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Guide to the Edward Meyer Kern and Richard H. Kern Papers

WA MSS S-2395



by Diana Smith

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-2395

CREATOR: Kern, Edward Meyer, 1823-1863

TITLE: Edward Meyer Kern and Richard H. Kern papers

DATES: 1795-1895

BULK DATES: 1850-1860

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.76 linear feet (3 boxes) + 1 broadside folder

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The papers contain journals, notebooks, drawings and maps, documents and correspondence which document the activities of Edward and Richard Kern in the West and the Pacific from 1845-1860. A journal and a notebook document Edward Kern's participation in Fremont's third expedition to California; and a journal, a logbook, drawings, two maps and a letter document Edward's participation in the Northern Pacific Exploring Expedition in 1853-1856. A scrapbook of unsigned preliminary sketches and drawings by either Edward or Richard Kern document the time spent by both in New Mexico, and feature drawings of New Mexico, Mexico, and Arizona. Five notebooks attributed to Richard contain similar preliminary sketches and drawings. The correspondence includes a letter from brother-in-law William B. Wolfe who describes Richard's death in the Gunnison Massacre in 1853.

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

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.kern>.

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

The collection was previously held by William E. Kern, a nephew of Richard and Edward, who owned a hotel in Dingman's Ferry, Pennsylvania. In 1958 the collection was found in the hotel basement by new owners, Fred and Ann Cron. Purchased from William Reese Company on the Frederick W. & Carrie S. Beinecke Fund for Western Americana and the Library Associates Fund, 1989.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Edward Meyer Kern and Richard H. Kern Papers are 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

Edward Meyer Kern and Richard H. Kern Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Associated Materials

The papers were accompanied by Edward M. Kern's copy of Frémont's *Geographical Memoir Upon Upper California* (Washington: Wendell and Van Benthuysen, Printers, 1848), and by three additional volumes that contain John Kern's bookplate: *Reports of the Secretary of War, with Reconnaissances of Routes from San Antonio to El Paso*, by ... J. E. Johnston, Printed at the Union Office, 1850), Howard Stansbury, *Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1852), L. Sitgreaves, *Report of an Expedition down the Zuni and Colorado Rivers* (Washington: Robert Armstrong, Public Printer: 1853). The books have been cataloged separately with the Kern provenance traced.

EDWARD MEYER KERN AND RICHARD H. KERN

Edward Meyer Kern (1823-1863) and Richard Hovenden Kern (1821-1853) were brothers from Philadelphia who became artists, scientists, and explorers. In 1845, Edward accepted the position of artist and topographer for John Charles Frémont's third expedition, which was to explore the central route to California. The Frémont expedition merged into the California Battalion when the Mexican War began, and Edward was made commander of Sutter's Fort.

In 1848, Edward convinced his brothers Richard and Benjamin Jordan (1818-1849) to join him on Frémont's fourth expedition, which was to test the viability of a winter pass for a railroad in the central Rockies. The winter was unusually harsh and a third of the men died after becoming stranded in the snow and ice. The three Kerns made it safely to Taos, New Mexico. In the spring of 1849, Benjamin Kern returned to the mountains with a guide to retrieve a cache of papers and possessions, only to be killed by Ute Indians.

Edward and Richard lived in New Mexico for two years, working for the Corps of Topographical Engineers. In 1851 Richard joined Lieutenant Lorenzo Sitgreaves on an expedition to explore the Little Colorado River,

and Edward joined Lieutenant John Pope, who was looking for a better route between Santa Fe and Fort Leavenworth. In 1853, while working on the Pacific Railroad Survey along the 38th parallel with Captain John W. Gunnison, Richard was killed by Ute Indians in the Gunnison Massacre.

From 1853 to 1856, Edward served aboard the *U.S.S. Vincennes* on the North Pacific exploring expedition commanded by Cadwalader Ringgold (later replaced by John Rodgers). This expedition navigated the globe and mapped the Japanese coast. Edward next joined Lieutenant John M. Brooke on a survey of the sea lanes between California and China, returning in 1860. During the Civil War, Edward served under Frémont, who had command of the Army of the West, but when Frémont was relieved of command, Edward was as well. He died November 23, 1863 of an epileptic attack.

