

Couch Family Papers, 1839-1948

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Couch family
Title	Couch Family Papers
Dates	1839-1948 (inclusive) 1839 1948 1870-1890 (bulk) 1870 1890
Quantity	1.5 cu. ft., (2 document boxes, 1 card file box, 1 flat box, and 1 oversize folder)
Collection Number	Mss 952
Summary	Papers of the family of John Heard Couch, one of the original developers of the townsite of Portland, Oregon, and his descendents, including members of the Glisan and Robertson families. Papers include correspondence, legal papers, land ownership records, clippings, family Bibles, journals of John Heard Couch, and papers concerning Couch's wife Caroline and their descendants Caroline Wilson, Clementine Lewis, and Elizabeth and Rodney Glisan. Of special note is John Heard Couch's logbook, 1853-1858, for voyages on the ships <i>Chenamus</i> and <i>Madonna</i> ; and the travel diary of Nan Robertson, 1911-1912, written during a trip to San Francisco and Southern Asia.
Repository	Oregon Historical Society, Davies Family Research Library Davies Family Research Library Oregon Historical Society 1200 SW Park Avenue Portland, OR 97205 Telephone: 503-306-5240 Fax: 503-219-2040 libreference@ohs.org
Access Restrictions	The collection is open to the public.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

John Heard Couch (1811-1870) was an Oregon pioneer, sea captain, merchant, a founder of the city of Portland and founder of an important and influential Oregon family. During the 1840s he sailed ships financed by John Cushing from his home town of Newburyport, Massachusetts, with supplies for establishing a dry goods business in Oregon. In 1845 he claimed a square mile of land on the Willamette River, known as Couch's Addition, in the heart of what became Portland.

Well regarded among his fellow citizens as a fair and knowledgeable man, Couch was rewarded by several public positions, including Oregon Territorial Treasurer, Multnomah County Commissioner, Oregon Port Commissioner, Oregon Port Warden, and U. S. Inspector of Hulls for Oregon. He married Caroline Flanders (1807-1885), sister of his first mate George Flanders, in 1832. Flanders was also an Oregon pioneer, merchant and Portland founder, becoming a partner in Couch's Portland land claim in 1850.

John and Caroline Couch had four daughters, three of whom married influential Portland men. Caroline Elizabeth Couch (1833-1917) married Dr. Robert Bruce Wilson, while Clementine Couch (1838-1914) started a family with prominent Portland merchant Cicero Hunt Lewis (1826-1897). Elizabeth Raines Couch's (1842-1926) husband, Dr. Rodney L. Glisan (1827-1890), the first physician in Oregon Territory, was also an early Portland land owner and was active in Couch's Addition's real estate activities after John Couch's death.

Among Couch's descendants and relatives was Nan Robertson (1885-1928). She was a sister of Thomas Robertson (1881-1924), who married Kathleen Burns (1883-1970), a great-granddaughter of John Heard Couch.

Content Description

Papers include: Legal documents (1850-1946) such as deeds, warranty deeds, quit-claims, passport, wedding certificate, title abstracts, maps, receipts, water right certificate, tax sale; correspondence (1846-1945) to John H. Couch and others regarding property holdings; personal items, consisting of memorabilia, a Bible from the ship *Chenamus*, notes, newspaper clippings, and a prayer book. Also included is the travel journal (1911-1912) of Nan Robertson, an in-law of John H. Couch's great-granddaughter, documenting Robertson's trip to Australia, New Zealand, India, and Indonesia via San Francisco.

The journal or log book (1843-1858) kept by John H. Couch includes records of his voyages on the ships *Chenamus* (1843-1844) and *Madonna* (1849). Included is information on weather, nautical position, and daily events on board. The book also contains poems and water color illustrations of vessels.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

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Preferred Citation

Couch family papers, 1839-1948, Mss 952, Oregon Historical Society Research Library

Administrative Information

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in four series as follows

- Series A: Land records, 1854-1935
- Series B: Correspondence and ephemera, 1849-1948
- Series C: Diaries and journals, 1843-1912
- Series D: Publications, 1828, 1860

Acquisition Information

The collection is composed of materials assembled by the Oregon Historical Society from many sources over a long period of time

Three title abstracts for Couch's Addition: gift of Mrs. Harry Couch, Aug. 9, 1976, Library Accession 13801

Prayer book of Mary Caroline Wilson, and Nan Robertson diary and memorabilia: gift of Mrs. Donald E. Butler, Aug. 23, 1988, Library Accession 18949

Processing Note

Restoration and custom boxing were provided for the John Heard Couch journal, the Bible, and Nan Robertson's diary

Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

Series A: Land records, 1854-1935

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/1-3	Glisan and Couch properties—deeds, land claims, titles, general	1854-1933
1/4	Deed of property from Couch and Hastings families to Battlen	1862
1/5	Rodney L. Glisan—indexes to deeds and other title documents	ca. 1892
1/6	Deed of blocks 82 and 93 in Couch's addition to Henry Weinhard Photographic copies filed as negatives OrHi 73672 and 73673, Oregon Historical Society Research Library	1873

