

Finding Aid to the William H. Best Family Papers

Best, William Henry, 1849-1898

William Best Family Papers, 1838-1953, 1962

.4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 43

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OVERVIEW

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Ina and Sarah Best, Fargo, N.D., 1953, 1962 (Acc. 43).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Willam H. Best Family Papers, MS 43, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

William Henry Best was born November 24, 1849, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the son of Thompson, and Selina Best. When he was 6 years old the family moved to Missouri, leaving there 8 years later for Farmington, Minnesota. With money earned as a cook on a Northern Pacific Railroad construction crew, Mr. Best enrolled in 1872 at the University of Minnesota. His health prevented his finishing, so in 1875 he became a bookkeeper with Mayo Lumber Mills, and then with Croswell Flour Mills.

On August 17, 1876, he married Abbie White Hall of St. Anthony Falls, MN. They had 5 children; Will, Sarah, Ina, Emir, and Mary. In 1879 he moved to Casselton, North Dakota. as a grain buyer and bookkeeper for Huffard and Paulin. In 1884 he became an agent in real estate, loans, and insurance for Stark and Company, and in 1888 Mr. Best was elected mayor of Casselton. In 1891 the family moved to Fargo, North Dakota where Mr. Best became a life insurance agent and in 1896 he was appointed Fargo's Chief of Police. He died May 3, 1898 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery.

Mr. Best was a member of the Congregational Church and was a prominent Republican. He belonged to the Masons, and was Worshipful Master of Casselton Lodge. In 1890 he was made North Dakota Grand Lecturer, and in 1895 became North Dakota Grand Master.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **William H. Best Family Papers** consists of correspondence and subject files, arranged alphabetically.

The **Correspondence Series** ranges from 1859 to 1961. Of interest is a copy of an 1859 letter describing an Indian attack on some wagons. Also noteworthy is correspondence from Linda Slaughter concerning the WCTU, and her property dispute with the WCTU in 1897. There are some letters from Fargo Masons, Augustus Roberts, and Ina Best. Also included are a set of notes on stagecoaches, railroads, and steamboats.

The **Subject Files Series** contain some biographical information on the Best family. There's an assortment of legal and financial papers of the Best family such as bills, receipts, deeds, and teacher's contracts. There's a collection of church, school and musical programs, and wedding announcements. There are numerous papers from William Best's business, including letters of administration, farm and lot contracts, and chattel mortgages. Also included is an insurance policy, promissory notes, bill, and claims. There is a map showing Cass County voting patterns in 1886. There are miscellaneous newspaper clippings on temperance, steamboating, education, and government, as well as on people, including James Foley, B.W. Condit, Baldwin Olson, Mrs. A.C Strand, Dr. Charles Hall, and Fargo's Civil War Veterans in 1932. There is an 1838 miniature almanac from Boston.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Content
1/1	Finding aid, and Biographical material
	Correspondence Series
1/2	1859-1897, 1961

Subject Files Series

1/3	Biographical sketches and clippings - Best Family, 1929-1961
1/4	Chattel Mortgages, 1886-1889
1/5	Legal and financial documents, 1879-1897
1/6	Legal and financial documents, 1885-1902
1/7	Legal and financial documents - Best Family, 1866-1904, 1919
1/8	Maps, 1886
1/9	Newspaper clippings, 1887-1915, 1926-1931, 1951-1960
1/10	Newspaper clippings-biographical, 1924-1937
1/11	Programs and announcements, 1838, 1888-1911, 1920-1936