Scope and Contents

The Edward Meyer Kern and Richard H. Kern Papers consist of journals, notebooks, drawings, maps, documents, and correspondence which document the activities of Edward and Richard Kern in the West and the Pacific from 1845-1860. The collection was previously held by William E. Kern, a nephew of Edward and Richard, who owned a hotel in Dingman's Ferry, Pennsylvania, where it was found in the hotel basement by new owners, Fred and Ann Cron, in 1958. The collection was featured in *Life* magazine in 1959. Some of the papers were severely mildewed and damaged, including two journals, three notebooks, and a scrapbook of sketches and drawings. These were disbound and each page separately encapsulated in mylar after treatment. Some of the notebook pages are so damaged as to obscure the sketches, and one journal is missing the bottom quarter of its pages. The collection is housed in three boxes and is organized into four series: *Writings*, *Drawings and Maps*, *Correspondence*, and *Other Papers*.

[Series I, *Writings*](#), is organized into two subseries: Journals and Notebooks. Journals are further organized into those by Edward Meyer Kern and those by unidentified authors, and are listed chronologically. Edward Kern's journals include an illustrated journal of the first Frémont expedition to California, kept from August 17, 1845 to February 15, 1846, and a journal of his voyage in the launch of the *Vincennes* while mapping the coast of Japan in 1855. The logbook for the *U.S.S. Vincennes*, kept from June 11 to December 26, 1853 is filed here under "Unidentified" as the identity of its author is not clear. The last journal is by an unidentified American pepper merchant in Singapore in 1832-1833. This journal and the launch journal had been damaged by mildew and were disbound for treatment. The pepper merchant's journal is missing the bottom quarter of its pages, affecting text.

The Notebooks include five that can be identified as Richard Kern's, and two identified as Edward's. These volumes contain sketches of New Mexico, Mexico, Arizona, Zuni Indians, and a map of Northern California. An 1850 notebook kept by Edward contains notes on his palette. Two of Richard's notebooks were damaged by mildew and were disbound for treatment. These notebooks consist primarily of preliminary sketches, but also contain a few finished drawings.

[Series II, *Drawings and Maps*](#), is organized into three subseries: Edward Meyer Kern, Richard H. Kern, and Edward Meyer or Richard H. Kern. The drawings are listed chronologically within each section. They include twelve watercolors from Edward's voyage on the *Vincennes*, depicting Madeira, the Cape of Good Hope, and Sydney, and two pen-and-ink maps: the track of the *Vincennes* as it navigated the globe in 1853-1856, and the coast of Japan showing the track of the *Vincennes* launch in 1855. One loose unsigned drawing has been attributed to Richard Kern: "La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Santa Fé N.M." dated 1850. Many more sketches and drawings are unsigned. Although they have not been conclusively identified as drawn by Edward or Richard, they are presumed to be by one or the other. Consequently, they have been placed in the subseries Edward Meyer or Richard H. Kern. Many of these sketches and drawings are views of New Mexico, where both lived from 1849 to 1851, and are often preliminary sketches with notes on color.

[Series III, *Correspondence*](#), is organized into three subseries: Edward Meyer Kern, Others, and Unidentified. Kern's correspondence is organized into incoming and outgoing correspondence, and is listed alphabetically within each category. Among his correspondents are Cadwalader Ringgold, John Rodgers, and John Augustus Sutter. A letter from his brother-in-law William B. Wolfe describes Richard Kern's death in the Gunnison Massacre. The five outgoing letters include one from Hong Kong, which Edward describes.

The one letter from Richard, filed under Others, is to an unidentified correspondent, about his work as assistant engineer to Captain Sitgreaves.

[Series IV, Other Papers](#) contains documents and miscellaneous papers arranged in chronological order, and includes an early deed of land from Michael Dietrich to John Kuhn, dated October 1795, and the letter of appointment of Edward Kern as Captain under Frémont in September 1861, signed by John C. Frémont.

[Oversize](#) consists of materials from Series I, II, and IV, and is arranged in box order.

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, 1832-1855

0.5 linear feet (1.25 boxes)

Series I, *Writings*, is organized into two subseries: Journals and Notebooks. Journals is organized into Edward Meyer Kern and Unidentified, and are listed chronologically. Notebooks is organized into Edward Meyer Kern, Richard H. Kern, and Unidentified, and are listed chronologically.

