



# Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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## **(Los Angeles Pueblo) [Four original manuscript letters from Abraham and Lydia Temple to their brother Francis Pliny Fisk Temple of "Pueblo de Los Angeles, Upper California": Sending Gold from L.A. in 1845]**

**Stock#:** 92945  
**Map Maker:** Temple - Workman Families / Temple  
**Date:** 1842 -1846  
**Place:** Reading, Mass.  
**Color:** Pen & Ink  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 7.75 x 9.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



### **Description:**

***"I have a slight touch of the California Fever ..."***

***Evidence of Gold Being Sent From Los Angeles to Massachusetts in 1845!***

***"There has been much said in this country in relation to the annexation of Texas to the U.S.A...."***

A fascinating group of letters that sheds light on the East Coast family connections of the influential Los Angeles-based Temple and Workman families. All four of the letters are addressed to Francis Pliny Fisk Temple. Of particular note is the letter from Abraham Temple, dated Oct. 24, 1845, in which he relates that he "has a slight touch of the California Fever." The letter also reports that 1000 men from unspecified western states were ready to make the trip to California. Given the 1845 date of the letter, this would be an early example of large scale immigration to California, before the great gold discovery, and while California was still part of Mexico.

But perhaps the most remarkable and frankly intriguing aspect of the letter is Abraham Temple's acknowledgement of receiving gold which had been sent by Francis Pliny Temple from Los Angeles:

*The G-Land [i.e. Gold] you sent was of good quality. I have disposed of it at 18\$ per oz their [sic] is a difference in the weights of the countries yours being lighter than ours, but I think you may do well to send on more if you can obtain it at \$14 per oz.*



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While the above passage is somewhat cryptic, the context, price per ounce and crossed-out "G" make it all but obvious that Abraham Temple is referring to gold. The Los Angeles ore must have come from the gold discovery made by Francisco López in Placerita Canyon on March 9, 1842. López, a compadre of William Workman, the patriarch of the Temple-Workman families, found gold flecks attached to the roots of wild onions he was picking near an oak tree - the now legendary "Oak of the Golden Dream." Apparently López had dreamed of striking it rich while napping under the tree. The San Fernando placers were worked for several years by Sonoran miners. The López or Placerita Canyon gold discovery is often touted as California's first gold strike, predating John Marshall's discovery at Sutter's Mill by a full six years!

Paul R. Spitzzeri has studied this little-known early Southern California gold discovery within the context of the Temple and Workman families:

*...the discovery of gold in March 1842 by Francisco Lopez near present-day Newhall...led to a significant mining effort for several years in the canyon that now bears his name. Historiographically, the gold rush in the north six years later has overshadowed the Lopez discovery, but the earlier find left its impression on Pliny Temple... - Spitzzeri, The Workman & Temple Families of Southern California, 1830-1930, pages 66-67.*

### **Temple and Workman Families and Early Los Angeles**

The Temple-Workman families played a significant role in the early history of Los Angeles and Southern California. Through their involvement in land development and through familial and business connections with other Alta California pioneers, especially Spanish-speaking Californios, family members enjoyed unique influence on the course of the region's early growth.

Jonathan Temple (1796-1866), the first person from either of these two families to settle in Southern California, was sometimes referred to by his Californio moniker Don Juan Temple. A native of Reading, Massachusetts, he lived in San Diego for a short time before establishing an American-style store in Los Angeles in 1828. In 1843, he acquired the Rancho Los Cerritos, a 27,000-acre property in the Long Beach area - his 1844 adobe is the centerpiece of the Rancho Los Cerritos historic site. During the 1840s, Temple was active in shipping and commerce along the California and Mexican west coast. Temple was also one of the first real estate developers in L.A., having constructed the original Temple Block and the Market House, which later served as city and county administrative headquarters and the seat of the county courthouse. He would go on to serve as the first alcalde, or mayor of Los Angeles after the town was captured by the United States during the Mexican War.



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Francis Pliny Fisk Temple, the younger half-brother of Jonathan Temple, was another prominent early figure in the early development of Southern California. The younger Temple married the daughter of William William, an English-born pioneer who arrived in Los Angeles from Santa Fe via the Old Spanish Trail route in 1841, as part of the Workman-Rowland Party - considered the first overland party of Americans to settle in Los Angeles. Through hard work and business acumen, Workman became one of the city's most successful entrepreneurs. He co-owned a store, served as a judge, and invested in real estate. His son-in-law, Francis P. F. Temple, also made a name for himself as a landowner and businessman, even branching into banking, and becoming one of the largest landowners in the area.

In summary, the Temple-Workman family were key players in the development of Los Angeles and Southern California during the second half of the 19th century. Their business ventures and land holdings helped shape the city's growth.

#### **Rarity**

Original letters from the 1840s relating to Los Angeles are very rare in the market, particularly letters relating to prominent early English-speaking settlers during the Mexican era.

