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Guide to the Aurora, Esmeralda County, Nevada Collection

WA MSS S-1327



by Susie R. Bock

March 1992

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-1327

CREATOR: Aurora (Nev.)

TITLE: Aurora, Esmeralda County, Nevada collection

DATES: 1852-1927

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The records document the first decade of Aurora's existence. The collection contains tax receipts for local businesses and citizens, trader's licenses, abstracts of mine titles, stock documents, and papers of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Esmeralda Lodge No. 6. A few records relate to the Kimbal & Canfield company's business in El Dorado County.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.aurora>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.aurora>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from William Wreden, 1965 on the William Robertson Coe Western Americana Fund.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Aurora, Esmeralda County, Nevada Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Aurora, Esmeralda County, Nevada Collection. Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

AURORA, ESMERALDA COUNTY, NEVADA

Gold and silver were discovered on Esmeralda Hill, Nevada in 1860 by prospectors from California who found evidence of precious metals in exposed quartz veins. A mining district was established that fall, and in the following year California incorporated the district as Mono County with Aurora as its seat. In 1861 the territory of Nevada, which included the Aurora region, was established. Although the territorial government formally created Esmeralda County, Nevada did not take over political control until 1864.

Quartz mining continued for about a decade, after which Aurora seems to have quickly lost its position as the population and mining center of Esmeralda County.

Scope and Contents

The Aurora, Esmeralda County, Nevada Collection documents the early life of Esmeralda County, with particular focus on the county seat, Aurora. The collection spans the period 1852-1927, but the bulk of it falls in the 1860s.

The origin of this collection is unclear. No one prominent person or institution can be seen as the creator of all the records. The collection combines documents created by the government of Esmeralda County with papers generated by residents or businesses operating in the area. The papers are arranged by record type and then chronologically from the earliest records to the most recent. Documents spanning 1863-64 show the region's political transition from Mono County, California to Esmeralda County, Nevada.

The oldest document is a balance sheet (folder 1) from South Fork House (possibly an inn) of Placerville, El Dorado County. Since Aurora was largely founded by prospectors from California, perhaps this was a financial paper belonging to an early resident. Receipts (folders 2-3) date mostly from 1863 and were written in California. Most note the receipt of money for services from people and companies in Aurora. The name William Feast, secretary of the Utah Mining Company and county treasurer, appears on several receipts, as do the titles Canfield & Co. and Kimball & Canfield.

Traders' licenses (folders 4-6), granting merchants the right to trade for a period of several months, were issued by local governments for a fee. The collection contains the 1860-63 licenses issued by El Dorado County to Canfield & Co. to do business in Coloma. Following these are licenses issued by Mono (Esmeralda) County to Kimball & Canfield through May 1865, and then to Kimball & Co. or O. Kimball & Co. up to 1866. The chronological succession of the licenses suggests that all three titles refer to the same company. A notation on the license dated November 1, 1864 suggests that Kimball & Canfield dealt in lumber. The licenses of 1878 were granted by Esmeralda to Ainsworth & Hutchinson & Co. and to A. W. Crocker to operate liveryes.

Tax documents (folders 7-11) span the years 1860-65 with one for 1927. Tax receipts dating from 1860-64 note poll and state-county taxes paid in El Dorado by J. G. Canfield, J. Newburg, H. N. Miller, O. Kimball, and J. G. Canfield & Co. There are receipts for 1861 California state-county taxes paid at Aurora by William Feast and others for both commercial and personal real estate. Tax receipts for 1862 cover taxes paid by the residents of Aurora to California on real estate and livestock. Receipts for 1864-65 are for taxes paid

by Kimball and Canfield, either as individuals or as corporations. These records document the transfer in governing authority from California to Nevada. The tax receipt for 1927 is for Charles F. Jorger's land in Aurora, but it was issued by Mineral County, which suggests that Aurora, and even Esmeralda County, had lost their civil servants and were being administered by the neighboring county.

Titles to mining claims (folder 12) are mostly "Abstracts of title" which show the ownership history of a particular mine. All are sworn to by the county recorder. The following mines are represented: Enterprise Quartz, Heath, Sierra Madre, Sonora Quartz, Telegraph Quartz, and Texas Quartz. Agreements (folder 13) consist of an 1862 indenture settling the debts of James H. Creamer, et al and an 1863 contract with the Utah Mining Company for A. Darraba and Charles Gokin to sink a shaft. The bank drafts of William Feast (folder 14) document money he drew from Howard & Sanchez in 1862-63. Some of the transactions seem to be county business since he signs himself county treasurer.

