

William P. Hanson Diaries

MSS 082



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Contact Information

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Collection Summary

Title

William P. Hanson Diaries, 1849, 1862-1889.

Call Number

MSS 082

Creator

William P. Hanson, 1826-1889

Language of Materials

English

Extent

Boxes: 4

Items: 33 volumes

Linear Feet: 1.5

Abstract

The diaries of William Hanson describe his life as a rancher in Yuba County from 1862-1879, then moving to Willows, California until his death in 1889. It includes recollections of Honorable D. M. Hanson crossing the Plains in 1849, written in 1919.

Information for Researchers

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research without restriction.

Usage Restrictions

No restrictions.

Publication Rights

The library can only claim physical ownership of the collection. Users are responsible for satisfying any claimants of literary property.

Alternate Form of Material

Photocopy of entire collection available in Boxes 3 and 4.

Acquisition Information

Gift of Colusa County Historical Society.

Processing Information

Processed by: Bill Jones

Finding aid updated by: Pamela Nett Kruger

Preferred Citation

William P. Hanson Diaries, MSS 082, Special Collections, Meriam Library, California State University, Chico.

Online Catalog Headings

These and related materials may be found under the following headings in online catalog.

[Colusa County \(Calif.\) -- History.](#)

[Yuba County \(Calif.\) -- History.](#)

[Willows, \(Calif.\) -- History](#)

[Farm life -- California.](#)

[Farmers -- California](#)

[Hanson, David Mark, 1840-1920.](#)

Related Collections

As I remember, by Hanson, Nicholas Wilson. Call number: F 866 H3 (N.E.Cal.)

Biographical/ Historical Note

William P. Hanson was the fourth child of George and Polly Hanson. He was born in Prestonburg, Kentucky on August 15, 1826. He married Lydia A. Wilson on March 1, 1853 in Illinois. Together they traveled to California with part of Lydia's family, William's relatives, and some cattle. William lived in Marysville for a while, working at the mines on the Feather River. Indians from Lake Country went to Rancherias along the Sacramento River to hunt and fish, sometimes visiting Marysville. Their bartering attracted the attention of William who found some Indians to acts as guides, going with them to upper Lake County. They traveled by way of Sulphur Creek, through Grizzly Canyon, and William decided to settle there with his family. They lived in Lake County from 1856 to 1860 before deciding to return to "civilization," making their new home in Yuba City until 1873. In 1873, William bought the Sam Brannan Ranch and lived the life of a farmer, an occupation common for ex-miners. In 1879, he decided to move to Willows after leasing the Brannan Ranch to his brother, Daniel. William's family remained in Willows until his death in 1889.

William and Lydia had eight children--the first and the last both died as children. In December 1889, Williams was hit by a train on Christmas Day while waiting to meet his daughter Clara. His leg was amputated afterwards, but he failed to recover from the shock and died four days later.

Scope and Content/Collection Overview

In his diaries, William expressed love and tenderness for his wife and children, who seemed to mean everything to him. He described his life as a busy, productive farmer and a genuine “family man.” He played pool, went to the races, and saw chicken fights. With his family, he went to the circus, on picnics, drank eggnog at Christmas, celebrated Thanksgiving, and went to see the fireworks on the Fourth of July. The Hanson family competed with each other in cribbage, croquet, whist, euchre, 7-up, Pedro, and Smut. William often mentioned small pleasures in his diary that would not seem to be important to such a busy man. He mentioned what Lydia made for dinner (often “exotic” foods like squab, brains, or pig head), what chores Lydia and the children did, whether someone wasn’t feeling well, and the phases of the moon.

The diaries span twenty-eight years of William’s life, 1862-1889 inclusively. The collection includes recollections of Honorable D. M. Hanson crossing the Plains in 1849, written in 1919.

Arrangement

Chronological

Material Cataloged Separately

No material cataloged separately.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Box 1

Folder 1:

1862-1865, Yuba City

1862

- January 10 “ . . . rained very hard . . . river is raising very fast . . . wind very high and we expect an overflow.” (sic)
- January 11 “High water . . . hole country under water. . .” (sic)
- January 21 “Hauled off dead horse. . .”
- January 29 “Snowed all day . . . cattle dieing fast. . .” (sic)
- March 19- April 3 Builds and launches a boat.

[On last page of diary, William wrote a list of the family members as they existed in 1862- -William P. Hanson, Lydia A. Hanson, Polly, Lilly Ella and Clara.]

