

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Lewis, Richard F., d. 1955

Richard F. Lewis papers, 1938-1944

MS 41

49 items
0.2 linear ft.

ACQUISITION: These papers were acquired by the library in September, 1970 from Jack R. Brown, Sacramento, California.

INTRODUCTION

Richard F. Lewis came to Alaska around 1894, following his graduation from Harvard Law School. He married in 1898 in San Francisco and brought his bride to Juneau where he practiced law until 1952 and was owner of the Juneau Water Works. In 1900 he was among the group of Alaskans who lobbied successfully in Washington, D.C. to have Alaska's capital moved from Sitka to Juneau. In 1952 he retired to Piedmont, California where he died in 1955.

Lewis was called upon in 1938 to assist the Alaska Commercial Company of San Francisco, a trading company operating in Alaska, in establishing its title to the wharf and other property at Unalaska. By 1938 the company had sold all of their Alaska holdings except their trading posts at Dutch Harbor and Unalaska to former employees who organized as Northern Commercial Company. Dutch Harbor and Unalaska had been part of their original purchase from the Russian American Company in 1867. With increased U.S. Navy activity in the area in the late 1930's the company's officers were concerned that their property would be taken over for military use.

The Dutch Harbor and Unalaska properties and merchandise were sold in August, 1940 to Northern Commercial Company. Two weeks later the Navy selected Dutch Harbor as its Aleutian Islands headquarters. The trading post there ceased operations for the next two years. The Unalaska post, however, continued in operation, catering to the many civilian construction workers as well as military personnel and local residents.

The Lewis papers also include correspondence relative to the Alaska Juneau Gold Mining Company strike, mine closure, etc.

Grace L. Lewis prepared a manuscript on her recollections of Alaska which is included with the papers of her husband.

Alaska Commercial Company property at Unalaska, 1938-1940.

Inventory

- Folder 1. Correspondence between Richard F. Lewis and Charles Warren, an attorney in Washington, D.C., and company officials. 11 letters
2 maps and petition from Unalaska townspeople.
3 items
Alaska-Juneau Gold Mining Company.
- Folder 2. Correspondence relative to miner's strike, government closure of the mine and U.S. War Labor Board Material, and miscellaneous. 23 items
- Folder 3. AMERICA'S LAST FRONTIER (My Memories of Alaska), by Grace L. Lewis. And several versions of unpublished manuscript primarily about Juneau area in typescript with letters to and from publishers. Also a letter written by Jack R. Brown dated July 11, 1970, which was returned with the notation that Mrs. Lewis died several years previous at the age of 93 years. 9 items