Descriptive Summary

Title: C. E. French Letter Books
Date: 1884-1896
Collection Number: MS-R138
Creator: French, C. E. (Charles Edwin)
Extent: 0.4 linear feet (1 box)
Languages: The collection is in English.
Repository: University of California, Irvine. Library. Special Collections and Archives.

Abstract: The collection comprises bound copies of outgoing letters written by C. E. French, an entrepreneur who contributed significantly to the growth of Santa Ana, California during the mid to late 19th century. The letters refer to French's personal and business activities and reflect the concerns of Orange County residents preceding and immediately following the 1880s real estate boom. The letters include information about family matters, remittance for goods and services, real estate transactions, Irvine Ranch business, local transportation, Santa Ana community activities, and the attractive climate of Southern California.

Access
The collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
Property rights reside with the University of California. These materials are in the public domain. For permissions to reproduce or to publish, please contact the Head of Special Collections and Archives.

Preferred Citation

For the benefit of current and future researchers, please cite any additional information about sources consulted in this collection, including permanent URLs, item or folder descriptions, and box/folder locations.

Acquisition Information
Acquired, 2008

Processing History
Processed by Cyndi Shein, 2008.

Biography
Charles Edwin French was a resident of Santa Ana, California who contributed significantly to the city's growth during the mid to late 19th century. He actively promoted Santa Ana and the surrounding area as an ideal place to live and conduct business. Professionally, he facilitated real estate transactions, was postmaster of Santa Ana, and managed Irvine Ranch for a time. He was responsible for the construction of the original Irvine family ranch home in 1876. He was instrumental in establishing the first horse-drawn street car line in what is now Orange County and was named secretary of the Santa Ana, Orange, and Tustin Street Railway when it was incorporated in 1886.

In addition to his business ventures, French also supported the civic and cultural growth of the city. In 1878 he donated office space and a cabinet for books to begin the Santa Ana Public Library Association, with his wife, Emma French, acting as the city's first librarian. This library, along with the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), transferred their holdings to the City of Santa Ana in 1891, at which time C. E. French was elected to the first public library board. He built French's Opera House, which opened in 1890 with a benefit for the Orphan's School in Anaheim, starring Madame Modjeska as Lady Macbeth. French Street, French Elementary School, and French Park (an exclusive residential neighborhood in early Santa Ana) were named for him and his family.


Collection Scope and Content Summary
The collection comprises bound copies of outgoing letters written by C. E. French of Santa Ana, California. The letters refer to French's personal and business activities and reflect the concerns of Orange County residents preceding and immediately following the 1880s real estate boom. The letters include information about family matters, remittance for goods and services, real estate transactions, Irvine Ranch business, local transportation, Santa Ana community activities, and the attractive climate of Southern California.
The letters bear the characteristics of letterpress copies. Letterpress copies are often on tissue paper and are produced by the transfer of ink through direct contact with the original, using moisture and pressure. In French's books, the ink is blurred where it was transferred onto overly damp paper and is faint where the paper was not damp enough.

The collection also includes typed versions of several letters transcribed by Phil Brigandi.

Collection Arrangement
This collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material. The letters are in chronological order.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Subjects
French, C. E. (Charles Edwin) -- Archives.
Irvine Company -- Archives.
Santa Ana (Calif.) -- Archives.

Genres and Formats of Materials
Letter books -- 19th century.
Letterpress copies -- 19th century.

Letter books
Box : Folder 1 : 1 1884-1886 1884-1886
Box : Folder 1 : 2 1894-1896 1894-1896

Scope and Content Note
Some of the pages in this volume are severely creased and the chemicals in the ink have caused lacing; the affected pages are fragile and difficult to read.

Box : Folder 1 : 3 Typed transcripts of selected letters completed by Phil Brigandi undated