

Alaska State Library
Historical Collections

Guide to Collection

Nowell Family

Nowell Family Papers, ca. 1883-1950

MS 181

1 box
9 folders

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ACQUISITION: The collection was donated in September 1999 by J. Roger Nowell and Robert J. Curry, Jr.

ACCESS: The collection is unrestricted.

COPYRIGHT: Request for permission to publish material from the collection should be discussed with the librarian. Photocopying does not constitute permission to publish.

PROCESSING: Papers are arranged by type of material, then chronologically. Fragile documents are housed in mylar.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Nowells were a mining family active on Douglas Island, Gold Creek, Sheep Creek, and at Berners Bay in the 1890's and early 1900's. Nowell Avenue in West Juneau is named for this family. Thomas S. Nowell was born in Massachusetts in 1832. He came to Alaska in 1885 and became one of the first mining men to settle in Juneau, joining his brothers George and Benjamin S. He was father to six sons including Willis and Frank.

Willis E. Nowell was an internationally known virtuoso violinist when he came to visit his father in Juneau at age 41. He abruptly switched careers and went into mining operations with his family. Later he entered the steamship business and was agent for the Alaska Steamship Company at Juneau for almost a quarter of a century. It should be noted he continued playing the violin delighting local audiences at special occasions throughout his time in Juneau.

Frank H. Nowell was first associated with mining on Douglas Island with his father around 1886. In 1900 he went to Nome to work for a mercantile company. It was in the Northwest region of Alaska that he turned to his hobby in photography and became a noted photographer. His photographic work forms a separate collection, PCA 48.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The bulk of this collection contains Willis E. Nowell's correspondence and musical programs ranging from 1883 to ca.1950. Biographical information can be found on Willis as well as his father Thomas and brother Frank and other family members in newspaper clippings, mainly obituaries, and copies of chapters in books. One primary source is Willis' reminiscences of his life musical career. Photographs form a separate collection, PCA 402.

GENEALOGICAL NOTE

Key: --child

\=spouse

--George Nowell (? –1909)

--Thomas S. Nowell (1833-1942)

\=Lydia Hamm

--Frederick D. Nowell

--Willis E. Nowell (1859-1942)

\=Frances Eletta Newton (1873- ?)

--Roger C. Nowell

--Frances R. Nowell (1903-1929)

\=Robert James Curry

--Robert J. Curry, Jr.

--Willis Everett Nowell, Jr. (1905-1980)

\=Sarah Sjursen

--J. Roger Nowell

--Sylvia Nowell

--Phillip Nowell

--Frank H. Nowell (1864-1950)

\=Elizabeth 'Emma' Helen Davis

--Dorothy Nowell (ca.1898- ?)

\='Doc' Helling

--Raymond Helling

--Arthur Nowell (1866-1904)

--George M. Nowell

\=? Ames

\=Harriet C.

--Ethel Sims (adopted by Thomas S.)

INVENTORY

Folders:

- 1 *Correspondence, Willis E. Nowell (1859-1945), 1885-ca.1950:*
- Included in this folder are thank you letters for performances. Of special note is a letter of introduction for Willis to the American Minister of London, England from U.S. Senator H.W. Blair.
- 2 *Biographical Information:*
- This folder includes: a reminiscence by Willis E. Nowell, mainly of his musical experiences; a typed story of Hollis Newton, father of Frances, wife of Willis, and summary notes on family members mentioned in books, journals, and news clippings. Copies of book chapters, clippings, and journal highlights can also be found. Includes a clipping of Sarah Sjursen Nowell as Queen of Alaska.
- 3 *Willis E. Nowell (1859-1945), Musical Programs, 1883-1894:*
- Primarily programs and announcements for musical events in which Willis E. Nowell played his violin here in the U.S. and in Europe. The programs are arranged chronologically. Two items of special note have been included: a press account of the American Concert at the Trocadero, Paris, in 1889; the other, a collection of press opinions from around the country, mostly New England. There is one mention given from the Alaska Mining Record of Juneau, AK.
- 4 *Willis E. Nowell (1859-1945), Musical Programs, 1895-1940:*
- Musical programs featuring Willis E. Nowell in Juneau, Alaska. Includes one program from San Francisco, California where it is likely Willis was in the audience rather than performing.
- 5 *Legal Documents, Copies:*
- Affidavits to secure stocks in the Alaska-Dano Mines Company from the estate of Willis E. and Frances E. Nowell by their family.
- 6 *Memorabilia:*
- Items relating to Willis E. and to his daughter, Frances.
- 7 *News clippings, 1904-1942, Originals*
- 8 *News clippings, 1904-1942, Copies*
- 9 *Duplicates*