



The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

John W. Bell diary

1849

MssCol 252

Summary

Creator: Bell, John W.

Title: John W. Bell diary

Date: 1849

Size: .21 linear feet (1 volume)

Abstract: John W. Bell lived in Utica and Albany, New York. He kept this diary (2 vols.) during a voyage from New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn on board the schooner "Gager" from February 14-September 12, 1849. The ship stopped at Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Callao, with an overnight visit to Lima. Bell writes of the trials of ship life, the terrible storms and the calms they encountered, their first (unsuccessful) attempt to round Cape Horn, and homesickness during the months at sea, with no means of receiving mail. He also describes the pleasures of beautiful weather and passing other ships, including one from Bremen loaded with German emigrants headed for California. Entries made from October through December 1849 recount Bell's party's departure from San Francisco for the gold country, camping along the way, their arrival and permanent camp set-up, and the value of the gold dug each day. At the end of the diary are a number of expense accounts, including traveling, camp equipment, and provisions. Barometer readings are recorded for June 3-August 4, 1849.

Preferred citation: John W. Bell diary, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Key Terms

Geographic Names

California -- Description and travel -- 19th century
California -- Gold discoveries -- History -- 19th century
Callao (Callao, Peru) -- Description and travel
Horn, Cape (Chile) -- Description and travel
Montevideo (Uruguay) -- Description and travel
Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) -- Description and travel

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Diaries

Subjects

Gold miners -- California -- Diaries
Gold mines and mining -- California
Ocean travel -- 19th century
Voyages and travels -- 19th century

Names

Bell, John W.
Gager (Schooner)