



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

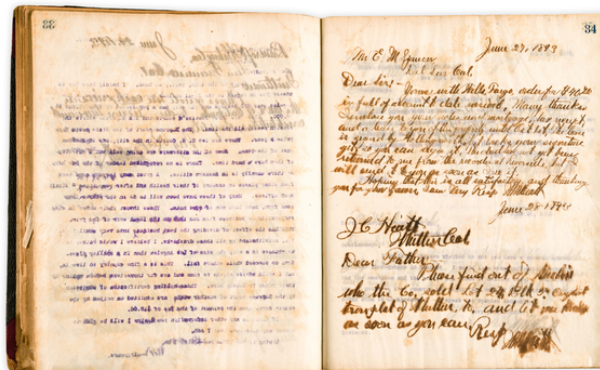
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## **(Southern California Real Estate Development) [Manuscript correspondence letterpress copybook maintained by Attorney W. M. Hiatt of Whittier and Los Angeles] Letters. April 24, 1893, to June 4, 1896.**

**Stock#:** 92824  
**Map Maker:** Hiatt  
**Date:** 1893 - 1896  
**Place:** Los Angeles  
**Color:** Pen & Ink  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 9 x 11 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### **Description:**

#### ***Extensive Manuscript Letter Book of Pioneer Whittier Attorney***

#### ***Real Estate Transactions, Economic Challenges and a Few Opportunities***

#### ***A Wealth of Economic Information During the Southland Bust Times of the 1890s***

#### ***A Founder of Whittier's First Newspaper***

The present letter copybook collects the outgoing correspondence of William M. Hiatt, a pioneering Los Angeles attorney who lived in Whittier. Originally a mid-westerner, Hiatt was born in Lynnville, Iowa, and seems to have attended Penn College in Oskaloosa, Iowa, before settling in Whittier in 1887. He was a co-founder, with his father J. C. Hiatt, of Whittier's first newspaper, the *Whittier Graphic*. Hiatt entered the bar on April 4, 1893, only three weeks before he began to compile the present letterbook.

The letterbook consists of over 700 pages of retained manuscript copies of outgoing correspondence. The majority of the letters relate to Hiatt's professional work, which focused on managing Southern California real estate, especially land in Whittier. Hiatt seems to have made a specialty of representing the interests of midwestern investors, mainly from Iowa and Illinois, who dabbled in Southern California real estate. The letters cover the gamut of real estate legal matters, including the buying and selling of land, mortgages, loans, subdividing land, debt collecting, insolvency cases, litigation, and the like. There are also a few letters relating to oil investments and a series of letters relating to the Young Men's Republican Club of Whittier.



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Whittier was a child of the 1880s boom years in Southern California real estate. J.C. and W.M. Hiatt, father and son, put their money and efforts behind the new town. In the Dec. 24, 1887 first issue of their short-lived local newspaper, *The Graphic*, the owners/editors stated:

*We make our appearance before the public, not for the purpose of filling a long felt want, but to supply an immediate demand from an enterprising young city. We are here to make money, if faithful and energetic service to the interests of Whittier and her citizens will secure a sufficient return in patronage to meet such an object .... We shall have a care to be on the right side of public questions, should occasion demand a discussion of party politics, we are Republican and Anti-saloon. We have faith in this town and shall stand ready to defend it, if need be, in everything that tends to material, intellectual, and moral well-being. Our homes are here, our money is invested here, our families are here, and we are here, to share the fortunes of the most beautifully located town in Southern California. - Nerhood, Whittier, California: The Life of a Boom Town of the 'Eighties as Reflected in Its First Newspaper.*

In that same year (1887) car loads of Quakers starting to stream into Whittier after Acquilla H. Pickering platted the town into lots. The place was touted as an ideal homesite, especially for Iowa Quakers:

Whittier is the coming place. It will dwarf Monrovia and eclipse Pasadena. Nothing can stop it! The Quakers are coming from all over the United States.

By the time William M. Hiatt began practicing law in 1893, the boom had turned to a bust, and economic opportunities were greatly diminished. But if the present letterbook is any indication, the local real estate deals in Whittier were still sufficient to keep at least one young attorney quite busy.

**Letterpress Copybooks - an Early Copying Technology**

Letterpress copybooks were a popular copying technology in the 19th century, prior to the invention of mimeograph machines and photocopiers. Such copybooks were widely used in offices as an economical manner to make copies of correspondence and documents. The technique involved dampening paper and then placing it on top of a tissue-like sheet. Pressure was then applied to the paper, causing the ink to transfer to the dampened sheet and create a copy. This method allowed for the quick and easy reproduction of documents, letters, and other written materials, and was widely used in businesses and government offices.

