Albert Kimsey Owen Papers: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Diann Benti.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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Overview of the Collection
Title: Albert Kimsey Owen Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1872-1969
Collection Number: mssOwen
Creator: Owen, Albert Kimsey.
Extent: 6 boxes
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
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Abstract: This collection consists of papers related to Albert Kimsey Owen, the rise and fall of the Topolobampo utopian colony in Sinaloa, Mexico (1886-ca. 1903), railroad development, and Owen's survival of the wreck of the Vera Cruz in 1880. The collection also includes a diary, newspaper clipping scrapbooks, and notebooks of Owen.
Language: English.
Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. Albert Kimsey Owen Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
Purchased from George Renner, January 1983.
Biographical Note
Albert Kimsey Owen (1848-1916), born in Chester, Pennsylvania, son of a Quaker physician, was a utopian reformer and founder of a co-operative community in Topolobampo, Sinaloa, Mexico. By profession Owen was a civil engineer. He went to Colorado to survey a railroad route, then on to Mexico to help lay out what was to become the Mexican Central Railroad. Upon first seeing Topolobampo Bay in 1873, Owen's dream was to found the perfect city, a colony based on cooperative principles, complete with workers, artisans, and intellectuals, to be supplied by a railroad line from the United States, with entry at El Paso, across the Sierra Madre mountains, to the Bay of Topolobampo. Since this would be the shortest route to the Pacific from the great industrial cities of the United States, he envisioned Topolobampo as a center for the Pacific trade.
Scope and Content
This collection consists of papers related to Albert Kimsey Owen, the rise and fall of the Topolobampo utopian colony in Sinaloa, Mexico (1886-ca. 1903), railroad development, and Owen's survival of the wreck of the Vera Cruz in 1880. The collection also includes a diary, newspaper clipping scrapbooks, and notebooks of Owen. There are also some later notes and correspondence of Professor George Renner related to the disposition and custody of Owen's papers in the 1940s-1950s.

• Albert Kimsey Owen Letters and Documents  (Call number: mssAKO 1-198)

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.
Subjects
Owen, Albert Kimsey.
Topolobampo and Pacific Railroad and Telegraph Company.
Cooperative societies -- Mexico -- Sinaloa (State)
Railroads -- Mexico -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Railroads -- Mexico -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.
Utopias -- Mexico -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Sinaloa (Mexico : State) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.
Topolobampo (Mexico)
Topolobampo (Mexico) -- History -- 19th century -- Sources.

Forms/Genres
Letters (correspondence) Mexico.

Box 1
Correspondence [almost all are letters of congratulations to Albert Kimsey Owen for having survived the wreck of the Vera Cruz in 1880]. 1879-1880
Physical Description: [83 pieces]

Box 2
Correspondence, articles, and documents chiefly relating to the Topolobampo Colony. After 1880-1923
Physical Description: [81 pieces]
Dates represented: 1880s (8 pieces); 1890 (2 pieces); 1891 (2 pieces); 1893 (4 pieces); 1894 (3 pieces); 1895 (3 pieces); 1896 (2 pieces); 1897 (2 pieces); 1898 (1 piece); 1899 (2 pieces); 1900 (3 pieces); 1901 (3 pieces); 1902 (1 piece); 1903 (33 pieces); 1904 (12 pieces); 1905 (1 piece); 1906 (1 piece); 1907 (2 pieces); 1911 (2 pieces); 1923 (1 piece); and undated (3 pieces).

Box 3
Reports, documents, some photos, and printed materials.
Box 4
Scrapbooks of news clippings including ones by Owen and about the Topolobampo Colony, ephemera, and later correspondence and notes of George Renner concerning disposition of the Owen papers.

Box 5
Diaries and notebooks of Albert Kimsey Owen.
Contents consist of:
• Diary [travel notes, Denver to Mexico City and west to the Lerma Valley] 1872, Mar. 7-May 12
• Memoranda 1885, May 13-Oct. 19
• Notes 1900, Jan. 31-Mar. 23
• Notes 1902, July 22-Nov. 30
• [Notes] 1903, Feb. 26-May 17
• Notes 1903, Oct. 4-1904, Jan. 6
• Notes 1906, Mar. 25-Dec. 31
• [Notes and clippings] 1910-1911

Box 6
Two scrapbooks chiefly of newspaper clippings [one is on the sinking of the Vera Cruz in 1880]; 1 issue of El Gazetero, 1903 May 1
Physical Description: 2 volumes