Grindell, John (b. 1828)

The overland narrative of John Grindell: Platteville, Wis., to California 1850: typed carbon copy
1850 March 25-August 1

Abstract: This typed transcript of a journal chronicles Platteville, Wisconsin, resident John Grindell's 1850 overland journey west during the California Gold Rush.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 097, Item 031
Creator: Grindell, John (b. 1828)
Title: The overland narrative of John Grindell: Platteville, Wis., to California 1850 : typed carbon copy
Inclusive Dates: 1850 March 25-August 1
Extent: 1 v. (18 p.) ; 29 cm.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

John Grindell was born in Ireland in 1828 to Thomas and Jane Grindell, who settled in Toronto, Canada, in 1830. Grindell learned the cabinet maker's trade in Toronto, then migrated to Platteville, Wisconsin, in 1849.

Grindell traveled overland from Platteville, to California during the California Gold Rush. He left in March of 1850 and arrived in August. He began as a member of a company of pioneers but finished the trip alone and on foot. He began mining on August 1 and spent two years searching for gold. Grindell did not find his trip as profitable as he had hoped and of the four men in his original party, he was the only one to survive and return to Wisconsin.

On his return to Platteville in 1852, Grindell opened a furniture store with his brother William, which they operated together for forty years. In 1852, Grindell married Susan Cook, of Beetown, Wisconsin. Together, they had six children. During the American Civil War, Grindell raised a company of volunteers in Platteville for the Army of the Tennessee, and served as a First Lieutenant.

Grindell was an active Republican, was elected treasurer of Platteville in 1866, and president of the village board in 1880. He was also a life-long Methodist and Mason. He lived in Platteville until at least 1900.

Sources:


Additional biographical information derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

This typed transcript of a journal chronicles Platteville, Wisconsin, resident John Grindell's 1850 overland journey west during the California Gold Rush.

This item is a typed transcript of John Grindell's "Scetch [sic] Book of the travels from Platteville, Wisconsin to Califor(nia)." It is one of three copies made by the author's family, who possess the original. It was sold under the condition that it would not be published and that no additional copies would be made. The daily entries describe the journey west to California and its many hardships. Grindell wrote about purchasing supplies, hunting, encounters with Native Americans, camping locations, illnesses, accidents, weather, river crossings, and the search for grass and water for the horses. He also described the major landmarks he encountered on the trail including Independence Rock, the Platte River, Church Rock, Laramie Peak, and Soda Springs. On July 23, he decided to leave the company with which he began the journey and travel the rest of the way on foot. He stopped writing in his journal after arriving at the California mines on August 1. The last two pages of the typescript contain lists of the distance traveled per day, Grindell's personal expenses, and the company's expenses.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Grindell, John (b. 1828)--Diaries.

Topical Terms

Frontier and pioneer life--West (U.S.)--History--19th century.
Overland journeys to the Pacific.
Voyages and Travels--History--19th century.
Pioneers--West (U.S.)--Diaries.

Geographic Names

West (U.S.)--Description and travel.
California--Gold discoveries--1840-1850.

Form/Genre Terms

Diaries.

Related Materials in other Repositories

The Overland Narrative of John Grindell. Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 097 Diaries, Journals, and Ships' Logs collection.
Detailed Description of the Collection

The overland narrative of John Grindell: Platteville, Wis., to California 1850 : typed carbon copy, 1850 March 25-August 1 [Item 031]

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