

Guide to the Union Colony Maps and Letters Collection 2017.117

Reference Code US CoGrCGM 2017.117
Title Union Colony Maps and Letters Collection
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Finding Aid
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Name and location of Repository

Hazel E. Johnson Research Center
Greeley History Museum
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Greeley, Colorado 80631
Phone: (970) 336-4187
Email: museums@greeleygov.com
URL: <http://greeleymuseums.com>

Collection Summary

Dates 1872-1876
Bulk Dates 1872-1873
Level of description Item
Extent 3.3 cubic feet
Creator(s) Boston Rare Maps, 88 High St. Southampton, MA 01073
www.bostonraremaps.com

Administrative/Biographical History

Nathan Meeker

Nathan Meeker was born on July 12, 1817 in Euclid, Ohio. He was a journalist, novelist, poet, teacher, traveling salesman, small-time merchant, utopian and, for a short time at the end of his life, U.S. Indian Agent. After graduating from Oberlin College he bounced around attempting to establish himself as a poet, before marrying Arvilla Delight Smith in 1844, and settling in the Ohio Trumbull Phalanx, “a colony founded for the practical realization of the social theories of Francois Fourier, a man of great interest to Meeker.” The Colony failed in 1847, and thereafter he established and then lost stores in Ohio and Illinois. Along the way he gained the attention of Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune, who helped him publish some novels and employed him as a correspondent during the Civil War. After the Civil War, Meeker became the agriculture editor of the New York Tribune. In 1869 Meeker traveled to Colorado to scout out a location for a town where he eventually established the Union Colony of Colorado in 1870.

Brief History of the Union Colony

Nathan Cook Meeker conceived Greeley, Colorado as a utopian agricultural colony. Meeker's idea for establishing a town in the West was inspired by a trip to Colorado Territory in October 1869. Returning to New York City, he wrote an article, "A Western Colony," which was enthusiastically endorsed by the *New York Tribune's* editor, Horace Greeley, and printed in several December issues of the paper. On December 4, 1869, Nathan Cook Meeker published "The Call" in the *New York Tribune* at the advice of his employer, Horace Greeley. In the article, Meeker laid out his plans to establish a colony in Colorado that would extol the virtues of Christianity and temperance and promote irrigation, farming, and semi-communal living. The colony that Meeker established in early 1870 was originally named the Union Colony, but it was later renamed Greeley in honor of Horace Greeley.

Meeker called for as many as fifty people to establish the colony. Ten would need \$10,000 or more, or twenty would need \$5,000 each. All others could have anywhere between \$200 and \$1000 available to pool resources for the community. The response to Meeker's "call" for colonists far exceeded his expectations; more than 3,000 inquiries were received from people looking for an opportunity to establish a new home in a new land.

The proposed settlement was to include tracts of land divided into ten acres apiece. These lots would then be divided into eight sections each for building purposes. Each family in the colony was to be apportioned between 40 to 160 acres each for farming and grazing. The more desirable lots, as well as lots in the town, were to be sold and the proceeds were also to be pooled for the betterment of the community. Meeker thought it very important for the town to have a church, town hall, a school, and a library from the outset. He also believed that it was best for members of the colony to live within the town, even though many colonists owned land outside of town which they farmed. He wrote, "Some of the advantages of settling in a village will be: easy access to schools and public places, meetings, lectures, and the like, and society can be had at once. In planting, in fruit-growing, and improving homes generally, the skill and experience of greater progress can be made than where each lives isolated."

In December, a joint-stock colonization company, called the Union Colony, was organized, and \$155.00 collected from each member was held in an account by treasurer, Horace Greeley, for the purchase of land in the West. More than 700 people joined the colony as investors, participants, or both. Colonists embraced Meeker's beliefs in temperance, religion, education, cooperation, agriculture, irrigation, and family values as being essential to the town's character and success.

J.P. Cranford

J.P. Cranford was a prominent Brooklyn contractor, with a primary interest in paving. By 1873 he was President of the Abbott Pavement Company, and sometime later he founded a paving firm under his own name. Indeed, according to one source, by 1916 the firm had become "gigantic" and "laid a large part of Brooklyn's paving." He seems to have been a major non-resident investor in the Union Colony. In 1889, for example, he contributed land at Greeley for the site of the State Normal School (Boyd, p.253). He is not mentioned in any of the records

reprinted in Willard's *The Union Colony at Greeley, Colorado 1869-1871*; however, his wife Jane Sarah Cranford (1830-1902), is recorded there as having purchased at auction on July 10, 1871 a total of 19 lots for \$940 (Willard, p. 154).

Scope and Content

The archive consists primarily of correspondence between Nathan Cook Meeker, Union Colony of Colorado founder, and J. P. Cranford, Brooklyn construction magnate and investor. The collection includes sixteen letters and notes, as well as six manuscript maps and four other documents. The maps provide a detailed view of the Colony and town in their earliest years and at various scales.

System of Arrangement Conditions governing access

Order imposed by material type and subject.

Conditions governing access

There are no restrictions on the access of this collection.

Conditions governing reproduction and use

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

Languages and scripts of the materials

English

Custodial History

Boston Rare Maps acquired the collection and sold it to the Union Colony Company of Colorado who donated it to the City of Greeley Museums in 2017.

Notes

Preferred citation: City of Greeley Museum's Permanent Collection, #2017.117

Names

Abbott
Boyd, David, b. 1833
Buckley, J. D., 1837-1889
Cranford, Jane Sarah
Cranford, J. P.
Emerson, Charles, 1816-1896
Greeley, Horace, 1811-1872
Kelly
Kennedy, Silas S., b. 1836
Martin, Henry V.
Meeker, Nathan Cook, 1817-1879
Meeker, Ralph, 1845-1921

Post, William H., d. 1872
Shattuck, Joseph Cummings, 1835-1921
Thomas
Thompson, Stillman K., 1831-1912

Places Evans (Colo.)
Greeley (Colo.)
Union Colony of Colorado

Subjects Cities & towns
Land subdivision
Land use
Real estate development

Document Forms Broadside
Letters
Lists
Maps

Contents

Series I: Maps
Six manuscript maps

Series II: Letters
Sixteen letters – primarily correspondence from 1872-73 between Union Colony founder Nathan Cook Meeker and Brooklyn construction magnate and investor J.P. Cranford.

Series III: Documents
Four documents, including a printed circular, two lists of lots and prices, and a letterpress broadside announcing the Colony's intention to close out all its landed property.

Container List

Series I: Maps
Box Folder
1 1
Oversized Maps Rehoused in Map Drawers

Series II: Letters
Box Folder
1 2-3

Series III: Documents
Box Folder
1 3