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Guide to the J.S. Holliday Research Collection on the William Swain Family

WA MSS S-2408



by Diana Smith

July 2001

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-2408

CREATOR: Holliday, J. S.

TITLE: J. S. Holliday research collection on the William Swain family

DATES: 1799-1980

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.77 linear feet (9 boxes) + 1 broadside folder

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: J.S. Holliday's collection relating to the Swain family acquired while doing research for his book *The World Rushed In*. The collection includes 27 letters from Sabrina and George to William, dated April 15, 1849 to September 8, 1850. Also included are "A Forty Niner," William's dictated recollections, and his will, made out before leaving for California. Other family papers include William's father Isaac's account books, letters of family members and neighbors, and a daguerreotype and cased albumen prints, presumably of family members. Holliday's research files include approximately 150 letters from Sara Swain to Holliday and another 70 to her Mormon cousin Nancy Williams, with much information on the Swain family and Niagara County, New York. These are accompanied by Holliday's notes, transcripts of the Swain letters, photocopies of materials related to the Wolverine Rangers, Edward Eberstadt's notes, Sara Swain's notes on family and local history, and *After 100 Years*, Nancy Williams' biography of Rebecca and Frederick Granger Williams.

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

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.swain>.

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 Yerba Buena Books on the Frederick W. Beinecke Fund, 1988.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research. Box 9: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Use

The J. S. Holliday Research Collection on the William Swain Family 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

J. S. Holliday Research Collection on the William Swain Family. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Associated Materials

William Swain Journals and Letters (WA MSS 466)

J. S. HOLLIDAY AND THE WILLIAM SWAIN FAMILY

J. S. Holliday's gold rush history, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience* (New York: Simon and Schuster, c1981), is based in large part on the experiences of forty-niner William Swain. Swain was born in Youngstown, New York in 1821, the second son of Isaac and Patience Swain. He taught school from 1844 to 1846, and married Sabrina Swain in 1847. Their first child, Lila Crandall Swain, was born in June 1848. When the gold discoveries in California were announced at the end of 1848, William decided to go to California. At Independence, Missouri, they joined a company of men from Marshall, Michigan, the Wolverine Rangers. In May 1849 they started on their overland journey, reaching California in November of that year. A year later, Swain started for home via Panama, reaching New York in February 1851.

J. S. Holliday was introduced to the William Swain journals and letters by Edward Eberstadt, the New York rare book and manuscript dealer who had acquired them from William Swain's daughter Sara Sabrina Swain. Eberstadt had intended to publish the journal and diary but had been unable to do so due to the press of business and ill health, and asked Holliday, a recent Yale graduate, to take over the project. Holliday did so, and met Sara Swain in 1948. Born in 1860, Sara was a school teacher and amateur historian of Niagara County, New York. Holliday discovered that she still held letters that her mother Sabrina and uncle George had sent to her father during the gold rush. Sara gave Holliday the letters, which form part of the present collection, in 1951. She died in 1953.

The Swain collection includes documents concerning William Swain's father, Isaac, who had first been married to Elizabeth Hall. Their daughter, Rebecca, married Frederick Granger Williams, who was a counselor to Joseph Smith. The Williams family followed Joseph Smith to Illinois and Missouri and made the overland journey to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Her grandson, Frederick Granger Williams, married Nancy Clement, who later corresponded with Sara Sabrina Swain.

Scope and Contents

The J. S. Holliday Research Collection on the William Swain Family consists of papers relating to the Swain family, which Holliday gathered in the course of his research for *The World Rushed In*. The collection is housed in eight boxes and is organized into two series: *Swain Family Papers* and *J. S. Holliday Research Files*.

[Series I, *Swain Family Papers*](#), 1862-1980, boxes 1-3, is organized into five subseries: Correspondence, Writings, Documents and Financial Papers, Other Papers, and Photographs. The correspondence includes 27 letters to forty-niner William Swain from his wife Sabrina and brother George, dated April 15, 1849 to September 8, 1850. Also included are "A Forty Niner," William's dictated recollections, and his will, made out before leaving for California. Other family papers include William's father Isaac's account books, letters of family members and neighbors, including a draft of a letter to William's half-sister Rebecca Swain Williams in 1839 announcing the death of Isaac and the family's reaction to Rebecca's conversion to Mormonism, and a daguerreotype and cased albumen prints, presumably of family members.