1863

- March 26 “. . . We played billiards . . . got a little to much brandy. . .”(sic)

[Diary ends on June 9, 1863; next one begins January 1, 1864. This is the only gap of more than a few days in all his diaries.]

1864

- January 1 Masonic parade
May 5 "Sun is eclipse today. . ." (sic)
May 28 "Lydia sick. Boy born at 2 o' c," (George)
September 26 Minstrel show
October 10 "I went to hear a woman lecture."

1865

- January 28 Death of Aunt Lizzie Spears
February 20 Death of Sam Spears
April 5 Polly dies. ". . . oh what a night to me."
April 6 "Tended funeral . . . went to graveyard and laid away or dear sweet Polly - oh what a day to me."
April 15 ". . . Seen the extra about Lincoln's death. . ."
April 19 ". . . Went to town to Lincoln's funeral. . ."
September 5 "George got choaked and came very nigh dying." (sic)
September 17 "George very sick"
September 21 ". . . We have but little hopes of his recovery. . ."
November 2 ". . . came home and seen the little stone that George threw up."*
November 22 ". . . Water coming up fast . . . high water today... Dr. Long drowned today."
November 27 Funeral of Dr. Long

[* The incident of George's choking spells is recounted in full in "A Heart- Rending Trial Between Life and Death" in Nicholas Hanson's As I Remember.]

Folder 2:

1866-1869, Yuba City

1866

- January 13 Reads letter from Bidwell.
February 15 "Seen Chinamen a selebrating their new year. . ." (sic)
February 28 Funeral of Daniel Linder. ". . . I sit our rosebush and cedar on my dear Polly's grave."
June 24 Boy born to Mary Nabb Rosenberg.
October 18 Funeral of Judge Fowler
December 18 ". . . We corked up wood in woodhouse and fixed for a flood. The river is raising fast. . ."

1867

- February 8 Hears of death of Rufus (brother killed by Indians).
May 6-9 San Francisco
June 28- July 13 Virginia City
August 11 Funeral of brother Folder Rufus.
September 7 ". . . deaf from effects of quinine. . ."
September 28 Funeral of Eliza Nabb Rawson.
October 2 Funeral of Jack Quigley

1868

- March 3 ". . . Took quinine and was deaf all day. . ."

March 28 "Lydia and children were christened today. . . "
March 31 Fixes churn to work by dog power.
September 8 Nicholas Hanson born (Lake County)
November 3 "Great deal of excitement about election. . ." (Grant)

1869

January 27 ". . . Gave my name in as a Pioneer. . . "
March 13 Family celebrates George Hanson's birthday.*
May 8 Attends celebration of the railroad (Sacramento)
May 30 ". . . Whiped George for throwing rock in Granny's house. . ." (sic)
July 26 Attends Dan Hanson's wedding.
August 15 Nicholas is christened.
August 28 Goes to circus and to races. ". . . Lost more money on pools- - no go to races. . . For ever and ever and no more smoke. . ." (sic)
September 8- September 10 Goes to races in Sacramento.
September 24 Funeral of Thomas Linder.

[*Description of this family tradition is given in "A Beautiful Custom" in Nicholas Hanson's As I Remember.]

Folder 3:

1870-1872, Yuba City

1870

April 16-25 Wilbur Springs
May 30 Funeral of Robert Boyd

1871

March 2 "Lydia sick and babe born today." (Lydia)
July 14, August 20 Both these days are given as funeral of Tom Boyd. Tom Boyd died July 12.
December 20 "Rained today and river raising. . ." (sic)
December 29 "High water and we took out things out cellar. . ."

1872

September 5 Sees General Bidwell at races.

Folder 4:

1873 Yuba City, 1874-1875, Brannan Ranch

1873, Yuba City

(There are two volumes for 1873- - one a diary and the other a non-diary volume containing mathematical computations.)

March 23 "I joined the church today. . . "
May 6-8 San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento
June 9 Begins to move house on Brannan Ranch
June 25 "House landed today on ground all safe and sound."*
June 30 "Frank got his foot mashed. . ."**

- July 4 "Went to Marysville to see the sights . . . had a good time . . . and seen the balloon go up. . ."
- December 18 "Baby born ½ 12 OK today" (Mabel) (sic)

[*Description of the Hanson's family's relocation from Yuba City to the Brannan Ranch is in the "The Sam Brannan Ranch" in As I Remember.]

