

# Guide to the Samuel Smith Wood Papers

MS 1083



compiled by Staff of Manuscripts and Archives

August 1982

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1083

**CREATOR:** Wood, Samuel S., 1799-1881

**TITLE:** Samuel Smith Wood papers

**DATES:** 1849-1920

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.5 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers consist of correspondence relating to the life of the Samuel Smith Wood family in Greytown, Nicaragua, the bombardment of the city by the American ship, Cyane, in July, 1854, and claims rising out of that incident. A particularly long account is given in a letter (July 15, 1854) by Wood's son, Alexander McCready Wood. Also in the papers are letters (1849) by Samuel S. Wood to his wife describing a trip through the gold regions of San Juan and San Francisco, California and a family genealogy.

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1083>.

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased in 1959-1962.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The entire collection is available on microfilm. Patrons must use HM 164 instead of the originals.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Samuel Smith Wood Papers (MS 1083). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Existence and Location of Copies

Entire collection also available on microfilm (788 frames on 1 reel, 35mm.) from Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, at cost. Order no. HM164.

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## Biographical / Historical

Samuel Smith Wood worked in flour manufacturing in New York City until ca. 1826. He moved to a farm in Coutlandville, where he remained until 1834. Wood then went to California prospecting for gold. In 1852 he established a trading post at San Juan del Norte (Greytown), Nicaragua.

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## Scope and Contents

The Samuel Wood Papers date 1849-1920 and are principally concerned with the Wood family of Greytown, Nicaragua, and the bombardment of Greytown by the American ship *Cyane* in 1854.

The rush across Central America by Forty-Niners bound for California resulted in a backwash of Americans who remained there to engage in trade. Those gathered at San Juan del Norte, or Greytown, organized themselves into an independent free-trade city. Among the prominent merchants of this place was Samuel Smith Wood who carried on an extensive and lucrative business. Among the more substantial citizens, Wood possessed a large and valuable stock of merchandise and was the owner of a number of buildings at Greytown.

In 1854, a dispute broke out between some of the residents of Greytown and the American minister there, and the United States government dispatched the ship *Cyane* to investigate. An account of what followed is given in a lengthy letter written by Alexander McCreedy Wood, son of Samuel Smith Wood, dated 1854 July 15. He writes: "The *Cyane* arrived here on Tuesday night last and on Wednesday morning Captain Hollis notified the inhabitants of our town that indemnification to the amount of \$28,000 was demanded by his government and unless the terms were complied with by eight o'clock on Thursday morning, he would blow and bombard the town to atoms which the inhabitants failing to do, his threat was actually and faithfully carried into effect and our once pleasant little town lies in a heap of smouldering ruins."

Captain Hollis' act, which was generally condemned, gave rise to numerous actions against the American government. The Wood family presented a memorial to Congress asking indemnity for their large losses. Many of the papers are concerned with this case.

## Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1reel 1U	<a href="#">"Wood Family Pedigree"</a> English	1906
Correspondence		
b. 1, f. 2reel 1U	<a href="#">1849</a> English	
b. 1, f. 3reel 1U	<a href="#">1850-1851</a>	
b. 1, f. 4reel 1U	<a href="#">1852</a> English	
b. 1, f. 5reel 1U	<a href="#">1853</a> English	
b. 1, f. 6reel 1U	<a href="#">1854 Jan-Jul</a>	
b. 1, f. 7reel 1U	<a href="#">1854 Aug-Dec</a>	
b. 1, f. 8reel 1U	<a href="#">1855 Jan-Apr</a>	
b. 1, f. 9reel 1U	<a href="#">1855 May-Aug</a>	
b. 1, f. 10reel 1U	<a href="#">1855 Sep-Dec</a>	
b. 1, f. 11reel 1U	<a href="#">1856</a> English	
b. 1, f. 12reel 1U	<a href="#">1857 Jan-Mar</a>	
b. 1, f. 13reel 1U	<a href="#">1857 Apr-Dec</a>	
b. 1, f. 14reel 1U	<a href="#">1858 Jan</a>	
b. 1, f. 15reel 1U	<a href="#">1858 Feb-Dec</a>	
b. 1, f. 16reel 1U	<a href="#">1859 Jan-Jul</a>	
b. 1, f. 17reel 1U	<a href="#">1859 Aug-Dec</a>	
b. 1, f. 18reel 1U	<a href="#">1860 Jan-Apr</a>	
b. 1, f. 19reel 1U	<a href="#">1860 May-Dec</a>	
b. 1, f. 20reel 1U	<a href="#">1861</a> English	
b. 1, f. 21reel 1U	<a href="#">1862-1863</a>	
b. 1, f. 22reel 1U	<a href="#">1865-1871, 1920</a>	
b. 1, f. 23 - 25reel 1U	n.d. A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access to the digital copy.	

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Gold mines and mining -- California  
Merchants

### **Geographic Names**

California -- Gold discoveries  
Latin America  
Nicaragua -- Foreign relations -- United States  
San Juan del Norte (Nicaragua)  
United States -- Foreign relations

### **Names**

Wood, Alexander McCready, 1829-1881  
Wood, Samuel S., 1799-1881