

MS 486 ARTHUR BROWN COLLECTION

[1938-1954], 1861-1907. 1 oversize box + 1 half-box

Contains correspondence written to Arthur Brown and collected by him during the course of his career as Superintendent of Buildings and Bridges with the Central Pacific Railroad Company during the building of the transcontinental railroad and later for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company throughout its early years of expansion. Notable correspondents include: Leland Stanford (1824-1893), Mark Hopkins (1813-1878), and Charles Crocker (1822-1888). Some of the letters illustrate his friendship with Samuel Skerry Montague, various craftsmen, suppliers, and engineers. Biographical information about Arthur Brown, including excerpts from several books, and a photocopy of a transcript from Arthur Brown's testimony before the Pacific Railroad Commission in 1888, has been placed at the beginning of the collection. Organized chronologically by date. Box 1 contains photocopies of the letters. Box 2 contains the original letters. As the originals are very fragile, access is restricted.

PROVENANCE Purchased from Nancy Leigh Olmsted, 2001

HISTORICAL INFORMATION Arthur Brown was one of the principle architects and bridge builders of the Central Pacific Railroad Company's transcontinental line. He supervised and planned much of the construction of the Southern Pacific Line into the 1890s. Arthur Brown was born in the village of Kentore near Aberdeen in Scotland in 1830. He was brought to Canada by his widowed mother, and he grew up in Ottawa, Ontario. As a young man he assisted his uncle, Alexander Christie, in the railroad construction of bridges and culverts. The two men moved west to British Columbia, where one of Brown's first construction projects was a pier. In 1864, Brown moved to California, and in 1865 began work for Central Pacific Railroad under James Harvey Strobridge, Superintendent of Construction. In one month he was promoted to the position of Superintendent of Bridges and Buildings, a position he held until after the transcontinental line was finished and much of the Southern Pacific line had been built. Brown was responsible for supervising construction and preparing plans. He was a well-known and respected builder of bridges. In 1868, an ambitious undertaking by Brown and the 2,500 men assigned to help him led to the construction of a series of snowsheds in just five months. Brown also designed and helped build other structures for the railroad including the Oakland Mole, and stations at Alta and San Francisco. He provided drawings for boats such as the ferryboat "Solano." Brown also constructed the San Francisco mansions of Charles Crocker and Leland Stanford and the original Del Monte Hotel in Monterey. Brown retired in the early 1890s and died on March 7, 1917. He was survived by his wife, Victoria Runyon Brown.

BOX LIST

Box 1

Folder 1 [1] Biography of Arthur Brown, not dated, 5 p. Includes typewritten excerpts from: Cerinda W. Evans, COLLIS P. HUNTINGTON, Newport, West Virginia: Mariner's Museum, 1954, pp. 159-160. John Debo Galloway, THE FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD: CENTRAL PACIFIC / UNION PACIFIC, New York: Simmons-Boardman, 1950, pp. 86, 90-91. Oscar Lewis, THE BIG FOUR: THE STORY OF HUNTINGTON, STANFORD, HOPKINS, AND CROCKER, AND OF THE BUILDING OF THE CENTRAL PACIFIC, New York: Knopf, 1938, p. 139. Two-page typescript of testimony of Arthur Brown before the Pacific Railroad Commission about the costs of mountain construction. Includes as Exhibit no. 11, letter to Leland Stanford, President, Central Pacific Railroad Company, from Arthur Brown, Superintendent of Bridges and Buildings, July 25, 1887, 5 p.

Folder 2 [2] To T. Haskin Du Puy, President, Catawissa Railroad Company, from James R. McClure, October 4, 1861, Philadelphia, 1 p. Letter recommending Arthur Brown for the construction of a bridge. A.L.S.

Folder 2 [3] To Arthur Brown, Camp 2, from Charles Crocker, December 1, 1865, Sacramento, 1 p. Discusses contracting for timber for Secret Town bridge. A.L.S. with handwritten envelope.

Folder 2 [4] To Arthur Brown, Alta, from Charles Crocker, Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad, July 20, 1866, Sacramento, 1 p. Proposed meeting at the Alta depot on the occasion of the Stockholders' excursion. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope with a Charles Crocker, Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad stamp.