JOURNALS

Kern, Edward Meyer

b. 1, f. 1	"Journal of a trip to California 1845-46-47." Holograph journal of trip from 1845 Aug 17 - 1846 Feb 15. With five illustrations and two maps A drawing which had broken loose from the binding was encapsulated in mylar and is listed separately as box 2, folder 14	n.d.
b. 1, f. 2	Original covers of the journal of a trip to California 1845-46-47	n.d.
b. 1, f. 3	"In the 'Launch' from Samoda to Hakadada, Coast of Japan." Holograph journal, disbound	1855 May-Jun

Unidentified

	Journal of an American pepper merchant in Singapore, 1832 Dec 29 - 1833 Feb 11. Journal disbound, all pages damaged by mildew, affecting text Stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 46	1832-33
b. 1, f. 4	Logbook for Flag Ship Vincennes, kept 1853 Jun 11 to Dec 26 Photograph of unidentified man laid in loose	1853 Jun-Dec

NOTEBOOKS

Kern, Edward Meyer

b. 1, f. 5	Notebook containing notes on palettes, cash expenses, pen sketches and pencil sketches. At front: "Edwd. M. Kern Albiquiu, N.M. Feby. 1 1850"	1850
b. 1, f. 6	Palette leaf and Paul Weber's landscape palette, 2 sheets removed from 1850 notebook	n.d.
b. 1, f. 7	Notebook containing notes, pencil sketches and a map of Northern California. Notebook disbound, many pages damaged by mildew Belonged to Edward Meyer Kern?	n.d.

Kern, Richard H.

b. 2, f. 8	Notebook containing sketches of New Mexico and Mexico, journal of a trip to Chihuahua from New Mexico Jan 1-27 1850 With note on inside cover: "To the memory of Edwd. S. Thwait, murdered by the Apaches - Jan 12 1850"	1849-50
b. 2, f. 9	Notebook containing sketches of New Mexico and Mexico, notes on routes and roads, and a list of Indian tribes	1850 Jun-Jul

NOTEBOOKS > Kern, Richard H. (continued)

b. 2, f. 10	Notebook containing pencil sketches of New Mexico and Mexico, notes, and poetry. Notebook disbound, many pages damaged by mildew	1850 Apr-Sep
b. 2, f. 11	Notebook containing pencil sketches of New Mexico and Arizona. Notebook disbound, many pages damaged by mildew, obscuring sketches	1851 Aug-Nov
b. 2, f. 12	Notebook containing pencil sketches of Zuni Indians and scenes	1851 Sep
Unidentified		
b. 2, f. 13	Notebook containing distances from Santa Fé to Rayado via Barclay's Fort, measured with a biometer, by Lt. Parke March 1851, with figures and maps	1851 Mar

Series II: Drawings and Maps, 1846-1853*0.1 linear feet (.25 box)*

Series II, *Drawings and Maps*, is organized into three subseries: Edward Meyer Kern, Richard H. Kern, and Edward Meyer or Richard H. Kern. The drawings are listed chronologically within each section.

KERN, EDWARD MEYER

b. 2, f. 14	"Indian drawings on a Cotton Wood at Camp Jany 26/46." Pen-and-ink and watercolor over pencil Originally bound in "Journal of a trip to California 1845-46-47" in box 1, folder 1	[1846]
b. 2, f. 15	Watercolors from voyage of the Vincennes, depicting Madeira, the Cape of Good Hope, Sydney	1853-54
b. 2, f. 16	"Track of the U.S. Ship Vincennes in the Years 1853-54-55-56." Portfolio containing two pen-and-ink maps, one titled as above and another entitled: "Part of the Eastern Coast of Nipon (after Von Siebold. Rough Track of the Launch from May 28 - June 17, 1855," sketches of men's heads, and an illustrated title page Stored also in: Oversize, broadside folder 54	n.d.

KERN, RICHARD H.

b. 2, f. 17	"La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Santa Fé N.M."	1850 May 14
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KERN, EDWARD MEYER OR RICHARD H.

	Scrapbook of sketches and drawings, most unsigned. Disbound. Pencil, pen-and-ink and watercolor Stored in: Oversize, box 3, folders 47-51	1846-51, n.d.
b. 2, f. 18	"Sunday Oct 29 1848...before crossing Smoky Hill For[k]. Smoky Hills in the Distance." Watercolor drawing	[1848]
b. 2, f. 19	"Saturday Evening Camp Nov 11 - 1848." Watercolor drawing	[1848]
b. 2, f. 20	"In San Miguel - Light[?]" Pencil drawing	n.d.
b. 2, f. 21	Two pen-and-ink and watercolor drawings, one of a woman with a veil, another of two figures, one a woman, the other a military man	n.d.
b. 2, f. 22	Two technical drawings. Pen-and-ink and watercolor	n.d.

Series III: Correspondence, 1850-1895*0.1 linear feet (.25 box)*

Series III, *Correspondence*, is organized into three subseries: Edward Meyer Kern, Others, and Unidentified. The correspondence for Kern is organized into incoming and outgoing correspondence, and is listed alphabetically within each category.

