

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Edgren, Jesse L. and Mae Bennett

Jesse L. and Mae Bennett Edgren Papers, 1849-1949 (bulk 1896-1921)

MS 173

1 box  
2 linear ft.

Processed by: Gladi Kulp, Oct. 1998  
Revised: May 1999  
Revised by: Jacki Swearingen, Feb. 2015

**PROVENANCE:** The papers were donated by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Accession no. 98-47). The Society received the donation in 1989 from the nephew of Jesse L. Edgren, who will be known as the original donor.

**ACCESS:** The collection is unrestricted.

**COPYRIGHT:** Request for permission to publish material from the collection must be discussed with the Librarian. Neither photocopying nor making the materials available on the Alaska State Library Web Site constitutes permission to publish.

**PROCESSING:** The papers include correspondence written by Jesse L. and Mae Bennett Edgren, arranged chronologically, family documents, clippings, photographs, and mementos. File order is as received from donor. Documents were laminated by the original donor before he donated the collection to the Historical Society of Wisconsin. Inventory control is to the folder level with some item listings.

**SEVEN TRANSCRIPTIONS:**

[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173Aug25'98.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173Aug25'98.pdf)

[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173dottie 7 30 97.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173dottie 7 30 97.pdf)

[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173jesse\\_98\\_nd.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173jesse_98_nd.pdf)  
[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173jesse4\\_14\\_99.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173jesse4_14_99.pdf)  
[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173mae\\_3\\_10.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173mae_3_10.pdf)  
[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173mae\\_4\\_18\\_98.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173mae_4_18_98.pdf)  
[http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist\\_docs/finding\\_aids/MS173mae\\_nd\\_ca3\\_98.pdf](http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173mae_nd_ca3_98.pdf)

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jesse L. Edgren was a young Madison, Wisconsin, lawyer who, with his wife Mae Bennett, left for the Yukon Territory on the night of their wedding day, March 1898. They went to seek their fortune in the Klondike gold fields. Their route took them to Seattle, where they stayed just long enough to complete the outfit and board the next boat to Alaska. They traveled to Dyea and over the Chilkoot Trail to Lake Bennett which they reached in May of 1898. Next they arrived at Lake Tagish and finally to Dawson City by July of the same year.

Mae quickly became pregnant with her first child, but ten days before the birth of her baby she contracted typhoid fever. She gave birth December 22, 1898, and died January 3, 1899, just a few weeks after the birth. Her daughter, Mae Eldorado, known as the "first Klondike baby," was cared for by Dr. Mosier, a woman physician and close friend of Jesse and Mae Edgren.

In the spring of 1899 baby Mae Eldorado was sent back to Wisconsin to be raised by her maternal grandparents. She was accompanied by Mrs. John McDonald, a close friend of Mae Bennett. Jesse stayed in the Klondike for a time and eventually, according to his nephew's poem, died of lockjaw. Mae Eldorado died at age 22 in Wisconsin.

### SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The Jesse L. and Mae Bennett Edgren papers contain correspondence written by Jesse and Mae to their families in Wisconsin during their trip to the Klondike gold fields, 1898-1899. There is one letter to Jesse from his mother, written in 1897. The papers also include certificates admitting Jesse to practice as an attorney in Wisconsin, and clippings and photographs relating to Mae Eldorado, the "first Klondike baby." Unrelated to the Klondike adventure is a file of newspaper clippings commemorating the Donner Pass Tragedy in 1849 during the California Gold Rush. John Lewis Edgren, a relative of Jesse, was a member of the Donner Party.

The original donor included a poem he wrote about his Uncle Jesse. The remainder of the collection consists of oversize documents including several pages from an 1898 Dyea newspaper and a 1903 birds-eye view map of Dawson, Yukon Territory, by H. Epting. Although the collection includes the 1849 clippings about the Donner Party

tragedy, the bulk of the collection centers on the Edgrens' life from 1896 when they left for the Klondike until 1922 when Mae Eldorado died.

## INVENTORY

### **Box 1**

Most of the documents, including correspondence, newspaper clippings and photographs were laminated by the original donor.

#### **Folder 1      Correspondence, March (?), 1898-September 22, 1898, from Mae to Dot**

<u>Item#</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>From</u>	
173-1-1	ca. March 1898	"Out from Minn" enroute to Seattle	
173-1-2	Mar 10 '98	overlooking the harbor [Seattle]	
173-1-3	Mar 14	aboard ship	
173-1-4	Apr 18	"near Chilcoot"	
173-1-5	May 13	Lake Bennett	
173-1-6	June 2	"at foot of Lake Tagish"	
173-1-7	July 16	Dawson City, N.W.T.	
173-1-8	Aug 25 (from Mae & Jesse)	Dawson City, N.W.T.	Link to transcription: <a href="http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173Aug25'98.pdf">http://www.library.state.ak.us/hist/hist_docs/finding_aids/MS173Aug25'98.pdf</a>
173-1-9	Sept 22	Dawson City, N.W.T.	