[Series II, *J. S. Holliday Research Files*](#), 1862-1980, boxes 4-8, is organized into four subseries: Correspondence, Writings, Printed Material, and Other Papers. The files include approximately 150 letters from Sara Swain to Holliday and another 70 to her Mormon cousin Nancy Williams, with much information on the history of the Swain family and Niagara County, New York. These are accompanied by Holliday's notes, transcripts of the Swain letters, photocopies of materials related to the Wolverine Rangers, Sara Swain's notes on family and local history, and *After 100 Years*, Nancy Williams' biography of Rebecca and Frederick Granger Williams.

Collection Contents

Series I: Swain Family Papers, 1799-1927

1.46 linear feet (3 boxes)

Series I, *Swain Family Papers*, is organized into five subseries: Correspondence, Writings, Documents and Financial Papers, Other Papers, and Photographs.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters to William Swain

b. 1, f. 1-5	Swain, Sabrina and George	1849
b. 1, f. 6-8	Swain, Sabrina and George	1850

Other Letters

	DeLand, Minerva to George Swain Stored in: Series II. <i>J. S. Holliday Research Files</i> , Patience D. B. Swain, Box 7, folder 96	1871 May 21
b. 1, f. 9	Drown, George A. to Mike Conner	1882 Sep 25
b. 1, f. 10	Fralick, Abraham to E. J. Penniman	1852 Apr 21
b. 1, f. 11	Fralick, D. D. to E. J. Penniman	1849 May 16
	Root, William J. to B. M. Root Stored in: Series II. <i>J. S. Holliday Research Files</i> , Wolverine Rangers, box 8, folder 101	1862 Mar 11
b. 1, f. 12	Rudd, Sarah to [Isaac] Swain	1836 Feb 27
b. 1, f. 13	Swain, George to unidentified	1852 Sep 30
b. 1, f. 14	[Swain,] Isaac to George, William, and Patience Swain	1841 Aug 4
b. 1, f. 15	Swain, Patience. Envelope addressed to her	
b. 1, f. 16	[Swain, ----?] to Rebecca Swain Williams. Draft	1839 Mar 17
b. 1, f. 17	[----?], Lorayne to George [Swain?]	1847 Sep 11

WRITINGS

b. 1, f. 18	[Swain, George?] "Description of the night of the 4th Feby. 1842." Holograph	[1842]
b. 1, f. 19	Swain, George. Diary	1862
b. 1, f. 20	Swain, William. "A Forty-niner." Holograph Dictated by Swain	1886
b. 1, f. 21	[Swain, William?] Diary entry for March 25 detailing an inspection of his school	n.y. Mar 25
b. 1, f. 22	Commonplace book with poems, including one by Charles Swain, clippings, and extracts from Shakespeare	n.d.

DOCUMENTS AND FINANCIAL PAPERS

b. 2, f. 23	L. Porter's promissory notes and receipts, many made out to Isaac Swain	1799-1816
b. 2, f. 24	Page of accounts from an unidentified account book	1799-1801
b. 2, f. 25	Isaac Swain. Account book	1817-35
b. 2, f. 26	Isaac and George Swain. Account book	1834-46
b. 2, f. 27	Statement of account. Robert Fox with Isaac [and George] Swain	1838 Jun-Nov
	Agreement between George and William Swain and John McArthur. Draft Stored in: Broadside folder 106 Written on sheet of paper with school records	1847 Apr 20
b. 2, f. 28	William Swain's will	1849 Apr 11

OTHER PAPERS

	Advertisements for John B. Root's boilers and steam engines Stored in: Series II. <i>J. S. Holliday Research Files, Wolverine Rangers</i> , box 8, folder 101	[1867]
b. 2, f. 29	Poems by Cordelia Swain. Clippings	1852, n.d.
b. 2, f. 30	Invitation to Jessie Cornwell's wedding	1904 Sep 2
b. 2, f. 31	Leaves from "Mother's Tree" at Locust Hill	1927 Jul 4

