

Edward Chambreau collection, 1847-1880

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Chambreau, Edward, 1821-1902
Title	Edward Chambreau collection
Dates	1847-1880 (inclusive) 1847 1880
Quantity	0.5 linear feet, (1 container)
Collection Number	Coll 056
Summary	Edward Chambreau (1821-1902), adventurer and gambler, was born in France, migrated to Canada with his family in 1825, and in 1846 enlisted with the U.S. Army at St. Louis. From 1853 through 1875 Chambreau moved between Portland, Tygh Valley and Vancouver, running saloons, gambling parlors, general stores and a restaurant. In 1875 Chambreau converted to Christianity, sold his saloon and gave up gambling. He became a scout for the U.S. government and traveled between Oregon, Washington and Idaho in 1877. In 1880 he surveyed the conditions of nine Northwest Indian nations. The Edward Chambreau Collection contains letters, manuscripts of his autobiography, diaries, articles written by him and General O.O. Howard, and his military reports. These materials are not originals, but are rather photocopies and typescripts. Chambreau's autobiography is unique in that it has not been sanitized or edited; it paints a vivid, lurid and fascinating picture of frontier life. The collection is a valuable source for details on the activities of the Hudson Bay Company, early American/Indian relationships in Oregon and the strategies and techniques of bushwhacking, bar-fighting and card cheating.
Repository	University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives. UO Libraries--SPC, 1299 University of Oregon Eugene OR 97403-1299 Telephone: 541-346-3068 Fax: 541-346-3485 spcarref@uoregon.edu
Access Restrictions	Collection is open to the public. Collection must be used in Special Collections & University Archives Reading Room.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Historical Note

Edward Chambreau was born in France on January 12, 1821, and migrated to Canada with his family in 1825, where he attended school in Montreal until he was sixteen. In 1837 he took part in the French-Canadian *Fils de la Liberté* rebellion. He left home in 1838, and in 1846 enlisted with the U.S. Army at St. Louis. During the Mexican-American War, he crossed the continent to California with General Kearney's Army of the West. In 1847 he moved north to Oregon City, Oregon and joined the Hudson's Bay Company. When the Gold Rush began in 1849 Chambreau left for California and stayed until 1852, mining and gambling in Sacramento. Chambreau returned to Oregon in 1852 and took a job as a ticket seller and bouncer for the state's first circus. That year he met and married Barbara Ann McBea.

From 1853 through 1875 Chambreau moved between Portland, Tygh Valley and Vancouver, running saloons, gambling parlors, general stores and a restaurant. He worked for the US Army for three months under the indirect command of Captain Ulysses S. Grant in 1853, and joined Captain Kelly's ranger company in 1856 for another brief stint. In 1873 Chambreau toured the major cities of the US by train on his way to visit his ninety-three year old father in Montreal. Chambreau's saloon burned in the great Portland fire of August 2, 1873; losses were heavy. Another fire in 1874 burned down his liquor store.

In 1875 Chambreau became an ardent convert to Christianity, sold his saloon to his partner and gave up gambling. His life, however, did not become any less adventurous. He opened a grocery store in 1875, and became a scout for the US government and traveled between Oregon, Washington and Idaho in 1877. In 1880, just before retiring from government work permanently, he surveyed the conditions of nine Northwest Indian nations. Edward Chambreau died in Portland on February 20, 1902.

Content Description

The collection contains letters, manuscripts of his autobiography, his diaries, articles written by him and General O.O. Howard, and his military reports. None of these materials are originals, but rather are photocopies and typescripts. Chambreau's original narrative and writings were passed through his family until 1964, when his granddaughters, Margaret Lindgren and Wynifred C. Grasle, donated them to Reed College. The original papers at Reed include Chambreau's autobiography, written in pencil, his scouting journals, articles written on issues of the day, and associated documents and memorabilia.

