A Unique Book

Early in 1848 Laws for the Better Government of California was drafted by California’s military governor, Col. Richard Barnes Mason. Concerned about the threat of anarchy in the new territory of California at the close of the Mexican War, Mason asked a venturesome journeyman printer, Sam Brannan of San Francisco, to undertake the printing of the document. The publication in English and Spanish of Mason’s Laws was repeatedly announced in the newspapers but was delayed by the general exodus of people to the gold fields in the summer of 1848, and the thought that a legal code was more a matter for the United States Congress rather than for a military governor of the region. When news of the peace treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo reached him on August 6, 1848, Mason abandoned his projected laws subject to the conditions of the treaty and to the organization of California as a territory of the United States. Thus his book of draft laws became a great rarity.

Until the 1920s, it was thought that no copies of Mason’s Laws had survived. In 1923, the Huntington Library acquired a copy, and since that time, copies have been located at the California State Library and at Stanford University. These three copies contain only the English text, but it is clear that Mason ordered the document printed in Spanish as well as in English. The Bancroft Library has just obtained a copy that includes the Spanish translation and is therefore the only truly complete copy of Laws for the Better Government of California. This crucial document in our state’s legal history, one whose bilingual nature has been ignored by previous scholars for want of proof, now becomes one of the great treasures in the Bancroft’s collection. Indeed, it comes to us with a very distinguished provenance: Charles Maria Weber.

In 1841 the first party of Americans left Missouri intending to settle in California. The company included Charles Weber, aged 27, now far from his native Bavaria. First settling near San Jose, Weber became a naturalized Mexican citizen in 1844 and was granted a ranch of eleven square leagues (over 48,000 acres). His manufacturing and ranching enterprises flourished, and a few years later he founded the city of Stockton at the head of navigation on the San Joaquin River to serve as a business center for the southern mines.

Weber’s role in early California history has been documented in many studies conducted at The Bancroft Library by the Library’s former Director, George P. Hammond, and by a notable research scholar, Dale Morgan, another Bancroft staff member. These studies would not have been possible without the generosity of Mrs. Gerald Kennedy, the granddaughter of Charles Weber, who presented the family papers for research at Bancroft. Dale Morgan was the first scholar to make use of them, but his work was cut short by his untimely death. George Hammond then took up the task and, with the help of descendants of Charles Weber, completed and published The Weber Era in Steinbeck History in 1982, a volume that was distributed gratis to the Friends of The Bancroft Library.

Now Mrs. Kennedy’s four daughters, Helen Kennedy Cahill, Geraldine Kennedy Cole, Katherine Kennedy Cookson, and Moira Kennedy Holden, have presented in their mother’s memory this remarkable piece of early Californiana from Charles Weber’s own library — the unique copy of the bilingual version of Mason's Laws for the Better Government of California, already extremely rare in the English version. Weber probably received this early copy of the document for comment, but his interests evidently lay elsewhere, for he did not even slit most of the pages at their folds. The result is a special copy in special condition, and a most welcome addition to the Bancroft’s collections.

The Mexican letters of François de Monclar, 1866-67

In 1864 the Austrian archduke Ferdinand Maximilian von Hapsburg, backed by a coalition of European powers and Mexican monarchists, ascended the throne of Mexico. His reign was to be short lived, crushed barely 3 years later by the combined power of republican sentiment and Mexican nationalism. By August 1867 Maximilian was dead and the dream of a second Hapsburg empire in Mexico was in ruins.

In the course of the succeeding months de Monclar chronicled the gradual but total defeat of the Imperial army, amidst growing anxiety among the ranks of the Emperor’s supporters. He tells of the evacuation of Mexico City and of the subsequent imprisonment of many of his Mexican friends. “There are about 800 persons in prison here, compromised by the Empire. All that is good in Mexico.” Finally, there is the execution of the Emperor himself in July. “How much has happened since the 26th of May?” François recalled on July 29, 1867, “just a few days after learning of the Emperor’s death. ‘What sadness, horrors, and blood!! One trembles to think of it. Alas, it is not over yet.’

Within a few weeks of writing those lines the French Legation had left Mexico. There are only a couple of short letters written during the Legation’s brief stay in New York before returning to Europe, and then de Monclar’s account ends. Presumably he returned safely to his home and family. What is certain is that in so faithfully keeping a promise to a beloved ‘petite soeur,’ de Monclar left behind a remarkable, personal account of a crucial chapter in Mexican history. His letters are a welcome addition to the Library’s already significant holdings of primary source material for the period.

