Support for the exhibition *Bancroft to the Core* has been generously provided by

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BANCROFT TO THE CORE

HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT arrived in San Francisco in 1852 determined to sell books. The nineteen-year-old East-Coast transplant found more pleasure—and profit—peddling books than digging for gold and by 1856 had founded his own bookselling company, H.H. Bancroft and Co. In 1860, Bancroft initiated a new phase in his career when he began collecting books. This initial collection was created to help the aspiring publisher enter the burgeoning publishing market on “Pacific Slope” topics. As Bancroft became more interested in collecting books, the bookseller gave way to the collector and historian. Bancroft recollected that “gradually and almost imperceptibly . . . the area of my efforts enlarged. From Oregon it was but a step to British Columbia and Alaska; and as I was obliged for California to go to Mexico and Spain, it finally became settled to my mind to make the western half of North America my field, including in it the whole of Mexico and Central America.” The result was a library that by the turn of the century included 50,000 volumes as well as hundreds of manuscripts, maps, dictations (early oral histories), pictorial materials, and other original records. The century concluded with Bancroft as collector of materials documenting the complicated history of what he called the Pacific States, later using these materials in The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, a 39-volume history of the region. As a collector, Bancroft learned as he went along, following new paths suggested by what he found or could not find in his quest to articulate for himself the historical narrative of the area. His desire to account for all printed matter on California led him to collect books on his visits to Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He crossed the Atlantic in 1866 with his wife Emily to rummage through bookstores in London, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Austria. He also relied on agents to purchase books at auctions abroad. In 1874 he traveled up the coast from southern California, visiting the chain of Franciscan missions and consulting records of their establishment and enterprises. His documentation not only included reputable publications, like rare books and important historical documents, but also pamphlets and ephemera of all sorts. He pored over newspapers wherever he visited and gathered thousands for his collection, considering them the baseline for historical inquiry. He courted significant individuals, including Californios and prominent pioneers, expressing interests in official and family documentation they might have. And when he could not find the written or published records, he had them created—sending out scribes to gather “dictations” or personal narratives. By such comprehensive—some might say indiscriminate—collecting, Bancroft provided evidence for all aspects of social, political, and cultural affairs. His “trash” has indeed become treasure to those interested in social history.

HUBERT HOWE BANCROFT
Born in Granville, Ohio, in 1832 into what he called “an atmosphere of pungent and invigorating Puritanism.” At the age of sixteen, Bancroft began working in the bookstore of his brother-in-law, George Derby, in Buffalo. In 1852 Bancroft traveled to California to sell books to the culture-hungry Argonauts. A successful entrepreneur, Bancroft set up his publishing and bookselling business in San Francisco, and soon became a voracious collector of materials documenting the complicated history of what he called the Pacific States, later using these materials in The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, a 39-volume history of the region. As a collector, Bancroft learned as he went along, following new paths suggested by what he found or could not find in his quest to articulate for himself the historical narrative of the area. His desire to account for all printed matter on California led him to collect books on his visits to Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. He crossed the Atlantic in 1866 with his wife Emily to rummage through bookstores in London, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Austria. He also relied on agents to purchase books at auctions abroad. In 1874 he traveled up the coast from southern California, visiting the chain of Franciscan missions and consulting records of their establishment and enterprises. His documentation not only included reputable publications, like rare books and important historical documents, but also pamphlets and ephemera of all sorts. He pored over newspapers wherever he visited and gathered thousands for his collection, considering them the baseline for historical inquiry. He courted significant individuals, including Californios and prominent pioneers, expressing interests in official and family documentation they might have. And when he could not find the written or published records, he had them created—sending out scribes to gather “dictations” or personal narratives. By such comprehensive—some might say indiscriminate—collecting, Bancroft provided evidence for all aspects of social, political, and cultural affairs. His “trash” has indeed become treasure to those interested in social history.