Folder 2 [5] To Arthur Brown, Crystal Lake / Alta, from Charles Crocker, Office [of the] Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad Company, September 29, 1866, Sacramento, 1 p. Discusses changes to the new depot at Cisco and Alta. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope with a Charles Crocker, Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad stamp dated September 29, 1866.

Folder 3 [6] To Arthur Brown, from Charles Crocker, Office [of the] Superintendent of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, December 29, 1866, Sacramento, 1 p. Presents Brown with a check for \$300 as a New Year's Gift and as an acknowledgement of Brown's skill and energy. A.L.S.

Folder 3 [7] To Arthur Brown, Cisco, from Charles Crocker, Office [of the] Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad Company, June 8, 1867, Sacramento, 1 p. Inquires how many and what kind of spikes will be necessary. A.L.S.

Folder 3 [8] To Arthur Brown, Cisco, from Charles Crocker, Office [of the] Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad Company, June 26, 1867, Sacramento, 1 p. Advises Brown about getting a mill to deliver bridge timber in a timely manner. A.L.S.

Folder 3 [9] To Arthur Brown, Cisco, from Charles Crocker, Office [of the] Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad Company, August 17, 1867, Sacramento, 1 p. Sending receipt for \$600 back pay to August 1. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope with a Charles Crocker, Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad stamp dated August 17, 1867.

Folder 4 [10] To Arthur Brown, Alta, from S.N. Miller, Jr., February 26, 1868, Sacramento, 1 p. Letter introducing Albert Gallatin, a member of Huntington, Hopkins & Co. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope.

Folder 4 [11] To Arthur Brown, Cisco, from Mark Hopkins, March 10, 1868, Sacramento, 1 p. Inquires about the length and sizes of nails needed to build the snow sheds next season. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope with an Office, Central Pacific Railroad, Sacramento stamp dated March 12, 1868.

Folder 4 [12] To Arthur Brown, Summit, from Charles Crocker, Office [of the] Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad Company, September 21, 1868, Sacramento, 2 p. Discusses locations of water stations along the line. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope with a Charles Crocker, Superintendent, Central Pacific Railroad stamp dated September 21, 1868.

Folder 4 [13] To Arthur Brown, from Samuel Skerry Montague (1830-1883), Engineer's Office, Central Pacific Railroad, February 9, 1869, Sacramento, 1 p. Dinner invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Samuel S. Montague to Brown on the occasion of the first anniversary of their first dinner together in San Francisco. A.L.S.

Folder 5 [14] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from Pope and Talbot [a lumbering and shipping company], November 3, 1870, San Francisco, 2 p. Letter sets the terms and conditions under which the mill will deliver lumber by vessel to the Central Pacific Railroad Company in Oakland. A.L.S.

Folder 5 [15] To Arthur Brown, from Charles Crocker, February 11, 1871, Sacramento, 2 p. Letter discusses how many piles ought to be kept on hand, and under what circumstances Brown should re-order them. A.L.S.

Folder 5 [16] To Arthur Brown, from Charles Crocker, August 15, 1871, Sacramento, 2 p. Discusses Brown's desire to see his salary increased, Crocker's inability to act on the matter and Crocker's recognition of Brown's worth as an employee. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope, with postmark dated August 15, [1871].

Folder 5 [17] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from Mark Hopkins, March, 1873, Sacramento, 1 p. Forwards a request for employment from O.[?] J. Pierce and requests Brown's help in finding a position for O. [?] J. Pierce. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope, postmarked March 22.

Folder 6 [18] To Arthur Brown, from Samuel Skerry Montague, August 5, 1873, Sacramento, 1 p. Discusses Montague's purchase of a lot on Linden [?] Street from Brown. A.L.S.

Folder 6 [19] To Arthur Brown, Oakland, Mark Hopkins, August 21, 1873, Sacramento, 1 p. Informs Brown that there is a delay getting car wheels off a ship, but that once the cars are put together in Los Angeles the wheels should be there. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope postmarked August 21.