KERN, EDWARD MEYER

Incoming

b. 2, f. 23	Bond, Charles R.	1858 Oct 7
b. 2, f. 24	Brooke, John M.	1858, 1860
b. 2, f. 25	Brooks, Charles Wolcott	1860 May 4
b. 2, f. 26	Child, George W.	1857 Dec 26
b. 2, f. 27	Gliddon, [George]	1853, 1858
b. 2, f. 28	King, Christina	1850 May 14
b. 2, f. 29	Ringgold, Cadwalader	1852-53, n.d.
b. 2, f. 30	Rodgers, John	1856, 1860
b. 2, f. 31	Sutter, John Augustus	1855 Oct 19
b. 2, f. 32	United States. Treasury Dept. Second Auditor's Office	1853 Apr 18
b. 2, f. 33	Williamson, R. S.	n.y. Oct 27
b. 2, f. 34	Wolfe, William B.	1853 Dec 21

Outgoing

b. 2, f. 35	Piper, Mrs.	1855 Mar 25
b. 2, f. 36	[Wolfe], Mary	1858 Aug 18
b. 2, f. 37	Unidentified	1855-60, n.d.

OTHERS

b. 2, f. 38	Richard H. Kern to unidentified	1851 Sep 20
b. 2, f. 39	DeLissa, Alpha S. to W.E. Kern	1895 Aug 4

UNIDENTIFIED

b. 2, f. 40	Fragment	n.d.
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Series IV: Other Papers, 1795-1861*0.1 linear feet (.25 box)*Series IV, *Other Papers* contains documents and miscellaneous papers arranged in chronological order.

b. 2, f. 41	Deed of land from Michael Dietrich to John Kuhn	1795 Oct 9
	Certificate of Health for the American frigate <i>Globe</i> from La Junta de Sanidad de Montevideo Stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 52	1839 Mar 15
b. 2, f. 42	Certificate of the age of Edward M. Kern by Henry Neill	1844 Oct 31
b. 2, f. 43	Appointment of Edward M. Kern to Captain in the Volunteer Topographical Engineers, signed John Charles Frémont	1861 Sep 1
b. 2, f. 44	Kern, Edward Meyer. List of caption titles	n.d.
b. 2, f. 45	E., S. F. Palette for complexions	n.d.
	Box with chromolithograph of a woman picking grapes on the front Stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 53	n.d.

Oversize*0.94 linear feet (1 box)*

Oversize consists of materials from Series I, II, and IV, and is arranged in box order.

b. 3, f. 46	Journal of an American pepper merchant in Singapore, 1832 Dec 29 - 1833 Feb 11. Journal disbound, all pages damaged by mildew, affecting text (in Series I)	1832-33
b. 3, f. 47-51	Kern, Edward Meyer and Richard H. Scrapbook of sketches and drawings, most unsigned. Disbound. Pencil, pen-and-ink and watercolor (in Series II)	
b. 3, f. 52	Certificate of Health for the American frigate Globe from La Junta de Sanidad de Montevideo (in Series IV)	1839 Mar 15
b. 3, f. 53	Box with chromolithograph of a woman picking grapes on the front (in Series IV)	
b. bsd, folder 54	Kern, Edward Meyer. "Track of the U.S. Ship Vincennes in the Years 1853-54-55-56." n.d. Portfolio containing two pen-and-ink maps, one titled as above and another entitled: "Part of the Eastern Coast of Nipon (after Von Siebold. Rough Track of the Launch from May 28 - June 17, 1855," sketches of men's heads, and an illustrated title page (in Series II)	

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

Zuni Indians -- Pictorial works

Geographic Names

Arizona -- Pictorial works
California -- Description and travel
Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) -- Pictorial works
Great Basin -- Description and travel
Great Basin -- Discovery and exploration
Japan -- Discovery and exploration
Japan -- Geography
Madeira (Madeira Islands) -- Pictorial works
Mexico -- Pictorial works
New Mexico -- Pictorial works

Genres / Formats

Drawings (visual works)
Maps (documents)
Sketches

Names

Frémont, John Charles, 1813-1890
Kern, Edward Meyer, 1823-1863
Kern, Richard H., 1821-1853

Corporate Bodies

United States North Pacific Exploring Expedition (1853-1856)
Vincennes (Sloop of war)

Contributors

Kern, Edward Meyer, 1823-1863
Kern, Richard H., 1821-1853