

INVENTORY

JOHN M. FRANCISCO COLLECTION

248

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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INVENTORY: JOHN M. FRANCISCO COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION:

John M. Francisco, frontiersman, sutler, and politician during the early period of settlement in southern Colorado, was born in Bath, Virginia in 1820. After spending most of his boyhood in Virginia, Francisco moved to Saline County, Missouri in 1836. Following his father's death in the early 1840's, Francisco returned to the family plantation in Virginia to oversee its operations. He remained there until 1845.

Poor health forced Francisco to leave Virginia and relocate to Wisconsin. He remained in Wisconsin for three years during which time he engaged in prospecting and mining. Following his stint in Wisconsin, Francisco moved to Missouri, and later, he ventured on to Sante Fe and Chihuahua, Mexico.

In the early 1850's, Francisco organized two mercantile posts, one in Abiquiu, Rio Riba County, New Mexico and the other along the Rayado Creek near Fort Union, New Mexico. He operated the posts for approximately two years and then took on the position as a government sutler at Fort Garland. Francisco built the first house at the Fort. He is also credited with establishing branch stores throughout the southern region. Francisco remained at Fort Garland until 1862.

In 1861 Francisco was elected to the First Territorial Legislature as a member of the "Council." The following year he was nominated for Congress, however, he was defeated. During the early 1860's, Francisco sold his mercantile posts and settled in Pueblo where he supposedly built the first house of any importance. He also during this time period located an old Spanish grant upon the site where the town of La Veta now stands. He secured the land grant, built a large adobe plaza and an impressive house, and improved, irrigated, cultivated, and ranched the land. The village initially was called Francisco Plaza in honor of John N. Francisco.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The collection contains correspondence (1852-1870), notes and accounts (1850-1868), a quit claim deed (1861), various certificates of appointment and election (1856-1862), and publications (1862). In addition to the aforementioned documents there are two rolls of microfilm of Francisco's papers.

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The documents found in the Francisco Collection are invaluable for the interesting and useful information they shed on life and business dealings in southern Colorado during the early period of settlement. The researcher can learn about Francisco's business affairs with such men as Ceran St. Vrain, explorer, trader, and one of the Taos colony of pioneers, Alexander Hickland, employee of Bent's Fort and rancher, Lafayette Head, Indian Agent and founder of Conejos, and Charles Autobeas, owner of Autobeas Plaza on the Arkansas River.

PROVENANCE:

The documents found in the collection were collected by Mrs. Rosamond Slack. The collection was donated by Mrs. Frank Daniels of Antonito, Colorado in May 1957.

INVENTORY: JOHN M. FRANCISCO COLLECTION (Cont.)

- FF 1: Correspondence, 12/8/1852-3/22/1859
- FF 2: Correspondence, 4/16/1859-4/7/1860
- FF 3: Correspondence, 7/12/1860-4/30/1861
- FF 4: Correspondence, 5/31/1861-9/3/1861
- FF 5: Correspondence, 9/9/1861-8/7/1862
- FF 6: Correspondence, 12/13/1862-1/20/1864
- FF 7: Correspondence, 5/2/1864-11/24/1865
- FF 8: Correspondence, 12/15/1864-2/9/1870
- FF 9: Correspondence, n.d.
- FF 10: Quit claim deed: Colorado Town Company to John M. Francisco, 7/1/1861
- FF 11: Notes and accounts, 1859-1868
- FF 12: Certificate of Appointment: John M. Francisco as sutler at Fort Massachusetts, New Mexico, 11/4/1856
- FF 13: Certificate of Election: John M. Francisco to the Territorial Council, 8th and 9th Council Districts, 9/2/1861; Certificate of Appointment: John M. Francisco as notary public, Costilla County, Colorado Territory, 1/25/1862
- FF 14: Printed copy: "Rules of the House of Representatives and Joint Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Colorado," 1862
- FF 15: Newspaper: The Western Mountaineer, Laurette (Buckskin Joe), Colorado Territory, 7/3/1862 (one sheet)