Henry L. Oak
Born in Garland, Maine, and graduated from Dartmouth in 1865, Oak came to California in 1866 to be a clerk at McNear Brothers, a grain warehouse, and then worked as a teacher in Napa and as an editor for the new Occident, the Presbyterian Church newspaper, before becoming a librarian for Bancroft in 1869. He knew both Spanish and French. Bancroft noted that Oak was the “only live Yankee to find permanent occupation” at the Bancroft. “New Englanders in California, as a rule, make better businessmen than literary men.” Oak wrote more of the Works than any other person.

William H. Knight
In 1899 Bancroft hired William H. Knight to write a series of handbook guides on states of the Pacific Slope. To aid himself Knight put together a small collection of reference books. When Bancroft spotted the assembled books, he began to wonder how many extant books there were on California. At Bancroft’s request, Knight found some 30 to 75 volumes. Before long, Bancroft himself began adding to this collection as he ran across books while perusing the collections of other San Francisco booksellers. This original collection constituted the nucleus of the Pacific Coast Library, the original name for what would become The Bancroft Library.

Lenguage de California
Grammar and vocabulary of various California Indian languages with musical notations and portions of the Mass in Gregorian form
Santa Ynez, California, 1857.

BANC MSS C-675
**FIELD COLLECTORS**

Bancroft’s numerous assistants played an important role in growing the library, each using his or her particular skills and talents to extract information from individuals or to collect unique documentation. For gathering information about Spanish and Mexican California as well as documenting the unique stories of early Californians, Bancroft relied on men like Thomas Savage and Enrique Cerruti, who traversed the Golden State copying and collecting original Spanish-language documents and recording the stories of native Californians and American pioneers and settlers such as Pío Pico, John Sutter, and John Bidwell. Bancroft’s second wife Matilda also accompanied her husband to Mexico to conduct research. Bancroft selected individuals he thought could be of benefit to his enterprise, depending on them for authentic documentation, although Ivan Petrov would prove less than reliable. According to Bancroft, who provided a description of Petrov’s adventure in *Literary Industries*, Petrov tramped across the Aleutian Islands in search of aged Alaskans whose memories reached back to the early days of European settlement. One who was extremely reliable was Alphonse Pinart, a French linguist who traveled to Russia, the Pacific islands, Alaska, New Mexico, and Arizona in search of information primarily about indigenous languages. Pinart, who is profiled in a separate exhibition case, was also essential to Bancroft’s second wife when she married the widower in New Haven, Connecticut. Matilda quickly realized her husband’s obsession for research when the newlyweds spent part of their honeymoon at the Pennsylvania home of John A. Sutter, the Swiss immigrant to California who founded Nueva Helvetia, the first non-Indian settlement in the Central Valley. Matilda bided her time while her husband dedicated fifty hours over five days to recording Sutter’s recollections. Matilda, however, did not long remain a bystander. By 1879, she had become an active researcher herself. On a trip to British Columbia and Vancouver Island, Matilda recorded a 140-page dictation from the Rev. John B. Good, an English missionary who experienced the Fraser River gold rush. Bancroft reminisced that his wife “accompanied me more than anyone engaged in the work” during the couple’s time in Victoria. Matilda also helped her husband gather records and oral traditions during a six-week stay in Salt Lake City in 1884. While her husband was entertained by Mormon leaders, Matilda met with local Mormon women to record their stories, including at least one of the wives of Brigham Young. After their stay in Utah, Bancroft and his family traveled to Colorado, where Matilda again recorded the stories of ranchers, treaties, and newspaper editors in Cañon City, Leadville, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs. Matilda’s interest in people and places is evident from the diary she kept of her and her husband’s 1911 trip to Mexico, during which they met Mexican President Porfirio Díaz. The Bancroft Library Portrait Collection