**Excerpts from the letters here follow:**



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**Touting Oranges to an Investor from Burlington, Iowa:**

*Times are very close here at present, but there is considerable property changing hands... I think yours could be sold in all probability if placed on the market at a hard times price... as to oranges, while it is true that the market for them is in a very bad condition, and growers are not making any money at present, it is my opinion that it is a good time to stand by oranges. I think that through improved methods of marketing the fruit, the orange business will regain... it will be a safe and profitable occupation.*

**Promoting Whittier to an Illinois investor:**

*Whittier is situated about 12 miles from Los Angeles... The population, including those who live immediately around the town on 5 or 10 acre fruit ranches... is between 2000 and 2500. There is a good M.E. Church here, well attended. The schools here are the State Industrial School, the Public Schools and the Friends (Quaker) College, all of them are first class schools. Fruit ranches can sometimes be rented. The climate here is good, as good as any place in this part of the country. A good class of people live here and it is a model place for a house.*

**June 1893 Letter to a friend in Iowa on the challenges of opening a legal practice in Los Angeles:**

*There are now in Los Angeles over 350 lawyers and the city has a population of from 65,000 to 70,000... A great many lawyers come here from other places on account of their health and after (recuperating?) a little open offices. Many of these have been well to do... have been men of some note. These invest their money in some corporation or business firm and then do the legal work of the firm. This has the effect of dividing the best business into very small lots. Yet, notwithstanding all these drawbacks, I believe I would rather take my chances in a city the size of Los Angeles than in a smaller place...*

**Oil Investments:**

*In reference to your lease for oil purposes looking the matter up it seems to be very difficult to protect you... Suppose the lessees should go ahead and put down a well, and fail to get oil, have they sufficient means to pay for the labor and supplies used? If not, I think the laborers could file a mechanics lien upon your lot and hold it...*



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*In regard to the oil business. I will say that I have been over the ground, and, though I am no expert in oil matters, I am satisfied in my own mind that the oil is there. The question is to get it out of the ground. The Banner company's well... struck a flow of oil so strong that it raised over the top of the well...*

**Selling Lots in Whittier for Iowa Investors:**

*...I am pleased to recognize an old Penn College friend. I think I can sell your lot for \$100. The lot next to your was sold last summer for \$45. Whittier is growing and improving right along, but real estate is not selling quite so readily as a year ago. As you will notice by my letterhead I am now in the law business, in Los Angeles, am doing as well as could be expected for a young attorney. I have an office in Whittier and go out there every night, besides staying there one or two days each week.*

**Pickering Land and Water Company Lots and Land Development in General**

*...I have examined the enclosed certificate of title...to a part of Lot 4, Block "J" of the Pickering Land and Water Company's Subdivision of the John M. Thomas Ranch, and find the property therein described is vested in Jesse M. Hunt...*

*...In references to your notes against E. C. Armstrong... J.S. and T.E. Armstrong, brothers of E.C. were running a meat market in Whittier, but failed a few months ago, and are now going through insolvency. J.S. around 160 acres of land in the northern part of this county, which he deeds to E.C. because going into insolvency... Your notes can, perhaps in time, be collected... If you desire that I proceed against him please forward me \$10.00...*

*The idea is to make a straight road from Philadelphia street to the depot and in order to do so it will be necessary to have the road a little wider at your corner... The strip of land they want of you will be thirty feet wide at Philadelphia street... I understand that if they cannot get sufficient land of you to make the road as planned that Mr. Muir says the Ry will fence in all of their land on the East of Railroad and force the people to go to the depot some other way... If you want to make a speculation now is a good time to subdivide that piece and put it on the market.*

**Rarity.**

One would be hard pressed to find a comparable manuscript volume relating to the early development of Whittier. Such a record of Southern California-related real estate and business transactions from the



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1890s, comprising some 700 pages of letters by a busy and enterprising young attorney, is rare indeed.

**Detailed Condition:**

Quarto. Contemporary quarter red-dyed sheep or calf over pebbled cloth. Spine perished, backstrip gone, boards still attached (hanging by cords). Corners worn. Internally quite clean. 702 pages of retained copies of outgoing correspondence, written on tissue-like paper. Some of the pages are difficult to read, as is common with this antiquated copybook technology, especially the pages impressed from typed originals. Volume with alphabetical index tabs on fore-edges. Front free endpaper with ink stamp: "Arden Index, Pat. 1871."