The Chambreau autobiography is unique because unlike most other autobiographies by western frontiersmen, it has not been "sanitized," nor has it been edited to "improve" its English. Although Chambreau wrote it to illustrate the perils of fighting, gambling and drinking, he still paints a vivid, lurid and fascinating picture of frontier life. These materials are a valuable source for details on the activities of the Hudson Bay Company, early American/Indian relationships in Oregon and the strategies and techniques of bushwhacking, bar-fighting and card cheating.

Letters: The first two folders of the collection contain photocopies of letters from Chambreau to General Oliver Otis Howard (1830–1909; known as the "Christian General"), Commander of the Department of the Columbia. The original letters are to be found in the Bowdoin College Library.

Manuscripts: Folders 3 through 5 are devoted to two essentially similar copies of Chambreau's autobiography (1847–1890). The first version is a photocopy of a holographic manuscript, the original being in the Reed College Library. The second is a typescript of a manuscript in the hands of W.W. Chambreau of Des Moines, Iowa. This version has an introduction that contains biographical information about Chambreau's early life in Montreal. Folders 6 and 7 contain typescripts of diaries, letters, military reports and articles on frontier life written by Chambreau and General Howard. The originals are in the possession of W.W. Chambreau.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Property rights reside with Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries. Copyright resides with the creators of the documents or their heirs. All requests for permission to publish collection materials must be submitted to Special Collections & University Archives. The reader must also obtain permission of the copyright holder.

Archival material may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal and/or state right to privacy laws and other regulations.

Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in this collection without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g. a cause of action for invasion of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the University of Oregon assumes no responsibility.

If a researcher finds sensitive personal information in a collection, please bring it to the attention of the reading room staff.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Edward Chambreau collection, Coll 056, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Collection is organized into the following series: Outgoing letters from Chambreau to General Oliver O. Howard; and Manuscripts (writings by Chambreau).

Processing Note

Collection processed by staff.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Copy of inventory

Box1, Folder1

Letters

Edward Chambreau collection, 1847-1880
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv73195>

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Box	Folder		
1	2	Letters to General Oliver O. Howard (photocopies of originals in Bowdoin College Library)	1876-1879
1	3	Letters to General Oliver O. Howard (photocopies of originals in Bowdoin College Library)	1876-1879

Manuscripts

Container(s)		Description	Dates
		Autobiography, AMs (photocopy of original in Reed College Library)	1847-1862
Box	Folder		
1	5	Autobiography, AMs (photocopy of original in Reed College Library)	1862-1880
1	6	Autobiography, TMs (typescript of original held by W.W. Chambreau)	1847-1880
1	7	Diary, 1 p. (typescript of original held by W.W. Chambreau)	1863-1880
1	7	Letters to Oliver O. Howard (typescripts of originals held by W.W. Chambreau): Description of Moses Country, December 13 [1878]; Danger from the Uncivilized Indians, 1879; December 23, 1878; January 15, 1879	1878-1879
1	7	Reports to Oliver O. Howard (typescripts of originals held by W.W. Chambreau): February 22, 1879-April 2, 1879; June 30, 1879 [2 letters]; August 12, 1879-September 12, 1879; September 1879; October 28, 1879-December 19, 1879	1879
1	7	Articles (typescripts of originals held by W.W. Chambreau): "Discovery of California Gold Mines," June 1948; "History of My Trading Post From 1856-1864"; "1858 --While I was Justice of the Peace"; "Indian Council of September 1858"; "Drunken Indian 1858"; "Indian Raid Upon Warm Springs Reservation in 1859"; "Trip to Sheep-Eaters 1879"	

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1 7	Article by General Oliver O. Howard: "Horrors of the Columbia"	

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Businessmen--Northwest, Pacific--Biography

Frontier and pioneer life--Northwest, Pacific

Personal Names :

Chambreau, Edward, 1821-1902--Archives

Chambreau, Edward, 1821-1902--Correspondence

Howard, O. O. (Oliver Otis), 1830-1909

Corporate Names :

Hudson's Bay Company

Form or Genre Terms :

Diaries

Finding aid prepared by Finding aid prepared by Rose M. Smith
2004



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