**Alphonse Pinart (1832–1911)**

In 1857 while attending the Paris International Exposition, fifteen-year-old Alphonse Pinart, the son of a wealthy French iron-workers owner, met Abbé Charles-Étienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, an expert on the pre-Columbian cultures of Mesoamerica. The Abbé fired Pinart’s imagination about the ancient cultures of the Americas, and two years later Pinart sailed for the Pacific Coast of North America with the intention of tracing the origins of North America’s original inhabitants. Pinart thought that the languages of native groups would indicate whether pre-Columbian Indians had traveled from Asia via the Bering Strait. To establish this connection, Pinart arranged travel to the Aleutian Islands. After Pinart gained access to his inheritance, he was able to undertake a broad range of travels from 1874–1876, during which he visited the West, Mexico, Russia, and a number of Polynesian islands. While he was in Russia studying the Tartar languages and doing research in the St. Petersburg archives, Pinart also copied material for Bancroft relating to the Russian settlements in Alaska. One of Pinart’s most important contributions to The Bancroft Library was his acquisition of the New Mexico Originals, authentic documents that chronicled the administration of New Mexico under both Spanish and Mexican authorities.

**Henry Michel (1852–1935)**

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**Ivan Petrov**

The history of Ivan Petrov is as questionable as the information he collected for Hubert Howe Bancroft. Ivan Petrov came to the Bancroft in 1875 after a less-than-stellar career in the army which included numerous desertions and reenlistments, sometimes under assumed names. To supplement his income during this time, the young Russian also penned articles about the Russo-Turkish war for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. His tenure at the newspaper proved rather brief because he was accused of plagiarizing stories from the *London Times*. Despite the harmful accusations, Petrov continued working for the Bancroft Company. In 1876, he embarked on a three-month trip to Alaska at Bancroft’s request. According to Bancroft, who provided a rousing description of Petrov’s adventure in *Literary Industries*, Petrov tramped across the Aleutian islands in search of aged Alaskans whose memories reached back to the early days of European settlement. At one point, Petrov even received a munmony from Mr. McIntyre, an agent of the Alaska Commercial Company. Items that Petrov collected included Peter Kostromitin’s dictation and manuscripts relating to Fedor Rashmakoff’s trail for sorcery. Scholars have concluded, though, that these items were likely fabrications, and many of the other documents Petrov gathered for Bancroft have now been proved to be forgeries.

**Enrique Cerruti (1836–1876)**

For someone hired to collect the facts of the past, Enrique Cerruti was a curious choice. According to Bancroft, “lying with [Cerruti] was a fine art.” In fact, Bancroft dedicated nearly two pages of *Literary Industries* to characterizing Cerruti’s practice of deception. Cerruti’s penchant for obscuring the truth aided Bancroft considerably in the collection of rare and valuable documents because Cerruti was able to “shift his opinions accordingly to the company.” Cerruti, though, was also a compassionate person who experienced the suffering of Californios who had grown wary of sharing their stories with an Anglo audience that demeaned and disregarded their experiences. Cerruti traveled throughout the Bay Area gathering personal accounts and collecting valuable manuscripts and documents from the Californios and had an especially close relationship with General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, a prominent military leader during the Mexican period in California. Cerruti persuaded Vallejo to lend his papers to Cerruti for copying, and Vallejo ultimately donated his papers to the library after he visited the Bancroft’s library in San Francisco. In a recollection in the *Sonoma Democrat*, Vallejo said that he was touched by how seriously Bancroft was invested in writing the history of his native country, although he later expressed dismay that his accounts were not published separately.

**Thomas Savage (b. 1843)**

Thomas Savage, born in Havana, was a native speaker of Spanish. After working for 21 years in the American consulate in Havana, he retired in 1877 and worked at newspapers in Panama and San Salvador before arriving in San Francisco in 1875 in search of a more hospitable climate. He entered The Bancroft Library within four months of his arrival in San Francisco and served as Bancroft’s main source of information on Spanish-American affairs, even preparing a Spanish-American Manual. He oversaw fifteen Spanish speakers who copied materials from the Spanish and Mexican provincial archives in the U.S. Surveyor General’s office in the San Francisco City Hall over the course of a year as well as the copying of material from the archbishopric of San Francisco and the work of scribes who copied materials from the archives of San Jose and Salinas. He also traveled to southern California and took dictations from a number of Californios, including Pío Pico, the former governor of California. His work reflects the thoroughness and intelligence of someone at ease with and respectful of his topic.
BANCROFT AND THE LATIN AMERICANA COLLECTION

