

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

**Guide to Collection**

**Wagner, William J.**

**William J. Wagner Manuscript Collection, 1906-1946**

**MS 243**

2 boxes  
6 folders

Processed By: Kay Shelton 6/17/02  
Revised by: Anastasia Tarmann  
7/2010

**ACQUISITION:** The collection was donated by Diana L. Mills to the Alaska State Library Historical Collections 6/13/2002 and is accessioned as 2002-72.

**ACCESS:** The collection is unrestricted.

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

**PROCESSING:** This collection has been sorted by type of material and described at the item level. All items have been placed in mylar and into pH-neutral folders.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

William John (W.J.) Wagner was a radio pioneer in Alaska. He was born February 5, 1900 in Pell, Washington, to William S. and Anna J. (Salkeld) Wagner. He came to Nome in 1903 where his father was in the restaurant business and later managed cafes in other locations in Alaska and Seattle. On December 14, 1924, he married Irene F. Ludeman. Mrs. George Ernst (Anna Mae Wagner), his daughter by a first marriage and granddaughter, Diana L. Mills, were instrumental in donating his collection to the library.

After managing Bill Wagner and His Orchestra from 1918-1923, W. J. Wagner enlisted in the U. S. Army Signal Corps and later was a civilian radio engineer in the U. S. Civil Service, attached to the War Department. Leaving government service in 1936, he became the chief radio engineer, then manager, and finally owner of Radio Station KFQD in Anchorage. Subsequently, he was also involved in the ownership and management of stations in Fairbanks, Sitka, Seward, Juneau, Skagway, and Ketchikan. He operated Wagner's Alaska Radio Supply in Anchorage and other businesses in Alaska and in Seattle. He was an enthusiastic HAM radio operator.

He and his wife Irene were very active in their businesses, but also participated in the community. He was a member of the Lions, Elks, the Anchorage Merchants Association, and the Washington Athletic Club. He served on the Anchorage City Council in 1940 -1942, and they both supported the arts, participating in many musical activities. They sold their radio properties in 1959 and moved to Seattle. W.J. Wagner died in Seattle June 5, 1967.

*Sources: family, Tewkesbury's WHO'S WHO IN ALASKA AND ALASKA BUSINESS INDEX, "End of the Trail" ALASKA SPORTSMAN (August, 1967)*

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

The William J. Wagner manuscript collection contains personal papers, black and white photographs, memorabilia and newspaper clippings related to radio broadcasting, and Alaska events between 1913 and 1946.

## SUBJECTS

Anchorage, Nome, U. S. Army Signal Corps, KFQD Radio

## INVENTORY

### Box 1:

#### Folder 1:

U.S. Army. Signal Corps. 1924 - 1934: Letters and certificates, official papers of W.J. Wagner's service.

#### Folder 2:

Papers relating to KFQD including Radio Broadcasting Station Licenses

#### Folder 3:

Publications, Menus, Cards, 1927-1944

#### Folder 4:

Clippings from newspapers, most undated: 1920? - 1945?

#### Folder 5:

Postcards and photographs of Nome and vicinity, 1906-1913 [assumed to be collection of William S. Wagner from his time in Nome]. Includes images of Memorial Day parades, dinner

with Roald Amundsen, Nome storm of 1913.

Folder 6:

Photographs of W.J Wagner's activities, including Signal Corps, Radio studio images (with transmitters), and outside scenes.

**Box 2:**

Newspapers [check against microfilm; if decision NOT to keep, return to donor]:

All issues are on microfilm in good condition, but need to evaluate for inclusion in MS 67 Special Editions, Newspapers.

FAIRBANKS DAILY NEWS MINER [2 issues on Wiley Post/ Will Rogers airplane crash]  
August 16, 1935 ["Rogers and Post Killed"]  
August 17, 1935 ["Rogers and Post Bodies are Here"]

NOME GOLD DIGGER      March 12, 1902

NOME DAILY GOLD DIGGER      Wednesday, October 9, 1907

ANCHORAGE DAILY TIMES

April 3, 1940 [front page story on William Wagner election to City Council]  
December 4, 1941 ["City May Buy, Run Own Light Plant"]  
December 31, 1941 ["Fight Fiercely for Manila"]  
January 2, 1942 ["Manila Falls, Japs Enter," "Dimond Calls for More Strength in Alaska"]  
February 5, 1942 ["Allied Lines Hold Japs"]  
February 4, 1946 ["Steamship Yukon Aground"]  
February 5, 1946 ["71 Reported off Yukon"]  
February 6, 1946 [100 Marooned on Beach," Seward Opens Homes to Aid Survivors"]  
February 7, 1946 ["15 Still Missing Off Yukon," 2 Army Boats on Last Search"]  
February 8, 1946 ["Survivors Accuse Yukon Crew of Drinking"]  
February 9, 1946 ["Army Salvage Crews Scour Yukon Hulk"]