PHOTOGRAPHS

b. 2, f. 32	William, Sabrina, and George Swain. Copy photographs Copies of daguerreotypes	n.d.
b. 2, f. 33	William Swain. Copy photograph	n.d.
b. 2, f. 34	Swain house	n.d.
b. 2, f. 35	Swain house and trees in yard	n.d.
b. 3, f. 36	Unidentified man. Daguerreotype, ninth plate, in thermoplastic case	n.d.
b. 3, f. 37	Unidentified man, wearing glasses and reading a book. Carte-de-visite albumen photograph in case	n.d.
b. 3, f. 38	Unidentified younger man. Carte-de-visite albumen photograph in case	n.d.
b. 3, f. 39	Unidentified older man. Carte-de-visite albumen photograph in case	n.d.
b. 3, f. 40	Unidentified man. [Ambrotype?] in case	n.d.

Series II: J. S. Holliday Research Files, 1862-1980*2.1 linear feet (5 boxes)*

Series II, *J. S. Holliday Research Files*, is organized into four subseries: Correspondence, Writings, Printed Material, and Other Papers.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sara Swain Incoming

Charles, H. J. 1948 Aug 30
Stored in: Series II. *J. S. Holliday Research Files*, Wolverine Rangers, box 8, folder 101

b. 4, f. 41	Girling, Jessie Swain	1935 Dec 4
b. 4, f. 42	Keating family	1937, n.d.
b. 4, f. 43	Scovell, J. Boardman	1948 Aug 19
b. 4, f. 44	Swain, George	1935 Dec 14
b. 4, f. 45	Williams, Nancy	1946, n.d.

Sara Swain Outgoing

Eberstadt, Edward

b. 4, f. 46	Letters	1934-52, n.d.
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Holliday, J. S.

b. 4, f. 47-48	Letters	1947
b. 4, f. 49-50	Letters Stored in: Series II. <i>J. S. Holliday Research Files</i> , Wolverine Rangers, box 8, folder 100	1948
b. 4, f. 51-53	Letters	1949
b. 5, f. 54-57	Letters	1950
b. 5, f. 58-60	Letters	1951
b. 5, f. 61-62	Letters	1952
b. 5, f. 63	Letters	n.d.

Williams, Nancy

b. 5, f. 64	Letters	1935
b. 5, f. 65	Letters	1936
b. 5, f. 66	Letters	1937
b. 5, f. 67	Letters	1938-40
b. 6, f. 68	Letters	1941-44

CORRESPONDENCE > Sara Swain Outgoing > Williams, Nancy (continued)

b. 6, f. 69	Letters	1945-46
b. 6, f. 70	Letters	1947
b. 6, f. 71	Letters	1948
b. 6, f. 72	Letters	1949
b. 6, f. 73	Letters	1950-51
b. 6, f. 74	Letters	n.d.
b. 6, f. 75	Fragments	n.d.
Williams, Orlando		
b. 6, f. 76	Letters	1944-47
Others		
	Barry, J. Neilson to James T. Babb Stored in: Series II. <i>J. S. Holliday Research Files</i> , Wolverine Rangers, box 8, folder 98	1949
b. 6, f. 77	Eberstadt, Edward to Mr. [Poe?]	1939 Jul 13
b. 6, f. 78	Girling, Jessie Swain to Nancy Williams	1936 Mar 1
b. 6, f. 79	Williams, Nancy to J. S. Holliday	[1953 Oct 17]
WRITINGS		
Holliday, J. S.		
b. 6, f. 80	"Biographical Notes." Typescript, corrected	n.d.
b. 6, f. 81	"William Swain, 1821-1904." Typescript drafts (several), corrected	n.d.
Swain, Sara S.		
b. 6, f. 82	"Recollections." Recorded by J. S. Holliday	ca. 1950-51
PRINTED MATERIAL		
b. 6, f. 83	"Daughter of Pioneer Youngstown Family Celebrates 90th Birthday." <i>The Niagara Falls Gazette</i> clipping	[1950 Jun]
b. 6, f. 84	<i>National Society United States Daughters of 1812. 1892-1933 News-Letter.</i> Volume 8, Number 4	1934 Mar
b. 6, f. 85	Swain, Sara Sabrina. "The Story of Laura Secord and Fanny Doyle. Heroines of the Niagara Frontier"	n.d.
b. 6, f. 86	Williams, Nancy C. <i>After 100 Years.</i> Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing & Publishing Company	1951
OTHER PAPERS		
J. S. Holliday's Research Notes		

