

Finding Aid to the William L. Dickinson Papers

Dickinson, William L. (1878-1952)

William L. Dickinson Papers, 1891-1954

1.2 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 236

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: Donated by Mrs. W. L. Dickinson of Cody, Wyoming, 1954 (Acc. 236).

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Citation: [Identification of item]. William L. Dickinson Papers, MS 236, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

William Lewis Dickinson was born November 22, 1878 in Moire, New York to Lewis J. and Sarah Dickinson. In 1890, L. J. Dickinson moved to Dickinson, North Dakota (named for his cousin, Welles Dickinson) where he entered the mercantile business with his brother, Horace. After graduating from high school in Moire in 1895, William came West to join his family, but soon went to Minneapolis and then came to Dickinson to work in the family store. In 1905, in partnership with his father, he started the L.J. Dickinson and Son clothing store in Dickinson. After the store was sold in 1913, Mr. Dickinson, an outdoorsman, operated a ranch near Cooke, Montana, which she later made into a dude ranch. In 1917 he took an Extension Course in business from the University of Wisconsin and in 1925 he sold the ranch and

purchased the Current-Heffron Abstract Company of Dickinson, later called the Dickinson Abstract Company, which he sold in 1950.

On July 7, 1916, at Cody, Wyoming, Mr. Dickinson married Agnes Couture of Litchfield, Minnesota. On May 21, 1952, he married Frances Woodward at Mesa, Idaho. On October 2, 1952, he died at Idaho Falls, Idaho, and his body was taken to Salt Lake City for cremation in the Salt Lake Memorial Columbian.

Mr. Dickinson belonged to the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, the Dickinson Commercial Club and the Dickinson Town and Country Club. He was a director of the Stark County Taxpayers Association, was on the Board of Directors of the Dickinson Savings and Loan, and was president of the Range Riders Club. He was a Republican and a member of the Cattlemen's Association.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The William L. Dickinson Papers consists of two series: correspondence and subject files.

The [Correspondence Series](#), arranged chronologically, contains early letters to L. J. Dickinson (1896-1908) and some correspondence to William Dickinson from Wisconsin University (1916-1918). There are a number of letters to William and Agnes from his father (1919-1925), also letters from a ranch friend, Lawrence Nordquist (1929), to the abstract company from the North Dakota Highway Department (1933). There is a letter from his dog, Major (1934), and several concerning wheat allotments (1935-1937), a 1937 letter concerning land classification and a soil survey by NDAC, one from the Collection and Land Department (1939) and one from author, Jack Rollinson (1941). There is a 1949 letter to the Bureau of Reclamation and several from Frances Dickinson to Leonard Sackett of the Institute.

The [Subject Series](#) includes an 1891 autograph book and the diary of Mr. Dickinson covering his years as a rancher (1914, 1917-1922, 1925). There is biographical material about the Dickinson family, and papers from a University of Wisconsin Extension course in business (1917-1918). Concerning financial matters, there are clippings and papers on banks, Savings and Loan Companies, stock, books of expenses and receipts (1936-1940), records of the Dickinson Abstract Company (1926-1950), a group of statements, receipts and accounts, (notably from) L.J. Dickinson and Son Company (1905-1913), and automobile expenses (1933-1934). There is a ledger from the W.L. Dickinson Ranch (1914-1918) and miscellaneous papers.

There are newspaper clippings on two hotel fires in Dickinson (1949, 1950). Among numerous clippings and papers on government matters are those on taxes and audits in Cass County (1938-1941), taxes, census figures, federal agencies, budgets of North Dakota counties (1930-1941), the State Bank, school funds, community property, and "North Dakota Whirligig" concerning North Dakota State government (1933-1949). There is also material on tax budgets, levies from Stark County (including papers of the Stark County Taxpayers Association (1936-1940), and clippings on the federal government including material on Franklin Roosevelt (1936-1940) and on the Brannon plan (1949). From Mr. Dickinson's graduation in 1895 are the Class prophecy and program. Of interest are a large number of clippings on a variety of historical subjects from the West including the Badlands, the Marquis de Mores, and Buffalo

Bill with a 1911 copy of *Buffalo Bill Stories*. Clippings on Indians include a ceremony at Crazy Horse's Village, battles with Chief Joseph and others, and Indian raids. Among characters described are; "Liver Eating" Johnson, Martha "Clamity Jane" Cannery, "Wild Bill" Hickok, Jim Bridger, and memoirs of S.P. Panton and Jirah Allen. There are many other articles on the old days in Montana, and Wyoming on such subjects as homesteading, gold seekers, forts, explorers, Grasshopper glacier, Maximilian, English adventurers, early pioneers, steamboats, trappers, the army, outlaws and the railroads. Concerning land holdings are clippings on land in the public domain (1938-1952), a 1908 map for homestead entry survey in Wyoming, and papers on land belonging to W.L. Dickinson.