Nicole Bouché

Colorado River Photographs

In the four decades following the two pioneering expeditions through the Grand Canyon led by John Wesley Powell (in 1869 and 1871-72), only a few others attempted the hazardous journey down through the canyons and rapids on the Green and Colorado rivers. The fifth party after Powell’s second expedition, led by Julius F. Stone of Columbus, Ohio, went from Green River, Wyoming, to Needle’s, Cali-
California, in sixty-nine days in the fall of 1909. The major purpose of the journey was photography, although Stone, an inveterate explorer, was also interested in the geology of the canyons.

Recently Stone’s daughter, Mrs. Theodora Stone Sutton, generously donated to The Bancroft Library a huge album containing 340 photographs taken on the 1909 expedition. Stone was a thorough and meticulous man, and the typed key accompanying the album lists the location for every photo. Although there is no information on the type of camera used, it is likely that the party used a 5 x 7 view camera, and thus what we see in the album are contact prints. Stone later published a book containing a single reference to a Zeiss-Tessar lens.

The majority of the photos are of rock formations and rapids. A number of them show the party’s boats on the river, running rapids, or being manhandled over the rocks. There is at least one shot of an Indian cliff dwelling and a series of eight photos of Indian pictographs. The album also includes pictures of inscriptions carved on rocks: “D. Julien 16 Mai 1836” and “D. Julien 1836 3 Mai,” the latter inscription ornamented by the outline of a small boat with a mast, and an elaborate, arcane winged symbol.

When Julius Stone’s parents came from Germany to America following the revolution of 1848, they changed the family name from Stein to Stone. Julius, one of eleven children, was born in 1855 in a log cabin on a farm near Devil’s Lake, Michigan. His parents were educated, cultivated people, his father having been a professor of mathematics and astronomy in Prussia and his mother an accomplished linguist and musician. For his part, Julius received only a modicum of formal education; five or six years in a country school while he lived and worked on the farm. He left home at the age of twenty years in a country school while he lived and worked on the farm. He left home at the age of twelve. He soon acquired a knowledge of telegraphy, and with that skill became an itinerant railroad telegrapher. He worked on various railroad jobs until 1880, and thereafter engaged in coal mining in Ohio, West Virginia, Illinois, and Iowa. During these years he also studied physics, chemistry, astronomy, and engineering. Beginning in 1903 he took up business and banking. He served at various times as the president of different companies for making chains and hoists, and was for many years chairman of the board of Seagrave Corporation, one of two major manufacturers of fire engines.

Julius E. Stone was, in the best sense of the phrase, a self-made man: manufacturer, scientist, banker, philanthropist, patron of education, and explorer. He was a member of the board of trustees of Ohio State University for twenty years between 1909 and 1927, as a chairman for ten years, as a trustee for ten years, and as chairman of the board. A university official and intimate friend described him as having “the most marvelous mind of any man I’ve known.” Stone also belonged to the Explorers’ Club of New York, and his daughter recalls that some of the renowned explorers, scientists, and inventors of the day visited the Stone residence in Columbus when she was young. Among them were Orville Wright & Matthew Henson, the black man who accompanied Peary to the North Pole (or almost to it) in 1909. On his visit to the Stone household, Henson brought along his polar gear, which he donated for the benefit of his fellow guests.

Stone’s 1932 book *Canyon Country* should be seen as a companion piece to the photograph album. Although the Bancroft does not have a copy of the published work, it hopes to acquire one soon from Mrs. Sutton. *Canyon Country* is divided into three distinct sections. The first, “A Borrowed Chapter on Erosion,” is taken from Clarence E. Dutton’s “Tertiary History of the Grand Cañon District.” The second part contains the journal, in sixty-nine pages, of Stone’s expedition of 1909. The greatest part of the book—325 pages—consists of 300 photographs, together with detailed geological and historical information. These photos are also, of course, to be found in the huge album. Julius Stone’s photographic collection, in conjunction with the book, provides fascinating research opportunities for those interested in the history of the region and the types and rates of change of cliffs and other formations. Stone’s views of Glen Canyon and of many more years in the service of the Library and the University,” The resolution reads in part: “Over the past twenty years, the Library has grown enormously, acquiring a national and international reputation for the range and richness of its collections and for the scholarship and research done under its roof. All this has been achieved through the extraordinary talents of Dr. Hart, an inspired teacher, scholar, author, bibliophile and printer. His prodigious energy, his encyclopedic knowledge of literature and books, his personal warmth and enthusiasm, have brought the Library widespread support and gifts to the Library of unparalleled rarity and distinction.”
Blake Estate Oral History

How a barren ten-and-a-half acre windswept hill crest in Kensington, California, became a mecca for horticulturists, and how “the biggest three-bedroom house in the world” became in 1967 the home of presidents of the University of California, are stories told in the Blake Estate Oral History. The Regional Oral History Office interviews making up this oral history document both the life of the house and the evolution of the gardens.