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1/7	Description of blocks on the north and west part of Couch's addition to the City of Portland Bound notebook, property of R. L. Glisan, including details of survey and prices for lots	ca. 1872
Abstracts of title		
Box/Folder		
2/1	Lot 8, block 140, Couch's Addition	ca. 1912
2/2	Block 149, Couch's addition	ca. 1935
2/3	Part of lots 2, 3, 6, block 149, Couch's Addition (now NE corner of NW 17th Avenue and Burnside)	ca. 1934
2/4	Part of lots 2, 3, 6, Block 149, Couch's Addition (now NE corner of NW 17th Avenue and Burnside)	ca. 1935
Folder-item		
Oversize/1	<i>Plat of Couch's addition to the City of Portland</i> (map)	undated
Oversize/2	"Notes of survey of part of John H. Couch's land claim to be conveyed by Mssrs. Couch & Flanders to the Oregon Steam Navigation Co." Surveyed by Charles W. Burrage; includes map of property	Oct. 6, 1864

Series B: Correspondence and ephemera, 1849-1948

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box/Folder		
1/8	Letters and poem Contains: letter from John McLoughlin to John Heard Couch, Oct. 21, 1849; poem titled "A school-boy's ryme [sic] on Capt. J.H.C. [John Heard Couch]"; autographed letter, signed, from C. E. S. Wood to John Lewis, Oct. 31, 1885, stating a legal opinion regarding a dispute over property on Front Avenue, Portland	1849-1885
1/9	Letters concerning the estate of Mary H. Couch	1945-1946

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Folder-item		
Oversize/3-6	Letters to John Heard Couch	1846-1850
	Letter from John M. Cushing, regarding the voyage of the ship <i>Chenamus</i>	July 14, 1846
	Letter from Benjamin Stark, New York, regarding the barque <i>Hyperion</i>	Oct. 30, 1848
	Letter from Benjamin Stark, New York, regarding the barque <i>Madonna</i>	Jan. 15, 1849
	Letter from Benjamin Stark, San Francisco, regarding business matters	March 13, 1850

Box/Folder

1/10	Notes and memorabilia from Nan Robertson's travels in South Asia Materials relate to diary of Nan Robertson, box 4	1911-1912
1/11	Rodney L. Glisan: papers and clippings Includes marriage license for Rodney L. Glisan and Elizabeth Raines Couch, 1863; Couch family genealogy, 1948; memorial book for Rodney L. Glisan, Trinity Parrish, Portland, 1890	1860-1890

Folder-item

Oversize/7	Marriage certificate of Rodney L. Glisan and Elizabeth Raines Couch	1863
Oversize/8	Passport of John Heard Couch Includes physical description of Couch, age 29. Original and photostatic copy	Nov. 30, 1839

Series C: Diaries and journals, 1843-1849, 1911-1912

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box		
3	Logbook of John Heard Couch	1843-1858; 1843-1849

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	Logbook kept by John H. Couch during his voyages on the <i>Chenamus</i> (1843-1844) and <i>Madonna</i> (1849). Information recorded includes date, weather, nautical position, and daily events on board. Logbook also includes poems and several watercolor illustrations of vessels	
Box/Folder		
4/1	Diary of Nan Robertson Nan Robertson travelled with her family from Portland to San Francisco via train, then by ship to Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, and India. Entries are detailed and descriptive	1911-1912

Series D: Publications, 1828, 1860-1865

Container(s)	Description	Dates
4/2	Bible from the ship <i>Chenamus</i> Bible published by Nahum Haskell and Timothy Bedlington, Boston, 1828; used on ship commanded by John Heard Couch on trip from Newburyport, Mass., to the Hawaiian Islands, 1847. Contains historical references on fly leaf.	1828
Box/Folder		
4/3	Prayer book of Mary Caroline Wilson Burns <i>The book of common prayer</i> of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, published by D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1860. Gift to Mary Caroline Wilson Burns (1857-1950) from her mother, Caroline Elizabeth Couch Wilson (1833-1917). Inscribed "Ma. Carrie from her Mother, Dec. 25th 1863"	1860

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Chenamus (Brig)
 Frontier and pioneer life--Oregon--Portland
 Madonna (Bark)
 Pioneers--Oregon--Portland--Diaries
 Real property--Oregon--Portland
 Ship captains--Diaries
 Voyages to the Pacific coast

Family Names :

Couch family--Archives
 Glisan family--Archives

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<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv67038>

Geographical Names :

Australia--Description and travel

Couch's Addition (Portland, Or.)

India--Description and travel

Indonesia--Description and travel

New Zealand--Description and travel

Oregon--History--To 1859

Portland (Or.)--History

Form or Genre Terms :

Deeds

Estate records

Journals

Journals

Legal documents

Letters

Maps

Passports

Receipts

Ships' logs

Watercolors

Occupations :

Ship captains

Other Creators :**Personal Names :**

Couch, John Heard, 1911-1870--Archives
(creator)

Couch, John Heard, 1911-1870--Diaries
(creator)

Couch, Mary H.
(creator)

Flanders, George H., 1821-1892
(creator)

Glisan, Elizabeth Raines, 1842-1926
(creator)

Glisan, Rodney, 1827-1890
(creator)

Lewis, Clementine, 1838-1914
(creator)

McLoughlin, John, 1784-1857
(creator)

Robertson, Nan, 1885-1928--Diaries
(creator)

Stark, Benjamin, 1820-1898--Correspondence
(creator)

Wood, Charles Erskine Scott, 1852-1944--Correspondence
(creator)

2004



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