Birchall and Owen archive, 1849-1857

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Birchall and Owen Archive,
Date (inclusive): 1849-1857
Collection number: 331
Creator: Birchall and Owen (Springfield, Ill.)
Extent: 4 folders (0.25 linear ft)
Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library. Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences
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Abstract: A small collection of business correspondence from the firm of Birchall and Owen, retail suppliers of drugs, patent medicines, medical supplies, and stationers to Springfield, Illinois and wholesalers to the surrounding region. The firm also printed and distributed almanacs. Price lists and circulars from some of their suppliers provide an interesting overview of the popular medicines of mid-19th century America. The correspondence provides a window on commercial practices of the time, and the emerging emphasis on marketing and advertisement of products.
Physical location: UCLA Biomedical Library History and Special Collections in the Sciences locked cage
Language of Material: Collection materials in English
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
Property rights in the physical objects belong to the UCLA Biomedical Library. Literary rights, including copyright, are retained by the creators and their heirs. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine who holds the copyright and pursue the copyright owner or his or her heir for permission to publish if the Biomedical Library does not hold the copyright.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Birchall and Owen Archive (Manuscript collection 331). Louise M. Darling Biomedical Library History and Special Collections for the Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles.
UCLA Catalog Record ID
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 6365876
Acquisition Information
Historical Note
The partnership between printer/bookbinder Caleb Birchall (1808-1860) and druggist Thomas Jefferson Vance Owen (1827-1876) lasted from 1848 to 1855. Their drugstore in Springfield, Illinois seems to have been a thriving business, with supplies arriving from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, etc. and customers scattered over a wide region. The firm dealt not only in drugs and patent medicines, but also sold various medical and dental supplies, stationery goods, and printed and distributed an almanac (e.g., "Goudy's Illinois and Missouri farmers' almanac and repository of useful knowledge, for the year 1849...") In documents not in this collection, there is a record of Abraham Lincoln being a customer of the firm for office ledgers.
A great volume of the Birchall and Owen business correspondence has survived, but has been split into various-sized lots scattered amongst individuals and institutions; the Illinois State Historical Library houses one of the largest holdings.
Scope and Content
This collection contains 45 items of correspondence, printed circulars, and other commercial communications. Suppliers' printed lists provide a good overview of the popular drugs and patent medicines of the time. The letters from individual customers and jobbers highlight not only the most popular products, but also mention rarer items such as gold paint or gum opii. A list compiled by the bookseller (see Folder 1) itemizes each document with date, name of correspondent, and a short indication of content.
Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Subjects
Birchall and Owen (Springfield, Ill.) -- Records and correspondence
Drugstores -- Illinois -- Springfield
Itemized Birchall and Owen Archive contents

Scope and Content Note
aGatherin', the bookseller, compiled a list of documents for each correspondent providing date, correspondent's name, and whether the item was sent through the mail and includes postal markings.

Box 1, Folder 1

Printed price lists and circulars. 1849-1851

Scope and Content Note

Note
7 items

Box 1, Folder 2

Business documents. 1849

Scope and Content Note
letters of inquiry and orders, invoices, bills of laden, bearer notes, etc.

Note
21 items

Box 1, Folder 3

Business documents. 1850-1857

Note
17 items

Box 1, Folder 4