#### **Folder 2      Correspondence, May 11, 1898-January 12, 1899, from Jesse**

<u>Item #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Addressed to:</u>	<u>From</u>	
173-2-1	May 11	all	Lake Bennett	transcribed/laminated
173-2-2	July 31	all	Dawson City	
173-2-3	n.d. [summer 1898] "lost – rcvd Aug 10"	all	Dawson City	transcribed/laminated
173-2-4	Sep 25	Dottie	Dawson City	
173-2-5	n.d. (98-1)	all	Dawson City	
173-2-6	Jan 12 '99	all	Dawson City	
173-2-7	n.d. (98-2)	[family]	[unknown]	

#### **Folder 3      Correspondence, March 24, 1899-July 21, 1899 and [undated], from Jesse**

<u>Item #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Addressed to:</u>	<u>From</u>	
173-3-1	March 24 '99	sister [Dottie]	Dawson City	
173-3-2	March 29	sister	Dawson City	
173-3-3	Apr 14	all the folks at home	Dawson City	transcribed in Word
173-3-4	July 3	all	Dawson City	
173-3-5	July 21	sister	Dawson City	
173-3-6	n.d. [pp. 25 – 28]	?	unknown	transcribed/laminate

	(99-1)		d
173-3-7	n.d. (99-2)	all	Dawson
173-3-8	n.d. (99-3)	[Dottie]	unknown (incomplete)

**Folder 4 Family documents:**

- 173-4-1 Jesse's Wisconsin Bar certificate
- 173-4-2 Jesse's certificate from State of Wisconsin Supreme Court
- 173-4-3 letter to Jesse, July 30, 1897, from his mother before he traveled to Alaska
- 173-4-4 clipping on the death of Mae Bennett ["with Mom's letter" written at top of page]
- 173-4-5 poem written by Jesse's nephew (name unknown)

**Folder 5 Clippings, photographs, and other mementos relating to Mae Eldorado.**

Some items are laminated together.

- 173-5-1a "Milwaukee Claims . . . " - part 1 of green ink on newspaper
- 173-5-1b *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 12-4-04 – part 2 of green ink on newspaper
- 173-5-1c "First White Child" - part 3 of green ink on newspaper
- 173-5-2. Photo of large group 1898 – Jesse Edgren, Mae Bennett Edgren, "Major" (dog), and Capt. Jack Crawford, "Poet Scout"
- 173-5-3. Photo of funeral of Mrs. Mae Edgren – Mrs. May [sic] Edgren Daughter of Capt. J. Bennett Conveyed to her grave by her faithful [sic] dog team Dawson, Y.T. Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 99 photo by Hegg
- 173-5-4. Music and photo of Mae Eldorado Edgren, 1919
- 173-5-5. *Milwaukee Journal*, 7-12-36
- 173-5-6. *Wisconsin State Journal*, 6-15-1898 (side 1); side 2 multiple clippings
- 173-5-7. "A Klondike Baby" and other clippings, both sides
- 173-5-8. "In a Golden Grave" and other clippings, both sides
- 173-5-9. Wedding announcement , telegram and photo of Mae Eldorado

**Folder 6 Alaska mementos: newspaper clipping, Alaska-Yukon promotional booklet (1920s?)****Folder 7 Donner Party tragedy (winter 1846-1847) commemoration clippings****Folder 8 (Located in MS X-Oversize in Map Case in Vault)**

All materials in Folder 8 were laminated by the original donor; some titles are laminated together.

- 173-8-1 *The Klondike News*, April 1, 1898, v. 1, no. 1 (p. 1 and 2)
- 173-8-2a *The Dyea Press*, April 6, 1898, v. 1, no. 6. "Latest Bulletin! A Disastrous Avalanche" (front page showing)
- 173-8-2b *The Dyea Trail*, March 26, 1898, v. 1, no. 11 (1938 reprint, front page showing)
- 173-8-3 *The Dyea Trail*, April 9, 1898, v. 1 no. 14. "Sepulchre of Ice and Snow, An Awful Avalanche Buries A Great Host Of People." (p. 1 and 2)
- 173-8-4 *The Dyea Trail*, June 25, 1898, v. 1 no. 24 (p. 1 and 2)

173-8-5      Map: *Birdseye view of Dawson, Yukon Territory, 1903* illustrated by H. Epting (in 2 sections)