



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the John Challis Records

NMAH.AC.1375

NMAH Staff

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	John Challis Records
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1375
Date:	circa 1900-1974
Extent:	24 Cubic feet
Creator:	Challis, John, 1907-1974 Fraye, William W. Truesdale, Ephraim
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Dr. William W. Frayer, 2016.

Provenance

Dr. Frayer had had possession of the papers since Challis' death.

Preferred Citation

John Challis Papers, ca. 1930-1974, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research but is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

John Challis was an American builder of harpsichords and clavichords. He attended Michigan Normal College (now Eastern Michigan University), where his interest in constructing keyboard instruments

emerged. He spent four years apprenticing with Arnold Dolmetsch in England, returning in 1930, when he set himself up building instruments in a two-story space above a dress shop in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Scope and Contents

The collection documents the Challis Harpsichord business, and the lives of Mr. Challis and his partner, Ephraim Truesdale. The collection contains correspondence, both personal and business; business records, including ledgers and journals; drawings, including design drawings for harpsichord decorations and elements; client files; subject files, especially on harpsichord and musical instrument subjects; printed materials such as concert programs, trade literature, magazines on the subject of music and musical instruments, clippings, advertisements and publicity materials; photographs, including many of instruments and many of Challis' family members; music scores; ceremonial items such as diplomas; templates for elements of harpsichords; and recordings.

Arrangement

Collection is unarranged.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Clavichord
- Harpsichord
- Harpsichord makers
- Musical instrument makers
- Musical instruments

Types of Materials:

- Advertisements -- 20th century
- Business records -- 20th century
- Clippings -- 20th century
- Concert programs
- Design drawings
- Diplomas
- Drawings -- 20th century
- Ledgers (account books) -- 20th century
- Letters (correspondence) -- 20th century.
- Magazines (periodicals) -- 20th century
- Musical scores
- Photographs -- 20th century
- Sound recordings
- Trade literature