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Guide to the Emil Teichmann Papers 1868-1925



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.TEICHMANN
Title	Teichmann, Emil. Papers
Date	1868-1925
Size	0.75 linear feet (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Emil Teichmann (1845-1924) was a British fur trader sent to investigate possible illicit Russian fur trade in North America in 1868. The collection contains his original journal from 1868, the typed copy edited by Teichmann's son, Oskar Teichmann, correspondences between Teichmann and other traders, sketches, contracts, photographs, notes, and other memorabilia. The papers primarily document his trading negotiations, and photographic and illustrated scenes of landscape and cities like San Francisco and Sitka, Alaska.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Teichmann, Emil. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

In 1868, Emil Teichmann (1845-1924), an Englishman of German descent, entered the New York branch of Messrs. J.M. Oppenheim & Co., the leading fur merchants of London. At that time the Oppenheim Co. enjoyed a monopoly of the Alaskan fur-seal trade through a contract with the Russian-American Company, who delivered the entire yearly catch of sealskins to the London firm at a fixed price. No change was anticipated in this situation until, in the Autumn of 1867, the sale of Alaska to the U.S. was announced. The Russian-American Co., chartered by the Russian government, went into liquidation thus jeopardizing its contract with the Oppenheim Co., which was to run until the end of 1868. It was very important to the English company to save the seal catch of 1867 and if possible, that of the following year. Since the value of the furs was above the price originally contracted for, there was a danger that the Russian officials would attempt to sell part of the skins, rightfully belonging to the English firm,

to speculators. Emil Teichmann's mission was to keep an eye upon the Russians and to discover, if possible to prevent, a breach of the contract.

Leaving New York on February 12th, 1868, and after crossing the Isthmus of Panama by rail, Teichmann continued by sea until he reached San Francisco, the shipping center for the Russian–American Company. News of an illicit shipment of sealskins reached him there, but no witnesses were forthcoming. After a stay of three weeks, Teichmann set out for his ultimate goal, Sitka, Alaska. Upon his arrival, in view of the secret nature of his mission, he adopted the role of a slightly eccentric naturalist. In this dirty but friendly frontier town, among the still present Russians and the newly–arrived Americans, the young Englishman, after various adventures and seemingly hopeless dead ends, at last succeeded, through bribery and perseverance, in completing his mission. After six weeks in Sitka he returned to San Francisco.

The return voyage to New York was made via the overland route, through Salt Lake City, Omaha and Chicago, and was accomplished in 17 days. On October 22, 1868, after eight months of travel, Emil Teichmann sailed back to England on the Steamer, Deutschland.

Scope Note

During his American travels, Emil Teichmann kept a travel diary which, after his return to England, he rewrote and considerably amplified. This second version was written in German for the benefit of his German–speaking parents. After the author's death in 1924, his son, Oskar, prepared a typewritten English version based upon the first two versions. This was privately published in 1925, in a very abbreviated form.

The collection of material relating to Emil Teichmann's Alaskan mission includes the original diary and the typewritten English version made by his son. A copy of the printed edition, number 10 of 100 of a limited run in 1925, is housed in the Special Collection's Rare Book Collection (F908.T26 1925). The collection also includes notes about contracts; contract drafts; sketches by Teichmann; photographs; notes on trade and language; and an ivory artifact from Alaska.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

Browse finding aids by topic.

The Falls of Niagara...London, T. Nelson & Sons, 1868 (Cat. in Rare Bk. Coll.)

From England to California. Life among the Mormons... Sacramento City, J.A. Wilson, c. 1868, (Cat. In Rare Bk. Coll.)

Teichmann, Emil. A Journey to Alaska in the year 1868; being a diary of the late Emil Teichmann, edited with an introduction by his son Oskar. Kensington, Cayme Press, 1925. (no. 10 of 100 copies privately printed). (Cat. In rare Bk. Coll. F908.T26 1925)

Subject Headings

- Teichmann, Emil, 1845-1924
- Teichmann, Oskar, 1880-1959
- Fur trade - Alaska - History - 19th century
- Sealing - Alaska
- Northern fur seal - Alaska
-
- Alaska - History
- Diaries

INVENTORY

Box 1

Teichmann, Emil. A Journey to Alaska in the year 1868; Being a Diary of the Late Emil Teichmann, Typewritten manuscript, edited by Major Oskar Teichmann, based on the original diary and on the amplified version composed by Emil Teichmann after the conclusion of his trip

Box 1

Folder 1

Original personal daily pocket calendar/diary from 1868 that was transcribed into A Journey to Alaska, a more or less daily record of ET's journey from N.Y. to Sitka, Alaska, via Panama, San Francisco, Portland and Victoria, and the voyage back to N.Y. via San Francisco and Chicago, 1868.

Box 1

Folder 2

Papers and Correspondence, circa 1868

- Draft of a contract (?) with fur/skin trappers
- Business notes
- Trading contract with E.E. Smith made in San Francisco, 1868
- Trading contract with Nicholas Popoff made in Alaska Territory, 1868
- List of Information from Popoff
- Another trading contract with Nicholas Popoff made in Alaska Territory, 1868
- General description of Russian Territory and culture with sketches
- Letter from William H. Wood to Teichmann dated August 20, 1868
- Copy of trading contract with Micheal Nenowich made in San Francisco, 1868
- Business summary for July (1868?)
- Empty envelope entitled "1868, Papers Connected with my secret mission to Alaska"

Box 1

Folder 3

Papers and Correspondence, circa 1868

- Note about a private in the U.S. Army, Nicholas Bapoff
- Note about San Francisco
- Note about Chinese Theaters
- Note about immigrant laborers
- List entitled, "Views taken from my trip from New York to Sitka," 60 sketches listed.
- Accounting list on a scrap of paper
- 19 misc. descriptive sketches (4 leaves)
- Vocabulary list of an Indian language and sketches 2 leaves
- Unknown sketch with address on the other side, "E. Teichmann to Mr. M. Terenlieff (?)"

Box 1**Folder 4**

Sketches, undated

- Miscellaneous sketches of people and objects
- 34 carte-de-visites. Views of Salt Lake City and California.

Box 1**Folder 5**

Memorabilia, 1868, undated

- 2 Illustrations of Sitka clipped from a newspaper and used in the published version of the diary
- One copy of Alaska Herald; San Francisco. v. 1;3. (April 1, 1868)
- One Wells Fargo ticket
- One advertising card for the Michigan Central R.R.
- One business card for Alfred Muller
- List of passengers on the Deutschland

Box 2

4 medium sized mounted photographs of San Francisco after the earth quake and Salt Lake City

Box 2

33 small mounted photographs and portraits (files marked no. 1-32)

Box 2

14 currency photographs (files marked no. 33-46)

Box 2

Alaskan ivory artifact