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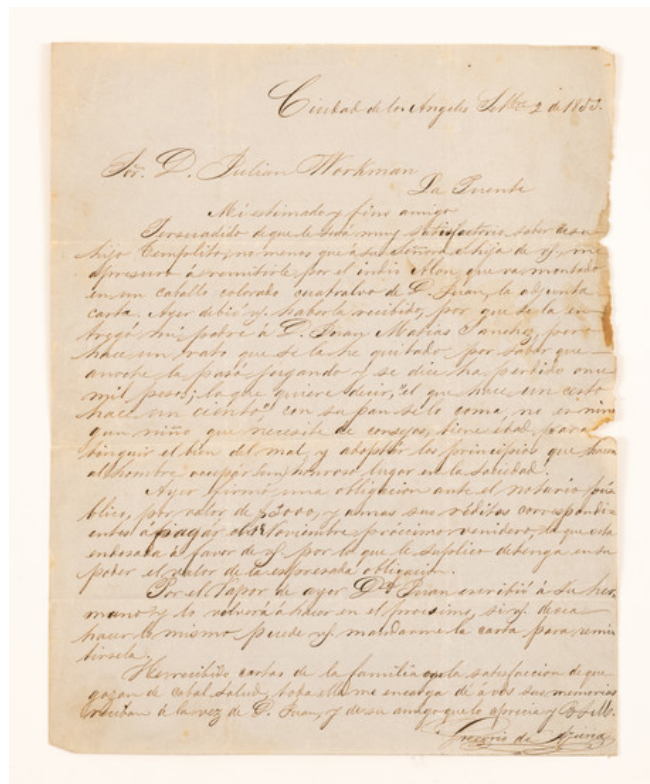
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(Los Angeles) [Original Manuscript Letter, in Spanish, from Gregorio de Ajuria to William Workman, aka Don Julian Workman, September 2, 1853, relating to Juan Matias Sanchez and gambling]

Stock#: 92944
Map Maker: Temple - Workman Families / Ajuria
Date: 1853
Place: Los Angeles
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: VG
Size: 8.25 x 10.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Original 1853 Letter to Californio Don Julian Workman

Written in Los Angeles and Carried on Horseback by "El Indio Alon" to Rancho La Puente

Juan Matias Sanchez Gambles Away 11,000 Pesos

A fascinating early Los Angeles letter by a prominent Spanish-born businessman who was connected by marriage to the most important family business group from early Los Angeles - the Temple and Workman families.

The letter, addressed to William Workman, the English-born patriarch of the Temple-Workman clan, concerns an incident that illustrates the close-knit social ties of *compadrismo* that prevailed among Californios - even into the American era. The Spanish-born Ajuria, a recent arrival to California who had



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married Jonathan Temple's daughter, here complains how a compadre of Workman's, Juan Matias Sanchez, had apparently lost 11,000 pesos during a serious gambling spree. Sanchez was Workman's trusted mayordomo, indeed the two men had known each since their New Mexico days going back to the 1830s.

The gambling incident likely only further strengthened the loyalty between Workman and Sanchez. Nearly twenty-five years after this letter Sanchez would put up his personal rancho landholdings in a desperate effort to help his old friend William Workman (and thus the extended Temple and Workman clan) avert financial ruin. The effort failed and William Workman took his own life due to the financial catastrophe which was precipitated by the failure of the Temple & Workman Bank.

In retrospect this letter serves as a poignant artifact of the the deep social connections that marked Californio society.

The text of the letter here follows:

Ciudad de Los Angeles Septbre 2 de 1853

Snr D. Julian Workman, La Puente

Mi estimado y fino amigo,

Persuadido de que le será muy satisfactorio saber de su hijo Templito, no menos que á su Señora e hija de V.S., me apresuro á remitirle por el indio Alon, que va montado en un caballo colorado cuatralvo de D. Juan, la adjunta carta. Ayer debió v.s. haberla recibido, por que se la entregó mi padre á D. Juan Matias Sanchez, pero hace un rato que se la he quitado por saber que anoche la pasó jugando y se dice ha perdido once mil pesos; lo que quiere decir, "el que hace un cesto hace un ciento," con su pan se lo coma, no es ningun niño que necesite de consejos, tiene edad, para distinguir el bien del mal, y adoptar los principios que hacen el hombre ocupar un honoroso lugar en la Sociedad.

Ayer firmó una obligación ante el notario público, por valor de \$3000, y amas sus réditos correspondientes á pagar este Noviembre procsimo venidero, lo que esta endosada á favor de v.s. por lo que le suplico detenga en su poder el valor de la espresada obligacion.

