois to help run a mill in Indiana, and the experience received in Indiana led to a career in milling. He married Clarinda Marquiss in 1838. Piatt took a partner by the name of Henry Sadorus and the pair bought a mill in Monticello. The two continued in business together for the next three decades. William attained fiscal security, which enabled him to invest in his younger brothers' financial endeavors. William died

in 1887.

John Piatt was born in Indiana in 1818. He moved briefly to California but eventually came back to Monticello, Illinois. John Piatt married Eliza Lowry on September 4, 1846. The couple had eight children. John Piatt died at Monticello, Illinois, in 1912.

James A. Piatt, Jr., was born in 1820. At the age of 28, he married Katharine Bryden and ventured west to seek his fortune in the gold mines of California. The family left Kansas City in April and reached Butte County, California, in 1852. The family lived in California for the rest of their lives. They amassed a valuable legacy of nearly 1600 acres of land and assets of \$250,000. James died April 8, 1873.

Richard Piatt was born in Indiana on March 31, 1823. He lived in Monticello until 1850 when he went to California to search for gold. Richard married Annabelle Stickles and they had two children. Richard was the last of the elder James A. Piatt's children to die. He was a businessman in Napa City, California, with enterprises including mining, cattle, land, and investing in merchant goods stores. At age 91, Richard Piatt died in 1914.

There is little information on the two youngest sons of James A. Piatt, Sr. Noah lived in California close to a decade then moved back to Monticello. He sold his farm there and moved to Fullerton, Kansas. There is conflicting information regarding his death. An obituary lists him dying in 1912 in California and another indicating he died in Kansas.

The minor figures of the collection include Charles Marquiss and Harry Sadorus. Marquiss is William's brother-in-law. Sadorus is William's business partner.

Series Listing

Series 1	Box 1 FF 1-5	Correspondence. Letters written to W. (William) H. Piatt by his younger brothers and other family members.
Series 2	Box 1 FF 6-8	Piatt Family Documents. Financial and general materials documenting the Piatt family.

Box and Folder Listing

Series 1 -- Correspondence

Box 1	FF 1	Correspondence to W. (William) H. Piatt from his brother John in Illinois. The first is dated September 16, 1855. It is a typical letter between two immediate family members. John writes about daily activities. He talks about buying and selling cattle. There seems to be a Spanish fever affecting some of the stock and he seeks William's advice on such matters. There is also discussion of weather, health, and visiting William in the future. The second letter is dated February 5, 1858. It discusses a letter received from Richard.
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| Box 1 | FF 2 | Correspondence to W. (William) H. Piatt from his brother James, Jr., in California. The letters span a time period of March, 1854 to April, 1857. James is consistently asking William's advice on financial matters. He talks about coming for a visit to Monticello, Illinois. There is discussion of the cattle industry, crops, family health, and the weather. |
| Box 1 | FF 3 | Correspondence to W. (William) H. Piatt from his brother Noah N. Piatt in California. Noah's letters are dated October 1, 1855, September 1856, September 3, 1866, October 24, 1856, August 11, 1866, March 15, 1868, and the final letter's date is illegible. He writes William to discuss cattle and hog prices, his family's health, the death of his wife, and how well brother Richard is doing financially. There is also the typical day to day goings on that is involved in a general letter. |
| Box 1 | FF 4 | Correspondence to W. (William) H. Piatt from his brother Richard in California. The letters date from March 1852 to August 1877. A myriad of topics include: weather, crop prices, cattle prices, visiting Illinois, health, Indian problems in southern part of California, different business ventures including mine acquisitions, domestic help, and death of a family member (Richard's son) . |
| Box 1 | FF 5 | Miscellaneous letters from Charles Marquiss, Henry Marquiss, H.T. Sadorus and Clarinda Piatt. The letters cover a time frame of October 1853 to January 1859. Topics include visits to California and Illinois, livestock prices, family well being, land acquisition, weather during travel, basically just keeping everyone up to date on what is going on with the different family members. The folder also contains a letter with the sender and receiver unknown and a letter written to Richard Piatt from the General Land Office, May 9, 1849. |

Series 2 – Piatt Family Documents

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| Box 1 | FF 6 | File containing checks signed by James or William Piatt. The checks date between February 20, 1858 and October 1859. |
| Box 1 | FF 7 | File containing various newspaper clippings about Piatt owned mine, copies of newspaper clippings, obituaries, and pages out of books dealing with Piatt County history. There is also some information on Butte County, California (where Richard, Noah, James, and John lived at one time or another) and a photograph of Ida Piatt (1899). |
| Box 1 | FF 8 | Letters regarding a bank draft written to N. (Noah) N. Piatt, February 13, 1873. The letters discuss the matter and were written in 1924. |

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