Folder 6 [20] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from Leland Stanford, Office [of the] President, Central Pacific Railroad Company, November 6, 1873, San Francisco, 1 p. Instructs Brown to deliver to Seth Wetherbee the tug boat "Rival" and the two scows belonging to the dredgers. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope.

Folder 6 [21] To Mark Hopkins, from A. A. Bradford, January 6, 1874, Fresno City, 1 p. A.L.S. Also includes note on other side from Mark Hopkins, n.d., 1 p. Discusses Brown's estimate on timber needed for temporary bridge over San Joaquin River. A.L.S.

Folder 7 [22] To Arthur Brown, from Frank Soule, Jr., Professor of Civil Engineering, University of California, Berkeley, May 18, 1874, 1 p. Asks Brown to give data to a student hoping to write a thesis about Brown's bridge over San Antonio Creek to Alameda. A.L.S.

Folder 7 [23] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from William Chapman Ralston (1826-1875), [President], Bank of California, June 19, 1875, San Francisco, 1 p. Memorandum recommending Mr. Shane as a plasterer. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope.

Folder 7 [24] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from Mark Hopkins, September 7, 1876, San Francisco, 1 p. Letter recommending John Savett, a mason and builder, for employment. A.L.S.

Folder 7 [25] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from Mark Hopkins, November 13, 1877, Sacramento, 1 p. About procurement and transportation of red granite. A.L.S.

Folder 8 [26] To Arthur Brown from Leland Stanford, Office of the President, Central Pacific Railroad, November 27, 1877, San Francisco, 1 p. Letter asking Brown to give his immediate attention to piles and stringers for the Bear Creek bridge. A.L.S.

Folder 8 [27] To H.R. Smith, El Paso, from John J. Valentine (1840-1901), Office [of the] General Superintendent, Wells, Fargo & Company, February 8, 1882, San Francisco, 1 p. Expresses wish for good transfer accommodations in a Southern Pacific station. A.L.S.

Folder 8 [28] To Arthur Brown, from Samuel Skerry Montague, in camp near Sacramento Bridge, May 21, 1882, 4 p. Personal letter about Mrs. Montague's health, and their camping vacation near the Sacramento Bridge. A.L.S.

Folder 8 [29] To Arthur Brown, San Francisco, from Jas. B. Eads, May 31, 1883, St. Louis, 1 p. Request for plans, sections and full description of a ferry boat to be used as a model for a boat to be used between Dover and Calais. Copy of an A.L.S.

Folder 9 [30] To Arthur Brown, from Samuel Skerry Montague, June 4, [1883], Sacramento Bridge, 2 p. Montague's personal news about hunting, fishing, and exercise. A.L.S.

Folder 9 [31] To Arthur Brown from Samuel Skerry Montague, June 12, 1883, Hazel Creek, 4 p. Discusses a potential employee and his drinking problem and also the weather. A.L.S.

Folder 9 [32] To Arthur Brown, from G. A. Wendell, Office of the U.S. Engineer, July 20, 1883, San Francisco, 2 p. Asks Brown to assist in providing compensation to S. J. Swift, an assistant engineer who did work for Southern Pacific. A.L.S.

Folder 9 [33] To Arthur Brown, from A.S. Bender, September 6, 1883, Bohemian Club, San Francisco, 1 p. Letter asking Brown to come to Mare Island to meet with C.C. Wolcott, civil engineer. A.L.S.

Folder 10 [34] To Arthur Brown, West Oakland, from George L. Vose, [Department Head], Massachusetts Institute of Technology, April 16, 1884, Boston, 2 p. Thanks Brown for drawings of the ferryboat "Solono" and photos of Tehachapi, and asking for topographical maps of Tehachapi. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope postmarked April 17, 1884.

Folder 10 [35] To Arthur Brown, from C. C. Wolcott, civil engineer, Department of Yards and Docks, U.S. Navy Yard, May 14, 1885, Mare Island, California, 2 p. Attempts to set up a meeting with Brown to discuss a new form of heavy crane for the Mare Island yard. A.L.S.

Folder 10 [36] To Arthur Brown, Oakland, from C. C. Wolcott, civil engineer, Department of Yards and Docks, U.S. Navy Yard, May 19, 1885, Mare Island, California, 2 p. Discusses the legs of a bridge being built at the Mare Island yard, and asks for Brown's opinion. A.L.S.

