



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.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**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)