Among legal papers are the Articles of Incorporation of the Current-Heffron Abstract Company (1914), Articles of Partnership of L.J. Dickinson and Son Company (1905), agreements of sale of Current-Heffron Abstract Company (1926, 1950), shares in Dickinson Mercantile, an accident statement, licenses, and permits (1916-1950). Concerning Montana, there are clippings and pamphlets on dams, a pictorial magazine, climatological data (1909) and tourist information.

There is also material from organizations such as the Elks, Masons, and Range Riders, and numerous clippings on Parks and Forests, clippings and other papers on cattle raising, livestock sales (1910-1949) dude ranches, the Eaton and Huidekoper families, and a series of articles on modern ranching by Wallis Huidekoper (1944). There are also articles on rodeos and races, ration books from World War II, a copy of the United Commercial Travelers magazine, *The Sample Case* (1928), and clippings on Will Roger's plane crash (1935).

SEPARATION RECORD

The following non-manuscript items from the William L. Dickinson papers have been removed and sent to the section indicated.

Map (Institute map collection)

- Dickinson Station grounds

Broadside (Institute broadside collection)

- Marriage license, William and Agnes Dickinson, July 7, 1916, Cody, Wyoming

Photographs (Institute photograph collection)

- 24 photographs of Dickinson, N.D., general (people, street scenes, buildings)
- 13 photographs of Dickinson, N.D., general, (people, and buildings)
- 40 photographs of Dickinson Ranch, (W. L. Dickinson ranch, Cooke, Montana, ranch scenes and people)
- 7 photographs of L. J. Dickinson family
- 10 photographs of W. L. Dickinson family

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box/Folder	Content
1/1	Biographical material, and Finding aid
	Correspondence Series
1/2	1896-1929
1/3	1933-1954
	Subject Files Series
1/4	Autograph book, 1891 Diaries of W. L. Dickinson
1/5	1914-1915
1/6	1917-1918
1/7	1919-1922
1/8	1925
1/9	Dickinson Family - biographical information
1/10	Extension Courses - bulletins
1/11	Extension Courses - business Financial Information
1/12	Banks, Savings and Loans - clippings
1/13	Banks, Savings and Loans, stock - papers
1/14	Books of expenses and receipts, 1936-1940
1/15	Dickinson Abstract Company, records, 1926-1950
1/16	Miscellaneous papers
2/1	Statements, receipts, accounts, 1905-1936
2/2	W. L. Dickinson Ranch ledger, 1914-1918
2/3	Fires, Dickinson Hotels, 1949, 1950 Government
2/4	Cass County, taxes, audits, 1938-1941
2/5	Counties, North Dakota 1930-1941
2/6	North Dakota, state government 1933-1947
2/7	North Dakota Whirligig, 1939
2/8	Stark County, misc., 1934-1940
2/9	Stark County Taxpayer's Association 1936-1940
2/10	United States, 1936-1950
2/11	High School Graduation, class prophecy, 1895 Historical Articles and clippings
2/12	Badlands, Marquis de Mores
2/13	"Buffalo Bill" Cody

2/14 Indians
2/15 Liver Eating Johnson, Clamity Jane, Bill Hickok, Jim Bridger
2/16 Memoirs, J. H. Allen, S. P. Panton
2/17 Montana and Wyoming, Misc.
2/18 Montana and Wyoming, Misc.
2/19 Railroads
Land Holdings
2/20 Land - public domain
3/1 Map - Homestead entry survey, 1908
3/2 W. L. Dickinson land
3/3 Legal papers - Agreements, statements, licenses, 1914-1949
3/4 Legal papers - Articles of Incorporation, partnership, 1905, 1914
3/5 Montana - Dams
3/6 Montana - miscellaneous information
3/7 Newspaper clippings - miscellaneous
3/8 Obituaries, biographies, miscellaneous
3/9 Organizations
3/10 Parks and Forests, Montana, clippings
Ranching
3/11 Articles and clippings
3/12 Dude ranches, clippings, pamphlets
3/13 Livestock records and sales, 1914-1924
3/14 "Modern Ranching by an Old Timer", W. Huidekoper
3/15 Ration books, World War II
3/16 Rodeos, races - clippings
3/17 United Commercial Travelers - The Sample Case, 1928
3/18 Will Rogers, plane crash clippings, 1935