Folder 10 [37] To Arthur Brown, Oakland, from C.C. Wolcott, civil engineer, Department of Yards and Docks, U.S. Navy Yard, June 2, 1885, Mare Island, California, 1 p. Asks Brown to recommend a draughtsman who is experienced in construction. A.L.S.

Folder 11 [38] To Arthur Brown, West Oakland, from J. Avis, Manager of Construction for Canadian Pacific Railway, July 13, 1885, Winnipeg, Canada, 1 p. Thanks Brown for sending blueprints of Central Pacific snow sheds to Canadian Pacific. A.L.S.

Folder 11 [39] To Arthur Brown, from C.C. Wolcott, civil engineer, Department of Yards and Docks, U.S. Navy Yard, August 19,

1885, Mare Island, California, 2 p. Discusses timing Brown's visit so that he can see the "Hartford". A.L.S.

Folder 11 [40] To Arthur Brown, Oakland Point, from Charles Crocker, 3rd Vice-President, Southern Pacific Company, February 2, 1886, San Francisco, 1 p. Requests a report of the condition of bridges and buildings on the Pacific System and any request for renewals and betterments for 1886. A.L.S.

Folder 11 [41] To Arthur Brown, San Francisco, from Chas. A. Hinckeldeyn, Technical Attache to the Imperial German Legation at Washington, April 26, 1886, New York, 2 p. Requests copies of the drawings of the ferryboat "Solano," constructed under Brown's direction. A.L.S.

Folder 12 [42] To Arthur Brown, from Leland Stanford, Office of President, Southern Pacific Company, July 23, 1887, San Francisco, 2 p. Asks Brown to prepare a statement outlining the difficulties of construction and costs for the construction of the railroad to be presented to the Pacific Railway Commission. A.L.S.

Folder 12 [43] To Arthur Brown, San Francisco, from T.J. Field, Supervisor for District No. 5, Monterey, July 18, 1888, Salinas, California, 1 p. Asks Brown about work he is doing on plans and outlines the bids for bridges by the Cal. Bridge Co. A.L.S.

Folder 12 [44] To Arthur Brown, from George Tilghman, Secretary of the Board of State Harbor Commissioners, May 18, 1889, San Francisco, 1 p. Informs Brown that the Board passed a resolution of thanks to Brown for his plans for a proposed depot to be built at the foot of Market Street. A.L.S.

Folder 13 [45] To Whom it May Concern, from Charles F. Crocker, 2nd Vice-President, Southern Pacific Company, May 20, 1889, San Francisco, 1 p. Letter of introduction to Arthur Brown on the occasion of his vacation in the East and Europe. A.L.S. + handwritten envelope.

Folder 13 [46] To Arthur Brown from J.R. Talcott, Chairman, Board of Supervisors of Alameda County, California, July 1, 1898, Oakland, 1 p. Request for Brown's advice on whether Cotton Brother's bill for modification of the plans and specifications for the Webster Street Bridge is reasonable. A.L.S.

Folder 13 [47] To Hon. N. N. Stranahan and his assistants, Collectors of the Port of New York, from John Gomez, Consul-General of the United States of America, November 19, 1903, Paris, 1 p. Letter introducing Arthur Brown, Jr., a student returning home after residing in Paris for 6 years. T.L.S.

Folder 13 [48] To Arthur Brown from Willis Jefferson Polk (1867-1924), architect for D. H. Burnham and Co., Architects, October 19, 1907, San Francisco, 1 p. Requests dimensions of the Southern Pacific's Oakland Mole to use as a model for the design of the Western Pacific mole in Oakland. T.L.S.

Folder 14 [49] To Arthur Brown, Oakland, from Henry S. Jacoby, member of the Committee on Wooden Bridges and Trestles, American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association, not dated, Ithaca, New York, 2 p. Asks for Brown's help with a history of the origins and development of wooden bridges and trestles. A.L.S.

Box 2 Original letters.

Key

A.L.S. = Autographed letter signed

T.D. = Typed document

T.L.S. = Typed letter signed

Filing Location: Big Four Building ID 1447