#### **Excerpts from each letter here follow:**

- Oct. 20, 1842. A.L.S. from Lydia Temple to Francis Pliny Fisk Temple:

*Dear Brother Pliny, ...Bradley sends much love to you, were you here you would find us just about the same as when you left. B. Thinks of manufacturing his owns shoes, and has gone so far as to cut one lot of 30 prs. should he succeed in selling these I think he will continue to manufacture. Suppose Brother, S. & A. and sister C. have told you all the news of the great Temperance Picnic in the woods, our temperance and anti-slavery lectures and the anti-slavery Fair that is coming next month....Your affectionate sister, Lydia.*

*Cousin Timothy buried a child last week Mr. Mark Temple has a son 3 weeks old, James Cugin is feeble having been bleeding at the lungs.*

*Oct. 29th 1843 found in Pillowcase.*

- Oct. 26, 1845. A.L.S. from Cynthia Temple to Francis Pliny Fisk Temple:



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*Dear Brother, ...Five years ago this evening I believe you were at Reading, imagine yourself once more at the home of your childhood surrounded by Brother, Brothers, & Sisters - but Alas! what changes five years have wrought, one of our number is now mouldering to dust and very probably all of us now living will not be, should you ever return...If I could but spend but one day with you how much pleasure it would afford me, did you reside within the distance of 500 miles I should certainly visit you. I wish you and brother J. would come within visiting distance. I do not ask you to come to Reading because I think there is other places you could do better but do not always stay there. I want you where I can enjoy your society. I have been very lonesome since Lydia's death...Dea Wakefield talks of selling his farm and moving out of town, whither it is only talk or whither he will move time will prove. Climena has taught the Centre School this season boarded at home at \$4.00 per week 24 weeks. Washington Temple returned from a voyage of a year in Sept remained at R. three weeks married Ruth [Hem]hill: left for New Orleans the 3rd day after [he] was married. The railroad I spoke of in my last is completed the cars have run since the 1st of July we can go to Boston, and back by them 5 times a day the fare is 30 cts... You are married are you? come home and get you a wife.*

- Oct. 24, 1845. A.L.S. from Abraham Temple to Francis Pliny Fisk Temple:

*Dear brother, ....I have a slight touch of the California Fever at times, but it has not entirely unfitted me for other duties. The attention of many Americans is directed to your coast. I have heard that a 1000 men would start from the Western States early next spring, it seems to be a settled point in the minds of our Country-men that California is destined to become a part, but I will make no prediction on the subject, but will say it is my opinion that land will be in better demand than formerly. The G-Land you sent was of good quality. I have disposed of it at 18\$ per oz there is a difference in the weights of the countries yours being lighter than ours, but I think you may do well to send on more if you can obtain it at \$14 per oz. There has been much said in this country in relation to the annexation of Texas to the U.S.A., it may be advantageous to Californians but I think it will not to New England, what the result may be in case of annexation I am not able to determine. President Polk is sending Soldiers into Texas by thousands to meet any exigency that may arise...*

- August 4, 1846. A.L.S. from Abraham Temple to Francis Pliny Fisk Temple:

*Dear brother, It is with a degree of anxiety that I write you at this time, considering the relation the U.S.A. sustain towards Mexico & her territories, fearing lest you & brother J may*



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*be involved in serious difficulties, touching, Life, Liberty & Property; but trusting to an all wise Providence, as your protector, I send you this by the good Ship Independence, hoping that when it reaches its destination you may be in the enjoyment of peace, good health, and happiness... Business is in a healthful condition at present in the Northern States, not being engrossed with Mexican affairs as the South, from recent rumors I trust a speedy peace will be concluded...Should an opportunity present I shall send the ballance of articles you sent for this autumn, with such other articles as may be of use to you, I wish you to obtain the bills I send you of goods, lest mine should be mislaid...Brother J's letter requesting my send him out sundry articles for his farm did not come to hand for nearly eight months after being written so that I was unable to send, but shall the first opportunity. I wish you to write me in confidence what you think of my coming out to the Coast, at some future day; what inducements there are for such a step, whether any articles could not taken along, to good advantage, and the best way of getting to you, and in fact all things connected with such an undertaking, the prospect of a stable government, the price of land in good locations; the facilities of doing business, mill sites, timbered lands. Emigration is the order of the day from the Western states to California, and many will from New England, a Ship will leave Boston in Sept next with emigrants by which I shall send letters, Maj. Amos Nichols has thought seriously of going out, but on account of the shortening of time will not be able to go, this company are mostly Mormons.*

**Detailed Condition:**

Four letters. Total of approximately 12 pages of manuscript text. Each on folded lettersheet (with integral address leaves intact). Crease marks from being folded. Remnants of wax seals. Some minor soiling and age-toning. Overall the letters are very clean.