The stock documents all date from 1863. Proxies (folder 15) transfer control of Sierra Madre Mining company stock to R. B. Sanchez for a stockholders' meeting in 1863. The stock transfer receipts (folder 16) document either the transfer of stock ownership or the appointment of lawyers to oversee such transfers. Most of the forms refer to Sierra Madre stock, but the following mining companies are also represented: Burns & Porter, Caucasian, Fairy Queen, Gibraltar, Live Yankee, and Rolla.

Court documents (folder 17) consists of two items. There is an 1863 complaint filed by Peter Campbell against Burns & Porter Mining Company regarding payment for work on the company's shaft. An 1864 "Protest" concerns an unpayed promissory note.

The collection also contains documents of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which functioned as a mutual insurance organization, dues being used to aid members in times of need. To assure that the officers of the Austin lodge did not abscond with its funds, each office executed a bond to the lodge. The collection includes the signed statements of officers for 1864 and 1866-72 (folders 18-20).

Letters (folder 21) is a miscellaneous collection, often with no clear connection to Aurora. An 1868 form letter from a San Francisco advertising agency requests the *Esmeralda Union* to run notices for the Pacific Business College. An 1881 letter from a woman in Boston to her brother relates family news and begs to hear from him, as does an 1907 letter to "Carl" from his sister in Long Island. In 1898 Edna M. Robinson sent a letter to the Board of School Trustees of Aurora asking for employment as a teacher. There are two letters by S. F. Green in 1913, which may or may not be to the same "friend." The letters mention mining shares and hopes that the mountain air will restore the author. A third letter from 1913 is addressed to Mrs. S. F. Green and concerns property in Nevada. The last letter, dating from 1925, is by B. H. Canfield to Charles Jorger in Bodie, California, thanking Mr. Jorger for sending "newspapers, receipts, etc. of the early days in Aurora." Canfield notes, "The Canfield who kept a store in Aurora, and some of whose documents you enclose, was a relative of mine."

Folder 22 contains a single assay certificate evaluating bullion sent by O. Kimball, and folder 23 has a business card of W. J. McKeough of Aurora with the statement "Mining," a grid for a township, and a song sung by British officers stationed in India during a plague addressed to the editor of the *Esmeralda Union*. Finally, folder 24 contains an 1914 photographic postcard of a processing plant from a mine in Aurora, Nevada.

Arrangement

The papers have been arranged by document type and the types have been arranged chronologically with the oldest records coming first.

Collection Contents

| | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | Balance sheet of South Fork House, Placerville, El Dorado County | 1852 Aug 20 |
| b. 1, f. 2-3 | Receipts | 1860-78 |
| | Traders' licenses | |
| b. 1, f. 4 | El Dorado County | 1860-63 |
| b. 1, f. 5-6 | Esmeralda County | 1863-78 |
| | Tax documents | |
| b. 1, f. 7 | El Dorado County | 1860-64 |
| b. 1, f. 8-10 | Esmeralda County | 1861-65 |
| b. 1, f. 11 | Mineral County | 1927 |
| b. 1, f. 12 | Titles to mining claims, alphabetically arranged by mine | 1861-64 |
| b. 1, f. 13 | Agreements | 1862-63 |
| b. 1, f. 14 | Bank drafts of William Feast on Howard & Sanchez, Bankers | 1862-63 |
| b. 1, f. 15 | Stock proxies | 1863 |
| b. 1, f. 16 | Stock transfer receipts | 1863 |
| b. 1, f. 17 | Court documents | 1863-64 |
| b. 1, f. 18-20 | Bonds by officers of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Aurora, Esmeralda Lodge No. 6 | 1864-72 |
| b. 1, f. 21 | Letters | 1868-1925 |
| b. 1, f. 22 | Assay certificate for bullion from Aurora Mill deposited for O. Kimball | 1872 Jan 10 |
| b. 1, f. 23 | Miscellaneous papers | 1880, n.d. |
| b. 1, f. 24 | Photographic postcard of Aurora, Nevada | 1914 |

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Mines and mineral resources -- Nevada

Geographic Names

Aurora (Nev.)
El Dorado County (Calif.)
Esmeralda County (Nev.)
Mono County (Calif.)

Genres / Formats

Receipts -- United States
Tax returns -- United States

Names

Canfield, J. G.
Feast, William
Kimball, O.

Corporate Bodies

Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Esmeralda
Lodge No. 6 (Aurora, Nev.)
Kimball & Canfield
Sierra Madre Mining Company