

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

**Guide to Collection**

**Nichols, Frank C.**

**Papers of Frank C. Nichols while in Alaska, 1898-1902**

[Letters, clippings and map concerning the Seward Peninsula mining activity of the Rhode Island and Alaska Mining and Transportation Company. 1898-1902.]

**MS 13-2-5**

**INTRODUCTION**

In 1898, the Rhode Island and Alaska Trading and Transportation company formed for the purpose of purchasing a ship to transport men to Alaska to Search for gold.

The bark MERMAID was purchased in San Francisco and Frank Nichols sailed to Alaska aboard her, coming by way of the Bering Sea to St. Michael.

After reaching Alaska, Frank Nichols and several friends formed the N and A Company with Mr. Nichols as auditor. Claims were started near Council on the Seward Peninsula. In 1902 Mr. Nichols was mining at Elkhorn Creek, northwest of Council.

Manuscript items include letters written by Frank Nichols to his parents in Fall River Mass., and newspaper articles or letters to the PROVIDENCE JOURNAL and FALL RIVER EVENING NEWS in 1898 describe the Rhode Island and Alaska Mining Trading and Transportation Company activity. Various members of the company wrote to the newspapers. The file includes a hand drawn map of the Koowak [Kohuk] River showing a winter trail of the natives and prospecting area. Photographs of mining activity and N and A Company personnel are located in PCA 256.

This collection was donated in 1985 to the Alaska State Museum by Anna Muriel Hurd, Frank Nichols' niece. It was then transferred to the Alaska Historical Library.

**Inventory:**

1. Note of introduction for Frank Nichols dated March 29, 1898, to Capt. Thompson from E.E. Bruce, International Exploration Co., Oakland, Calif.
2. Receipt for passage of the schooner LOUISE J. KENNY to San Francisco dated Sept. 21, 1899, signed by H.J. Johnston, St. Michaels, Alaska Ty.
3. Letter dated Jan. 10, from F. H. Martin, Port Clarence, Ak. , to the N & A Co. and Friend Holbrook. (Comments on provisions available for trip to Cape Nome and traveling companions, including Fred, the Reindeer Eskimo and his deer sleds.) See also N & A Company officials list, item 5-8b.
4. Letter, dated July 6, 1902, from Frank Nichols, Elkhorn Creek to his mother, Fall River, Mass. (Describes trip--White Mountain Neakluk [Niukluk] River, Council City; six men working at mining claim; mentions Mr. & Mrs. Charles Philips at Council.)
5. Letter dated Aug. 24, 1902, from Frank Nichols, Elkhorn Creek to his father, Fall River, Mass. (Tells problems--of mess tent fire, dam burst, frost in the mine pits. Employed 20-27 men at mining camp; big expense but hope to have money to get home in good shape.)
6. Letter dated Aug. 29, 1902 from F.N., Elkhorn Creek to his mother, Fall River, Mass. (mine is on a paying basis, going to look at a mica quarry in Sept., and leave from Nome for Seattle in Oct. Ed & Levi Almy are working on claims in Koksadapaga country: F.N. lists expenses for the season--\$1,000 + for food, \$5-6,000 wages, etc. Feels they have done all work that can be done with pick and shovel and 3 or 4 times more gold could be taken out by hydraulic means.)
7. Letter dated Sept. 8, 1902 from F.N., Elkhorn Creek, Ak. to his mother, Fall River, Mass. (going to Ophir about 2 days journey eastward from Council City with Bill Parsons to locate the mica mine.)
- 8a. Letter dated Oct. 1, 1902 from F. N., at Council City, Ak. to his mother, Fall River, Mass. (Returned from 2 week prospecting trip and staked a mica claim. Now engaged to Sadie and needing to decide best time to return.)
- 8b. Undated letter/agreement to establish the N & A Company with a proposed list of officers and various news, signed The Yannigans.
9. Letter dated Nov. 5, 1902, from F.N., Seattle to his mother. (Arrived on S.S.OHIO with Ed and Henry, and on to San Francisco, did not make much money due to expenses, plans to attend meeting of Sweet Cake Mining Co. but expect no dividend as they lacked water and put in 2 mile ditch.)
10. Letter dated Dec. 15, 1902 from F.N., Sacramento to his mother. (mentions relatives and plan to meet with Frank Lease, a mining man from Council City, who is at Lodi to discuss sale of Elkhorn claim; and visit with Sadie at Sonora.

11. Hand-drawn map (roughly 22x5") ink on cloth showing Selawik Lake, Koowak [Kobuk] River, winter trail of natives, portage and prospecting areas.
- 12-43. Newspaper clippings from the FALL RIVER EVENING NEWS and PROVIDENCE JOURNAL, March-Nov. 1898. Includes four letters to the editor by E.E. Van Der Burgh reporting on the men from Fall River and Providence that bought the vessel MERMAID to reach the Kotzebue Sound to prospect. Letters provide various Alaska news, wreck of the vessel HELEN W. ALMY, four members of the Providence and Alaska Trading and Transportation Co. were drowned while crossing Hotham Inlet; Capt. Wick's leaves the bark MERMAID with less provisions than planned, some of mermaid party return and found pay dirt.

Frank Martin writes that miners at Council City formed a Society-The Pioneers of N.W. Alaska and petition for a post office; reports on the country, "Sweet Cake" and other claims, only one woman in camp-Mrs. Campbell).

A letter from G. Henry Brown at Big Shushitna dated Sept. 24, 1898 describes poor mail service, his claims on Willow and Stony Creek, several Mexican miners have rich claims.