Guide to the Churchill Family Papers MS 70

Finding aid prepared by Samantha Mills
San Diego History Center Document Collection
1649 El Prado, Suite 3
San Diego, CA, 92101
619-232-6203
April 5, 2017
**Title:** Churchill Family Papers  
**Identifier/Call Number:** MS 70  
**Contributing Institution:** San Diego History Center Document Collection  
**Language of Material:** English  
**Physical Description:** 0.25 Linear feet (1 box)  
**Date (bulk):** Bulk, 1842-1902  
**Date (inclusive):** 1842-1973  
**Abstract:** This collection contains correspondence and other family papers of the brothers Charles and Mendal Churchill. Charles was a prospector during the California Gold Rush and Mendal was a storekeeper and then Civil War general who settled in Coronado, CA after his retirement.  
**creator:** Churchill family  

**Biographical / Historical Notes**  
Charles William Churchill was born in Ohio on November 22, 1822. He was in New York by 1842. After spending several years traveling back and forth between Buffalo, New York and Augusta, Georgia, he left New York City on a steamship bound for California via the Isthmus of Panama. He arrived in San Francisco in August 1849 intent on prospecting for gold, but he was not successful. He spent several months on Mormon Island. In 1851 Churchill joined a group of 47 other men in an expedition to Sonora, Mexico. They had heard of a large quantity of gold being unreachable due to a presence of hostile Indians. Expecting a fight, the men were well armed. The Mexican government viewed these men as invaders and ordered them to leave Mexico. Churchill returned to California and prospecting, but gave up prospecting in 1852 and took a position as a clerk for a D. Turner in Mariposa California. He died on Friday, July 13, 1855 at the age of 32 in Mariposa, California.  
Mendal Churchill, the younger brother of Charles, was born in Ohio on July 23, 1829. Unlike his brother, he remained in Ohio and prospered. He worked his way up from storekeeper to bookkeeper to become manager of Keystone Iron smelter located in Jackson County, Ohio. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted as a private in July 1861. He was elected to the captaincy of Company E, 27th Ohio Volunteer Infantry. By 1862, he was a major, and at the end of the war he was brevetted a Brigadier General. Following the Civil War, he became president of the Ohio Iron Company. He retired from that position in 1891 and began a tour of the world. This tour brought him to San Diego, where he established a residence in Coronado. He purchased a house that was designed by Irving Gill and remained in San Diego until his death on October 21, 1902.  

**Scope and Content**  
This collection contains correspondence and other family papers of the brothers Charles and Mendal Churchill. Charles was a prospector during the California Gold Rush and Mendal was a storekeeper and Civil War general who settled in Coronado, CA after his retirement.  
The correspondence is primarily between Charles and Mendal. There is also correspondence between Mendal and William Laughlin, who oversaw Charles’ probate, letters from Charles to his mother, and letters from their cousin William. This collection also contains a copy of Charles’ probate, Mendal’s will, a genealogy of the Churchill family, and typed excerpts from Mendal’s 1891 travel journal.  

**Arrangement**  
This collection is arranged by material type and chronologically.  

**Preferred Citation**  
Churchill Family Papers, MS 70, San Diego History Center Document Archives, San Diego, CA.  

**Conditions Governing Access**  
This collection is open for research.  

**Conditions Governing Use**  
The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials. SDHC Library regulations do apply.  

**Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements**  
Some correspondence is fragile, with pieces missing. Preservation copies have been made of the photocopies of the probate proceedings of Charles W. Churchill’s estate, and the original copies have been retained. Preservation copies have also been made of one of the Churchill genealogies, and the original has been destroyed.  

**General note**  
The collection was used as the basis for the book Fortunes Are For the Few: Letters From a Forty-Niner, published by the San Diego Historical Society in 1977.
Immediate Source of Acquisition
Accession # 730503 and 750808B.

Processing Information
Collection processed by Robert A. Ross in June 2002.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Churchill family
Churchill, Charles William, 1822-1855
Churchill, Mendal, -1902
Laughlin, William
California Gold Rush
Correspondence
Genealogy
Prospecting

Box-folder 1:1  Correspondence, 1842-1845
  Includes:
  Letters from Charles to Mendal and to their mother.

Box-folder 1:2  Correspondence, 1848-1850
  Includes:
  Letters from Charles to Mendal.

Box-folder 1:3  Correspondence, 1851-1853
  Includes:
  Letters between Charles and Mendal, and letters from their cousin William.

Box-folder 1:4  Correspondence, 1854-1858
  Includes:
  Letters from Charles to Mendal; letters between William Laughlin and Mendal; and a letter from cousin William.

Box-folder 1:5  Correspondence (transcripts), 1844-1854
  Includes:
  Letters between Charles and Mendal; from Charles to Mother; and from cousin William.

Box-folder 1:6  Probate: Charles W. Churchill, 1855-1858
Box-folder 1:7  Churchill Family Genealogy, 1889-1894
Box-folder 1:8  Mendal Churchill World Tour Notebook, 1891
Box-folder 1:9  Will: Mendal Churchill, 1902
Box-folder 1:10 Miscellanea, 1902-1973
  Includes:
  In memoriam and memorial letters for Mendal Churchill; a note from Virginia McKenzie Smith about the family Gill home; and a letter about Churchill genealogy.