OTHER PAPERS > J. S. Holliday's Research Notes (continued)

b. 7, f. 87-88	William Swain diary and letters of William, Sabrina, and George Swain. Typescript, corrected	n.d.
b. 7, f. 89	Copies of letters from Sabrina Swain to William Swain, made by Sara Swain	n.d.
b. 7, f. 90	"Data on Isaac Swain"	1936-50, n.d.
b. 7, f. 91	"Eberstadt's questions to Miss Swain and her answers"	1934, n.d.
b. 7, f. 92	"George Swain biographical info."	n.d.
b. 7, f. 93	"Info. from Niagara Co. histories"	n.d.
b. 7, f. 94	"Miscellaneous info. on Swains & Youngstown residents, etc."	1934, n.d.
b. 7, f. 95	"Notes by JSH on William's post-Gold Rush domestic life"	n.d.
b. 7, f. 96	"Patience D. B. Swain - her early life. Info. on her children, Geo. & Wm. and her grandchildren" Includes letter from Minerva DeLand to George Swain, 1871 May 21	1871, n.d.
b. 7, f. 97	"Sabrina's geneology"	n.d.
b. 8, f. 98-102	"Wolverine Rangers" Includes letter from William J. Root to B. M. Root dated 1862 Mar 11; and advertisements for John B. Root's boilers and steam engines; a letter from H. J. Charles to Sara Swain dated 1948 Aug 30; a letter from Sarah Swain to J. S. Holliday dated 1948 Oct 17; a letter from J. Neilson Barry to James T. Babb dated 1949 Apr 1	1862-1980, n.d.
b. 8, f. 103	Swain, Sara S. "Notes on Dunn & Swain Family - Also Early Settlers of Niag. and Porter Townships"	n.d.
b. 8, f. 104	Miscellaneous notes	n.d.
Other Papers		
b. 8, f. 105	Jessie Swain Girling. Bank book	1912-36

Oversize, 1847 Apr 20

b. bsd, folder 106 Agreement between George and William Swain and John McArthur. Draft (from series I) 1847 Apr 20

Restricted Fragile

0.21 linear feet (1 box)

Box 9, *Restricted Fragile*, contains fragile originals. The materials are arranged in folder order and may only be seen with permission of the appropriate curator. Preservation photocopies have been placed in the main files for reference use.

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 9, f. 107	Box 5, folder 54
b. 9, f. 108	Box 6, folder 81
b. 9, f. 109	Box 6, folder 83
b. 9, f. 110	Box 7, folder 90
b. 9, f. 111	Box 7, folder 91
b. 9, f. 112	Box 7, folder 93
b. 9, f. 113	Box 8, folder 98
b. 9, f. 114	Box 8, folder 100
b. 9, f. 115	Box 8, folder 101

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

Mormons -- United States
Overland journeys to the Pacific
Overland journeys to the Pacific -- 1849
Pioneers -- California -- Biography

Geographic Names

California -- Gold discoveries
California -- History -- 1846-1850
Niagara County (N.Y.)
Youngstown (N.Y.)

Genres / Formats

Account books
Daguerreotypes (photographs)
Photographic prints
Thermoplastic cases

Names

Eberstadt, Edward, 1883-1958
Holliday, J. S.
Swain, George, 1819-1892
Swain, Isaac
Swain, Sara Sabrina
Swain, William, 1821-1904
Williams, Nancy Clement

Families

Swain family -- Archives

Corporate Body

Wolverine Rangers (Firm)