1874, Brannan Ranch

- January 18 "... High water and levee broke. . ."
- January 29 "Chinamen cut ditches to drain field. . ."
- June 13 "Lydia joined the Grangers today. . ."
- June 27 William elected roadmaster
- September 27 News of Mrs. McQuaid's death
- November 24 "Water raising fast and it is very high now. . ." (sic)
- November 25 "... old Tommy McMahon got drowned tonight. . ." (sic)

1875

- January 21 "... Water over the yard today my feet wet all day. . ."

Folder 5:

1876-1879, Brannan Ranch

1876

- March 4 "High water, water over the yard most all day. . ."
- March 7 "High water today, all over everything. . ."
- March 8 "... I slapped Ella for her sauce to me. I am sorry for it- - poor girl- - she has her pa's temper. . ."
- April 23 "High water and still raising and water over most everything. . ."
- May 1 "Very high water all over the country, sheep drowned today- - Ella and Geo and nice and Clara all we to the picknick to hawk farm. . ." (sic)
- May 7 "... Got signers to a petition for to be school trustee. . ."

(William was shot on May 26. Entries from May 25 to May 31 are done in another handwriting- - probably his wife or daughter's- the grammar and vocabulary are much improved.)

- May 26 Shot by Zinn at his pasture- - "Suffered intense agony and excruciating pain until relieved by doctor. . ."
- May 27 "... Billy Coates came down and arrested Old Zinn. . ."
- July 9 "... My darling Pet Mable . . . dead . . . oh what news to me . . . my poor darling bird gone from me forever and ever . . . took her to town and had her picture taken . . . oh what a day to me. . ." (died of pneumonia)
- July 10 Mable's funeral. "oh how lonely our home is without our sweet pet. . ."
- July 24-25 Trial of Zinn. "Jury hung and no verdick." (sic)
- November 7 "... Went to election . . . and voted for Hayes and Wheeler. . ."

1877

- November 18 "... I feel very bad and lonely today and feel so bad that my dear Ella is going away. . ."

November 21 Ella gets married (Stout)

1878

- January 16 "...River raising (sic) very fast. . ."
- January 28 "... Water all over our wheat today and still a raising (sic) fast. . ."
- February 11 "... Very bad day. I feel dreadfull bad today and my heart aches tonight-
am much discouraged I feel as if death would be a relief to me. . ." (sic)
- February 17 "... Gullies are coming up and the water in the road in front of our
house..."
- February 18 "... Went down to Olson Levee the last time . . . it all caved in today. . ."
- February 19 "... Went to the stock in field and on levee- - sheep and hogs not drowned
yet - - dreadfull flood . . . Shultz Levee broke today . . . was at Al's and
the water was in his house. . ." (sic)
- February 20 "... Water higher than I ever saw it . . . English's house went tonight . . .
and all the houses on the levees went off today . . . hogs and sheep
drowned today . . . awful day . . . one I will never forget. . ."*
- August 1 George M. Hanson dies (William's father)
- August 7 "... I got letter from David and got the sad news of my dear father's
death.. . oh how bad I feel tonight. . ."
- September 4 Funeral of Jane Apperson
- September 25 Eugene O' Connor is killed.
- November 20 George Wilson gets married (Lydia's brother).

[* Description of the flood is included in "The Sam Brannan Ranch" in Nicholas Hanson's As I Remember.]

[At rear of the diary is enclosed a letter from William's dead father dated July 3; a poem about New Year's 1886 at the Hanson's in which it is indicated that daughter Ella had two children named Willie and Mabel; a home-made check to William from Henry Krens dated 1-19-80; part of bank note dated 1877; a letter to William from R. Mahon regarding John Payne and the ownership of a ginny; a piece of paper says "C.H Kluegel, State Engineer's Office, Sacramento"; and a note concerning the rent of various barns and corrals.]

1879

- January 5 "... We made eggnog and played Smut and had a gay time- - got a little
too much eggnog. . ."
- January 14 "Ma had her teeth filled . . . Ella got stuck after the young dentist. . ."
- February 15- March 26 Entries regarding flood.
- April 30 "... We all went and seen our dear Lillie married. . ." (Thomas Newsome)
- May 3 First mention of daughter Ella's married name- - "Stout"
- July 31 Mention of Moody and Lizzie Clark (nee Boyd)*
- August 27 Visits Indian school and meets superintendent
- October 22 Hansons move to Willows
- October 4 Brannan ranch is leased to cousin Dan Hamblin.
- October 13 "Got a letter from Ella and dear little Mable's picture. . ."
- October 15 "The fortune teller came by and told Babe's fortune. . ." (Little Lydia)

November 1 “. . . Mama got mad at me. . .” (Wife Lydia)
December 21 Takes dose of turpentine for cold.

