F. Schilling & Son Business Records

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Descriptive Summary

Title: F. Schilling & Son Business Records
Dates: 1875-1943
Collection Number: 1983-41
Creator/Collector: Schilling, Frank F. Schilling & Son
Extent: Approximately 4 linear feet
Repository: History San Jose Research Library
San Jose, California 95112
Abstract: Ledgers from F. Schilling & Son, one of San Jose's historic businesses, family owned and operated from the 1860s through the early 1980s, selling firearms, hardware and sporting goods.

Language of Material: English

Access
The collection is open to the public for research by appointment with the Curator of Library & Archives.

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Preferred Citation
F. Schilling & Son Business Records. History San Jose Research Library

Acquisition Information
The collection was donated to the San Jose Historical Museum in 1983

Biography/Administrative History
According to “Pen Pictures From The ‘Garden of the World’,” Frank Schilling was born in Mainz, Germany, in 1835, and settled in San Jose around 1862 after making his way from New York, where he had arrived in 1850. A metallurgist by trade, he opened San Jose’s first firearms store at 27 El Dorado Street (now Post Street) shortly after his arrival. Schilling married Dublin, Ireland, native Margaret Dooty, in San Francisco. Sons Herbert E. and Raymond assisted in the family business. Herbert was also mayor of San Jose from 1892 to 1894. Second son F. A. (“Al”) Schilling held several positions in the Santa Clara County government, including County Auditor, County Purchasing Agent, and Business Manager at County Hospital. Frank Schilling was also a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Ancient Order of United Workmen, and the Knights of Honor. F. Schilling & Son Sporting Goods continued to be owned and operated by the Schilling family for over 100 years at the same address (the original building was demolished in 1929, and a new one built in its place). In 1982, in an obituary for owner Francis J. Schilling (son of Raymond), the Mercury News referred to the store as San Jose’s oldest continuously operated business. According to their interview with Schilling, his grandfather Frank sold hardware at the shop until 1906, when the business gave away all of their tools and hardware to rebuild the city. After taking over the business in the 1940s, grandson Frank stopped selling sports apparel, and focused on hunting and fishing equipment, “the blue-shirt trade,” for the “regular guy.” Urban growth had diminished Santa Clara Valley’s hunting and fishing activities, and the store - already operating on a reduced schedule - closed shortly after Schilling’s death.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection consists primarily of business ledgers which document operations from the 1870s through the early 1940s, as well as a small selection of ephemera and trade catalogs. Included are a number of letters from ammunition suppliers in 1939 announcing supply restrictions and increased costs due to World War II. The records are complemented by a large selection of hunting and fishing equipment, also donated to History San Jose’s Collection. In addition to F. Schilling & Son’s significance as one of San Jose’s historic businesses, these records as a whole speak to the role of fishing and hunting in the Santa Clara Valley in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Indexing Terms
Hunting--Equipment and supplies
Small business
Gunsmiths
German-Americans
Fishing
San Jose (Calif.)
Santa Clara County (Calif.)
ledgers (account books)
trade catalogs