

William Holmes Walker Papers

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Prepared by Karen Linn Femia

Collection Summary

Title: William Holmes Walker Papers

Span Dates: 1855-1982

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1855-1940)

ID No.: MSS84945

Creator: Walker, William Holmes, 1820-1908

Extent: 10 items ; 2 containers ; .6 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Summary: Early Mormon leader, pioneer settler of Utah, missionary to South Africa, and patriarch of the Mormon Church. Memoir, diary, and scrapbook reflecting the life of Walker and Mormon Church history.

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.

People

Lauritzen, Lewis E., 1878-1975.

Smith, Joseph, Jr., 1805-1844.

Walker family.

Walker, William Holmes, 1820-1908.

Organizations

United States. Army. Mormon Battalion.

Subjects

Agriculture--Utah--Salt Lake City.

Business enterprises--Idaho.

Business enterprises--Utah.

Frontier and pioneer life--Illinois--Nauvoo.

Frontier and pioneer life--Utah--Salt Lake City.

Missionaries--South Africa.

Mormon Church.

Mormons--Idaho.

Mormons--Illinois--Nauvoo.

Mormons--South Africa.

Mormons--Utah--Salt Lake City.

Overland journeys to the Pacific.

Polygamy--United States.

Real property--Idaho.

Real property--Utah.

Sawmills--Utah--Salt Lake City.

Places

Colorado--Description and travel.

Idaho--Description and travel.

Idaho--Social life and customs.

Illinois--History--1778-1865.

Iowa--Description and travel.

Kansas--Description and travel.

Nauvoo (Ill.)--Expulsion of the Mormons.

Nauvoo (Ill.)--History.

New Mexico--Description and travel.

South Africa--Description and travel.
Utah--Description and travel.
Utah--History.
Utah--Social life and customs.

Occupations
Missionaries.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of William Holmes Walker, Mormon pioneer and missionary, were given to the Library of Congress by Walker's granddaughter, Verda Hodgson, in 2002.

Copyright Status

The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of William Holmes Walker is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions

The papers of William Holmes Walker are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, William Holmes Walker Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of William Holmes Walker (1820-1908) span the years 1855-1982, with the bulk of the material dating from 1855 to 1940. The papers include a memoir, diary, notebook, and a family scrapbook.

The memoir of William Holmes Walker chronicles his life as an early Mormon convert, participant in the Mormon settlement at Nauvoo, Illinois, pioneer settler of Utah, missionary to South Africa, and patriarch of the Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). His papers contain both the handwritten original of the memoir which he entitled "Anecdotes, Travels, and Life of Elder William Holmes Walker, including his immediate association with Joseph Smith, the Prophet," and a bound typed transcript. Walker was born in Vermont in 1820. His parents, former Congregationalists John and Lydia Holmes Walker, converted to Mormonism 1832. The family participated in the Mormon emigration to Missouri and Illinois in the 1830s. The memoir relates mob violence experienced by church members during the emigration and later at the Mormon settlement of Nauvoo, Illinois. Walker lived at Nauvoo in the household of the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Joseph Smith from 1841 until Smith's death in 1844. Walker's sister Lucy became one of Smith's wives. After Smith's murder, Walker and his first wife, Olive Hovey Farr, joined the emigration to Salt Lake City, but along the way he and over five hundred other Mormon men enlisted in the "Mormon Battalion" (1st Iowa Volunteers) from July 1846 to July 1847. The Battalion marched from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Fort Leavenworth and to Santa Fe. Walker was then sent to Fort Pueblo, Colorado, as part of a sick detachment. After leaving the army, he rejoined his wife and other emigrants on the trail and arrived at their destination in October of 1847. The memoir tells of the building of the new settlement, agricultural work, and the establishment of sawmills.

In 1852 Walker was sent on a mission by the church to South Africa. The difficult journey to South Africa via the British Isles in 1842-1843 and his three years of mission work in Africa are described in the memoir, as are his cross-country journeys and other travels in the United States. After his return to Utah, Walker continued his church and business activities. During the 1880s, he and other Mormons evaded Federal authorities who were prosecuting Mormon polygamists.

Walker maintained property and businesses in Utah and Idaho and had families in both locations. He was ordained to the office of patriarch in 1892.

The papers also include a diary from his time in South Africa from August 1855 until the time of his departure in February 1856. A notebook concerning the military preparedness of Salt Lake City contains lists of officers, copies of orders, and correspondence reflecting the concern in 1857 about the possible arrival of the United States military in the Salt Lake City area and the fear of continued anti-Mormon violence. The family scrapbook compiled by Lewis E. Lauritzen (1878-1975), Walker's son-in-law, contains newspaper clippings related to family matters, poems, and various articles of interest. An obituary notice for Walker is also in the scrapbook.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1	Diary, mission to South Africa, 1855-1856
BOX 1	Memoir
BOX 1	Handwritten copy with appendices, circa 1892, 1900 (5 folders)
BOX 1	Typed transcript, undated
BOX 1	Notebook regarding military preparedness of Salt Lake City and family record, 1857
BOX 2	Scrapbook of the Lauritzen family, circa 1908-circa 1982