[*Humorous account of engagement of Lizzie Boyd and Moody Clark in “School Days in Sutter County” from Nicholas Hanson’s A I Remember.]

[At end of diary is a letter to Nicholas Hanson from H.H Houston regarding a round-trip ticket from Willows to Chicago dated 8-16-1927.]

Folder 6:
1880-1883, Willows
1880

June 26 “. . . Bob asked me for Clara. . .”
July 1 Clara marries Robert Miller
August 4 Visits daughter Lillie. “Seen our sweet little grandson. . .”
November 2 “Went to town early and voted for Garfield. . .”
December 1 “Heavy south wind- -blew cabin off foundation and privy over. . .”

1881

[In the beginning of diary are addresses of Mary Rosenberg and Ella Stout.]

February 10 “I was sick all day from taking morphine and quinine and other medicines.. .”
February 12 “I was very sick today all day and liked to have died at night. . .”
March 20- April 1 Lydia goes to Marysville; Flora is hired to cook and clean
April 7 “. . . am very deaf from taking so much quinine mixture. . .”
April 11-August 24 Lydia goes to Sacramento City. “I feel dreadfull lonely. . .” (sic)

[In rear of diary are four letters to William from his father- - one dated November 16, 1876, one dated October 5, 1875, and two undated. Also a “birthday” note to William from Ella, Clara, and George saying that they are giving him \$35; a receipt from A. Lusk & Co.]

1882

March 12 “. . .Bro Frank no come. . .I am sorry. . .for I expected him so much and I wanted us boys all to be together tomorrow so bad. . .”(sic)
August 16 “Stayed all day at Uncle Frank’s and had lots of fun and I put Rose and Ella in tub water and they threw water on me and we had to change our duds- - had singing and fun. . .”
November 10 (There is an entry by Cousin Rose beneath William’s- -“Feel blue tonight- - Remember me when far away if not at no other time. Rose.”
November 11 Baby boy born to Lillie and Tom Newsome.
December 4-8 Entries in William’s words; but not his writing. He has been ill.
December 24 “. . . We filled the children’s stocking . . . tonight. . .”
December 25 “. . . We made eggnog . . . went into town to Christmas tree. . .”

1883

February 17 “. . . Seen Stone and he told us Dr. Glen got shot at Jacinto today.”*

April 26 "I am total deaf today from quinine. . ."
April 28 (Entry made by child, probably Lydia, while William is sick).

[*Full account included in "The Murder of Dr. Hugh J. Glenn" in Nicholas Hanson's As I Remember.]

[At rear of diary are: short newspaper item announcing birth of Breslaver baby and death of Lincoln Harkey and A.B. Henderson, a short newspaper item announcing more births and deaths plus an ad for "Manhood Restored," two assessment notices made out to William P. Hanson dated October 1, 1881 and January 23, 1882, a recipe for cooking 100 lbs. of beef, a memo of receipt of Mr. Stone listing number of days worked, and a receipt from a blacksmith jobbing shop.]

Folder 7:
1884-1885, Willows
1884

October 24 Republican meeting in Colusa
November 4 "... Voted for Blaine and Logan. . ."

[In rear of diary are addresses for Cousin Matilda Hanson, T.J. Hanson, Mary Rosenberg, Henry T. Morse, W.W Apperson, and J.R Glenn, and Jacob Rosenberg. Also newspaper clipping headlined "California has largest crop of fruit in history," bills to William P. Hanson, a newspaper item about traditional family reunion on George Hanson's birthday, a tin-type probably of Nicholas Hanson, a paper with names and addresses of Mrs. Dr. M.E. Scott, Mrs. Robert E. Balch, Mrs. Margaret and Miss Mary Kaller, Mrs. F.A Meyer, and a sheet of paper with record of expenses.]

1885

There are three volumes for 1885. The first is a complete diary from January 1 to December 31, 1885. In this volume, April 21 through June 7, are entries written by Nicholas Hanson while William was on a trip. The second volume contains entries for April 20 through September 7, which includes William's trip to Missouri. The third volume contains entries for September 12 through September 30, 1885, which are duplicates of the entries in the first volume.