Bancroft made his first buying trip to Europe in 1866; later he would use agents to scout out material for him and to bid on important auctions, including those of collections spirited out of Mexico after the fall of the Habsburg Mexican emperor Maximilian in 1867. In addition to using field agents, Bancroft traveled to Mexico himself. During a trip in 1843 with his daughter Lucy, he met Mexican leader Porfirio Díaz. By this point he had completed the writing of the history of Mexico up to 1800, and he was seeking more information about the 19th century. The visit allowed him to collect more books as well as to establish relationships with booksellers and politicians. He would later visit Díaz again in 1891 with his wife Matilda and his children, who traveled with him to Mexico.

José Maria Andrade Collection

Bancroft learned of the Andrade sale soon after returning from Europe in 1883. The collection contained some 7,000 manuscript and printed sources gathered together by José María Andrade, a passionate and discerning collector, who amassed one of the most significant collections of materials documenting Mexican history. When Maximilian came to power, Andrade was persuaded to turn his books over to the emperor to form the core of an imperial library, with the promise that he would be compensated. When Maximilian's demise was imminent, Andrade repurchased his collection, taking it out of Mexico City via mule train to Veracruz and sending it off to Europe before Benito Juárez and his troops arrived. Bancroft realized the opportunity this auction would provide, because much of this material was unique or so rare that it would never again appear at auction. The collection included Mexican incunabula dating back to 1540 and outstanding manuscript materials fundamental to understanding the history of Mexico. Unable to return to Europe in time for the auction, Bancroft telegraphed one of his dealers, James Whitaker Stevens, in London, £5,000 to bid on this auction (the equivalent of some £75,000 today). The outcome was the acquisition of over 3,000 volumes for the collection.

José Fernando Ramírez Library

In 1880 the outstanding collection of another Maximilian exile, José Fernando Ramírez, appeared for auction in London. Ramírez had been born and raised in Durango, had studied law there, and had been admitted to the bar, eventually becoming a federal judge. He had served as the head of the national museum of Mexico, as minister of foreign affairs, and as the president of Maximilian's first government. Once the French retreated from Mexico, Ramírez emigrated to Bonn, where he died in 1871. At the July 1880 auction in London, Bancroft, represented by London dealer Henry Stevens, acquired 1,290 items. In this case Bancroft did not set a limit, and the total cost for these items was close to $90,000, the equivalent of some $120,000 today. While Bancroft was taken aback by the cost, the auction added substantially to his holdings, especially in the area of Mexican ecclesiastical history.

Ephraim G. Squier Collection

The Squier collection was auctioned in New York in April 1879. Squier had served as an U.S. chargé d'affaires in Guatemala and organized a company that sought to create an inter-oceanic railway in Honduras and surveyed the route in 1855. In 1856 he served as U.S. consul general in Honduras. He published a number of works including: Narrativas, Scrip torial Symbol, Notes on Central America, Wisiobia, and Honduras, writing extensively in ethnology, history, and politics. Bancroft's agents said that the library's collection of Central American material was "not surpassed by any other within our knowledge." It contained manuscripts, maps, Central American newspapers, and political and historical pamphlets. He had original drawings by Frederick Catherwood of Mesoamerican ruins, engravings, photographs, and even books from the library of Alexander von Humboldt. Many of the documents had been obtained from Spanish archives by Buckingham Smith, a secretary of the U.S. Legation in Spain. Bancroft said that Squier's collection was to Central America what Andrade's was to Mexico. The collection also contained items from explorers and conquistadors like Pedrarias Dávila, Andrés de Cércere, Juan de Grijalva, Pedro de Alvarado, and Pascual de Andagoya.