This drama of house, garden, and University features three main characters: Anson Stiles Blake (1870-1959), his wife, Anita Symmes Blake (1871-1962), and her sister, Mabel Symmes (1875-1962). Anson Stiles Blake, whose grandmother, Ann Jane Waters Stiles, endowed Stiles Hall, graduated from the University of California in 1891 and began to work in the family sand and gravel business. Later he supervised the construction of the Mare Island Drydocks.

Anson Blake married Anita Symmes of San Francisco in 1894, and built a house for his bride on Piedmont Avenue in Berkeley. The property had passed from Anson Gale Stiles, an original trustee of the College of California, to his daughter and then to her son, Anson Blake. Anita Blake enriched the property with her first garden.

In 1923 the Blake property in Berkeley made way for a new stadium for the University of California. The Anson Blakes and Edwin Blakes relocated to a large parcel of family land in Kensington. There Walter Bliss of the firm of Bliss and Faville built for Anson and Anita Blake a Spanish-style house, situated to shelter from the wind the garden Anita Blake and her sister Mabel intended to create.

Mabel Symmes, who had studied in the newly-formed Department of Landscape Architecture at Berkeley in 1914, had built a modest professional practice as a landscape architect. She joined her sister and brother-in-law in the house in Kensington and devoted her life to designing and planting the Blake Garden. The sisters’ vision of the garden grew to include 2,500 species and cultivated varieties of plants. According to garden historian Linda Haymaker, the Blake property enjoyed “fine outcroppings of Lawsonite rock, a generously rolling terrain, and a beautiful view of the bay below.”

More than sixty years later, Blake House, hidden by location and vegetation, still seemed remote. Elizabeth Gardner, wife of the University’s president, therefore asked ROHO to develop an oral history about the Blakes and the estate they deeded to the University in 1957.

Nineteen interviewees contributed to the story. They included nephew Igor Blake, knowledgeable about family history and his uncle’s business; George and Helena Thacher, another nephew and his wife, who shared Anson Blake’s interest in the California Historical Society; Elliot and Elizabeth Evans, family friends with pioneer roots; and Louis Stein, Kensington historian.

President Emeritus Clark Kerr told of accepting Blake House for the University; his wife Catherine described her proposal that the Pytanean Alumnae Association manage the house as a residence hall. Pytanean Janice Kittridge reported on that short-lived arrangement and recalled activities of Marguerite Johnston, social advisor to five UC presidents. Norma Wiiller, Tony Hail, and Ron and Myra Brocchini, who were responsible for remodeling the house, and University President Emeritus Charles Hitch, who lived there with his wife Nancy from 1967 to 1975, brought the house’s history up to the present.

A second group of interviewees described the evolution of the garden, which in 1924 contained only grasses and chaparral. Nurseryman Toichi Domoto recalled Anita Blake’s participation in the California Horticultural Society; senior gardener emeritus Walter Vodden remembered his training in horticulture from Mabel Symmes. Mai Arbegast, former Garden director, explained how she worked closely with Mrs. Blake in the 1950s. Other interviews were conducted with landscape architect Geraldine Knight Scott, who renewed the gardens in the 1960s and created a long-range plan for the estate, and with Flo Holmes, who for twenty years has arranged cut flowers from the gardens for Blake House functions. Linda Haymaker, landscape architect, put the gardens into historical context.

A silent supplement to the oral interviews is an appendix of manuscript materials. Notable among them is a carefully worded letter from Miss Anita Symmes’ father, refusing Anson Blake’s first request for his daughter’s hand in marriage. The oral history itself speaks to the results of Anson Blake’s perseverance!

Suzanne B. Riess

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Desiderata

**Bancroftiana** from time to time publishes lists of books that the Library needs. We would be particularly pleased to receive gifts of any of the books listed. Please telephone Bonnie Bearden, Rare Books Acquisitions Assistant, in the Acquisitions Division (642-8171) or write her a note if you can help us.

Bent, W. *A General Catalogue of Books in all Languages, Arts, and Sciences, Printed in Great Britain, and Published in London from the year MDCC to MDCCCLXXXVI.* London: 1786.


Hopkins, Casper T. *Insurance Survey of All Buildings in the Central Blocks of San Francisco.* San Francisco: San Francisco Board of Fire Underwriters, 1861.


Smith, Bonnie L. *Afro-American Archives in California and the West.* San Marcos, Calif.: Palomar College, n.d.


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