Volume 1

April 19 William begins journey to fair in New Orleans.
April 24 Nicky joins the Good Templars.
May 24 Virgil Apperson gets married.
June 8 William returns to Willows.
December 4 George (William's son) and Avery start for Arkansas.

[At rear of diary are two scraps of paper filled with arithmetical computations and penmanship practice done by Nicholas Hanson.]

Volume 2

April 21 "... started and came near to Reno. . ."

- April 24 “. . . changed cars from Omaha . . . woman cryed because she had an up
berth. . .” (sic)
- April 24 St. Louis, Missouri
- April 28-May 16 Visits many friends and relatives
- May 21 New Orleans. “I went to museum- - seen a woman with hair all over her.”
(sic)
- May 23 “We all went out to see the Battle of Sudan- - it was the greatest sight I
ever saw. . .”(sic)
- May 24 Fort Worth, Texas
- June 8 Return to Willows

[There are no entries in this volume between June 10th and August 15th, 1885. All entries between August 15 and September 4 are written in Lake County.]

Volume 3

- September 25 “. . . Had toothache all day . . . suffered dreadfull.” (sic)
- September 26 “. . . Am most crazy with toothache and Mama put hot ashes to it and I
went to the Dr. and had it pulled and I thought my head was coming off
with it but I am all right now. . .”

Box 2

Folder 1:

1886-1887, Willows

1886

There are two volumes for 1886 -one a complete diary by William P. Hanson; the other a thin volume with seventeen entries by Nicholas Hanson plus a humorous story by George Hanson about a carnival and a homely girlfriend.

Volume 1

- March 13 Annual birthday reunion in honor of George Hanson (Lake County).
- March 31 Mr. Hoag’s funeral
- August 2-7 Trip to San Francisco
- December 12 “. . . We all went to town to see balloon go up. . .”

[At rear are addresses of John Glenn, Willaim W. Apperson, Mary Rosenberg, and George M. Hanson.]

Volume 2

Entries by Nichols Hanson May 18- June 3, 1886
Story by George Hanson

1887

- April 22-24 Excursion train to Sisson (near Mt. Shasta)
- July 14 News from Frank Hanson- - has baby boy
- September 26 “Rose was married at Maxwell. . .”
- December 18 “. . . My dear Page died tonight . . . poor baby- -I’ll never get to see him
again.” (Page Hanson, Dan’s son)

[At rear of diary are addresses of: J. Roseburg, Mrs. J.H. Stuart, and Mrs. Jake Rosenberg.]

Folder 2:

1888-1889, Willows

1888

April 3 Fanny Glenn's funeral
July 18 "... Went to town and . . . got too much wine and lost my pipe. . ."
July 23 "Lillie sick and baby born about 6 OK. . ." (sic)
November 8 Harrison elected President
December 1 News that sister Elizabeth is dead.

[At rear of diary are addresses of Mrs. J. Rosenberg, Emma Epperson, Mrs. T.B. Millar, Tab, Truman, Hooker & Co., Frank and John Apperson, Mrs. Frank Lamb, and C. Weise.]

1889

There are two diaries for 1889 -one a complete volume from January to December; the other a partial from August 30 to September, which William took with him for his yearly trip to Lake County.

Volume 1

January 1 "All went to town to see the eclipse - was a grate sight. . ."* (sic)
February 6 Death of Tom Newsome, Lillie's husband
August 24 William Quint dies

[*Detailed account of this eclipse is given in "The Solar Eclipse" of Nicholas Hanson's As I Remember.]

Volume 2

Lake County, August 30- September 29, 1889
September 1 "... Rupell and Ella married"

(William's last diary entry was December 19, 1889. On December 25th, William was hit by a train and died December 29, 1889.)

[At end of diary are several newspaper clippings regarding William's accident, death, and funeral services.]

Folder 3:

1919

Memoirs, Recollections of Honorable D.M. Hanson Crossing the Plains in '49, Written in 1919 (being in his 79th year).

Box 3

Copies 1862-1869

Folder 1: 1862-1865

Folder 2: 1866-1869

Folder 3: 1870-1873

Folder 4: 1874-1877

Box 4

Copies 1878-1889, 1919

Folder 1: 1878-1881

Folder 2: 1882-1885

Folder 3: 1886-1889

1919 Memoirs by D. M. Hanson