



Alexander Bowman Journals

Collection 353

Champaign County Historical Archives

Compiled by: Karla Gerdes, Sara Bennett 2022

Creator/Corporate name: Alexander Bowman

Inclusive Dates: 1849-1864

Physical Description: 1 box (1 linear ft.)

Provenance:

The Alexander Bowman Journals were donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives in May 2017 by Jim Bowman, a descendant of Alexander Bowman.

Access:

The records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

Biographical Note:

Alexander Bowman (1826-1907) was a carpenter, secretary for a teacher's association, architect, and surveyor who moved his family from New York to Illinois in 1857. Bowman and his family were part of the boom in population that followed the arrival of the Illinois Central Railroad in the 1850s.

During his time in Champaign County, he drafted the Map of Urbana and West Urbana, the 1863 Map of Champaign County, and was the architect and supervisor for the construction of the 1860 Champaign County Court House. Bowman's maps remain a significant cartographical landmark for the county over 160 years later because they capture this unique moment of massive growth and the future aspirations of the young towns. He later moved to Vermillion County, Illinois where he was the County Surveyor for many years, and was instrumental in platting many of the towns in that county.

Scope and Content Note:

This collection contains 2 journals written by Alexander Bowman, transcriptions of the journals, and a flash drive of digitized images of the journals. The first journal gives a look into the daily life of Bowman and his family in New York, prior to coming to Illinois in 1857. During this time, he was working as a carpenter, but attempting to further his education in the evening. His goal was to become a teacher, a surveyor, or open a business of his own. Health issues and money were major concerns. Historical events that happened during this time are often mentioned but not in great detail.

The second journal continues documenting the daily activities of the Bowman family while living in New York, and after their move to Champaign County in 1857. Bowman writes about major job accomplishments. These include drafting a map of West Urbana, a combined map of Urbana and West Urbana, and drawing the plans for and supervising the construction of the Champaign County Court House in 1860. On February 7th, 1864, he writes that he just sent the drawings of the 1863 Map of



Alexander Bowman Journals

Collection 353

Champaign County to the engraver and expects it to be finished by June but is concerned about the sale of the map because of an almost complete crop failure the previous year.

Entries on the front and back covers, unnumbered pages at the front, and 8 unnumbered pages of family information at the end of the journal may or may not have been written by Alexander.

Arrangement:

This collection is arranged by type of material.

Subject Terms:

Carpentry
Cartography
Diaries
Journals
Maps
Surveyors

Names:

Bowman, Alexander
Bowman, Alexander Allen
Bowman, Alexina May
Bowman, Allen Percy
Bowman, Amelia Dalmond Booth
Bowman, Amice Booth
Bowman, Benjamin Franklin
Bowman, Catharine Jeannette
Bowman, Charles Wright
Bowman, Effie Isabell
Bowman, Frederick Ellsworth
Bowman, Hubert Ellsworth
Bowman, Jeannette
Bowman, Kate
Bowman, Robert Adair
Bowman, Ruth Amelia
Bowman, Watson Edison
Crane, Charles E.
Dunlap, Harriet Virginia
Morgan, Frances Hortense
Penwell, Edmond Enos
Penwell, Frank William
Penwell, Fred Bowman
Penwell, Ruth Amelia
Price, Francis May Wilson
Watson, Louie Hasselman



The Urbana Free Library

210 West Green Street • Urbana, Illinois 61801 • 217-367-4057 • urbanafreelibrary.org

Alexander Bowman Journals

Collection 353

Related materials:

Map of Urbana and West Urbana

1863 Map of Champaign County

Digital Images of Diaries

Container List:

Box 1

Folder 1: Envelope containing flash drive back up images of digitized journal pages

Folder 2: Journal transcriptions

Folder 3: Journal #1: December 1849 – December 27, 1851

Folder 4: Journal #2: January 1, 1852 – February 14, 1864 and Family Files