Por el Vapor de ayer Dn. Juan escribió á su hermano y lo volverá á hacer en el procsimo, si v.s. desea



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hacer lo mismo puede v.s. mandarme la carta para remitirsela.

He recibido cartas de la familia con la satisfaccion de que gozan de cabal salud, toda ella me encarga dé á vds. sus memorias reciban á la vez de D. Juan, y de su amigo que lo aprecia y B.S.M. [besa su mano]

Gregorio de Ajuria

English translation of the letter follows:

My fine and dear friend,

Persuaded that it will be very satisfying for you to hear from your son Templito, not to mention for your Lady and daughter, I hasten to send you the enclosed letter through the Indian Alon, who is riding a white-footed chestnut horse of Don Juan's. You should have received it yesterday, because my father gave it to Don Juan Matias Sanchez, but I took it from him because I found out that he spent the night gambling and it is said that he has lost eleven thousand pesos; "he that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing," and may he choke on it. He is no child in need of a scolding, he is old enough to distinguish good from evil, and adopt the principles that make a man occupy an honorable place in Society. Yesterday he signed an obligation before the public notary, for \$3000, also his corresponding income to pay this coming November, which is endorsed in your favor, the value of the expressed obligation I beg you to retain in your possession. By yesterday's steamer Don Juan wrote to his brother and will do so again on the next one, if you want to do the same you may send me the letter to forward along. I have received letters from the family with the satisfaction that they are in full health, all have asked me to remember them to you, and the same from Don Juan and from your friend who appreciates you and kisses your hand.

Gregorio de Ajuria

Gregorio de Ajuria

Gregorio de Ajuria was connected to the Temple-Workman family nexus through his 1848 marriage with Jonathan Temple's daughter, Francisca (1831-1903). A native of Bilbao, Spain, Ajuria came to California on a trading ship in 1845, at the end of the Mexican period. After he and Francisca Temple married, they remained in Los Angeles for a few years and then moved to Mexico City. Ajuria maintained substantial financial connections in Mexico, as well as having business dealings in New York and Paris. When Ignacio



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Comonfort was the president of Mexico between 1855 and 1858, Ajuria used his connections with the regime to secure for his father-in-law a ten-year lease of the Mexican national mint. A recent article by Omar Velasco Herrera explores this fascinating but now nearly forgotten connection between Californio capital and Mexico City finances, in which Jonathan Temple played a central role. This concession concerning the the Mexican national mint was held by Temple and his daughter until 1893, and was reputedly worth \$1 million.

Juan Matias Sanchez (1808-1885) and Rancho Merced

Juan Matias Sanchez, a native of New Mexico born about 1808, was William Workman's ranch foreman, or mayordomo. His 1845 adobe house still stands and is likely the oldest structure in Montebello. The Sanchez Adobe was built on the original Rancho La Merced - some 2,363 acres of fertile ranch land granted to Casilda Soto de Lobo in 1844. Rancho La Merced was purchased by William Workman in 1851, who transferred ownership to his son-in-law F. P. F. Temple and Sanchez. In 1851 Juan Matias Sanchez took up residence at the adobe, remaining there until his death in 1885. The Sanchez family resided at the property until 1911. The social ties between Sanchez and Workman were very strong, an example of the old style *compadrismo* that prevailed in Mexican California. According to a recent book about the Workman and Temple families:

Sanchez and his family shared lasting friendships with the Temple and Workman families... Aside from serving as sponsors at baptisms and naming their children after their friends and other expressions, another example of the abiding friendship between the three families was when Sanchez obtained the Rancho Potrero Grande (located in present-day South El Monte and Monterey Park) in 1852 and, five years later, sold equal shares to Workman and Temple. Twenty five years later, the strong bond was taken to an extreme in a time of exceptionally strained circumstances - Spitzzeri, page 99.

The extreme act alluded to above occurred when financial collapse loomed over the Temple-Workman empire, compelling the loyal Sanchez to yield his holdings in La Merced and Potrero Grande in a last ditch effort to save his old friends from ruin. Earlier acts of loyalty, such as the covering of a gambling debt, surely contributed to Sanchez's sense of obligation to Workman. The controversy described in the letter at hand, wherein the Basque Ajuria belittles the established Californio Sanchez for his large gambling losses, highlights how the Spaniard, a comparatively recent arrival in California, may not have fully grasped the nature of the friendship between Workman and Sanchez.



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Rarity

Such original early letters from Los Angeles are very rare in the market.

Detailed Condition:

Folded lettersheet. [1] full page of manuscript text in Spanish. Old fold marks. Small two-inch tear at fore-edge of integral address leaf. Addressed: "Sor. D. Julian Workman / La Puente / Son las 11 1/2 de la mañana."