California and the Mid-19th Century West

From the initial assemblage of 50-75 titles gathered by William Knight for his Hand-book Almanac for the Pacific States grew a massive collection of documentation on California and the American West. Bancroft himself was witness to much of the 19th century American period in California and traveled extensively throughout the West to get a sense of its unique local histories. However, he rightfully saw California as the key to this narrative about the West. It had become a state, after all, in 1850, preceded in the West only by Texas (1845), had by far the largest population and had early on, because of the Gold Rush, become the center of western business and trade. San Francisco was the commercial and financial hub, while the rest of California led the way in the development of agriculture, logging, mining, and other enterprises. Bancroft's familiarity with the players in this development—the immigrants who came by wagon train and by sea, the Argonauts of the Gold Rush, the individuals who developed the industries which took advantage of the bounty provided by sea and land, the entrepreneurs who developed businesses and laid the infrastructure for the state—allowed him to gather directly from them the evidence of their activities. To supplement contemporary archival and manuscript materials such as diaries of overland expeditions like the Donner party or the activities of miners in the gold fields, Bancroft had his agents take hundreds of narratives from Californio pioneers, including approximately 25 from members of San Francisco's Vigilance Committees of 1853 and 1856.

In Bancroft's visits to the Northwest, Utah, California, and the Southeast he documented similar developments in growing cities like Denver and Salt Lake City, as well activities unique to each region, such as the Mormon migration to Utah. Bancroft was an entrepreneur, a canny man of commerce, and his documentation and his World reflect that viewpoint, but there are also hints of a beginning of awareness of the importance of landscape and environment. Matilda Bancroft's dictation with Galen Clark, the guardian of Yosemite, and the materials related to leisure, tourism, and the enjoyment of the natural world suggest the need for balancing urban and rural industrialism with an appreciation and even preservation of California's spectacular wild places. While most of the documentation reflects the lives of Anglo-American men, a few efforts, such as the dictations with Mormon and Californio women, document the lives of others who contributed to the development of the West. Moreover, the activities of women and non-White immigrants to the West as well as the Native Americans of different regions, can be pieced together through the evidence that Bancroft gathered—statistics, the recounting of events both important and mundane, and diaries that mention families, friends, and the small routines of domestic life.
The curators would like to thank Director Dr. Charles Faulhaber for his support and encouragement, the Mechanics Bank and the Barkley Fund for their generosity, and acknowledge our colleagues, especially Susan Snyder, Head of Public Services for her assistance, as well as the staff of Bancroft Technical Services and the Library Preservation Department whose work behind the scenes makes our exhibitions possible.

**INDIGENOUS GROUPS**

Hubert Howe Bancroft viewed Native Americans much as did his 19th-century contemporaries, as a declining, inconsequential population, unable and often unwilling to adapt to the needs of modern enterprise and material progress. Bancroft never intended to document the contemporary presence of Native Americans in the Pacific states; he simply comments on their demise in passing, focusing rather on the effects of exploration and exploitation upon their cultures. In planning his *Works*, Bancroft determined that in order to begin his history he needed first to capture the story of the indigenous populations “...in all their native glory, and before the withering hand of civilization was laid upon them.” He realized that the pre-Columbian narrative, reflected in *Native Races*, the first five volumes of *The Works*, was complicated. However, to his credit, Bancroft reviewed the wide array of sources his library possessed and realized that the Native American population comprised heterogeneous groups whose cultures represented a wide range of social structures. His library held printed books about exploration and conquest, archival records of missionaries and other officials overseeing mission operations, manuscript accounts of encounter, depredation, and survival of Indians, and linguistic records of indigenous languages, all of which contributed to his understanding of the complicated history of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Coast.

**EXHIBITION CURATORS**

Theresa Salazar, *Curator, Bancroft Collection of Western Americana*
Jack von Euw, *Curator of The Bancroft Library Pictorial Collection*
Dylan Esson, *PhD Candidate in the History Department, University of California, Berkeley*

**EXHIBITION DESIGN**

Gordon Chun Design

William H. O’Grady (active ca. 1851–ca. 1857)
*Corlappich, Klamath River Indian Chief, 1851*
Drawing on tinted paper: ink and wash
BANC PIC 1963.002:0296—B
Robert B. Honeyman Jr. Collection of Early Californian and Western Art and Americana

Drawing made by an Eskimo
Pencil on paper
BANC MSS P.K 49, Box 1
Alaska Papers, [ca. 1871-77]