

Finding Aid to the Soule Family Papers

Soule Family

Soule Family Papers, 1859-1914

.4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 234

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: Donated by Robert Lowe, 2000, (Acc. 2613).

Property rights: The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Soule Family Papers, MS 234, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

The history of the Soule family, as reflected in this collection, begins with the obituary of Nathan Soule. This document tells us that Nathan Soule was born in August of 1790 in Dutchess County, New York. His father was Clement Soule and Nathan was one of twelve children. Nathan Soule was a judge and a U.S. Congressman from Clay, New York. He died on 9 January 1860 at 70 years of age. The only one of Nathan's siblings that is mentioned in the collection is Benjamin Soule who died in Spring Lake, Michigan on January 27, 1900. Nathan Soule's sons Ambrose L., Charles E., and J. M. Soule are mentioned in the collection. Ambrose Soule, born in New York, served in the Civil War and letters in this collection place him in Lexington and Somerset, Kentucky in 1864. Ambrose's wife was named Maggie, also born in New York, and they lived in Spring Lake, Michigan. Maggie's maiden name is not

mentioned but we do know that they had a son named George A. Soule. George was born in Michigan in May 1863. About 1886 he married Katie Reilly and they had two girls, Ada, born August 1889 in Michigan, and Ruth, born October 1894 in North Dakota. Katie was born in Minnesota in January 1865. George Soule worked for the railroad. During his time working for the railroad George Soule lived in Russia, Crookston, and Sauk Center, Minnesota; and in 1900 the family was living at Harvey, North Dakota. In November of 1900 George Soule abandoned his family and fled to Mexico. He had embezzled funds from the railroad and fled to escape prosecution. The family then moved to Grand Forks, N.D. His daughter Ruth kept a diary during that year. George Soule continued to write to his family from Mexico through 1910. While we know nothing of what happened to Ada, a letter in the collection from a friend to Ruth's describes her as a University student in 1914. Nothing further is known of what happened to George or his wife Katie.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection of **Soule Family Papers** consists of letters, ledgers, a diary, an obituary, and a map. This collection has been organized into three series: Letter, Ledger and Subject Files.

The [Letter Series](#) contains letters of the Soule family from 1859 to 1914. The oldest letter in the collection is written from J.M. Soule to his brother Charles in 1859. J.M. mentions in this letter that Ambrose was not doing well on account of recent crop failures. A letter written in 1860 by S.W. Bhubbrick to Ambrose Soule delivers news about friends and relatives. There are five letters in this collection written during 1864. Ambrose Soule writes three of these letters during the time that he served as a Captain in the Civil War as a Union officer. He writes from Kentucky and Tennessee. Maggie writes two more letters from 1864 to her husband Ambrose Soule. There are a number of letters from 1874-1899. These letters are mostly relaying family news between George Soule, his parents and his wife. There are also letters between Ambrose Soule and his brother Charles Soule. There are a few letters from friends and other family members. In a letter from Charles to George and Ambrose there is a notable discussion about the presidential election of 1896 between McKinley and Bryan. There are five letters written by George Soule dated 1900 to 1910. This is the period when George had abandoned his family and fled to Mexico after embezzling railroad funds. Finally there are two letters from 1914. One is from Ambrose, George's father, to George's wife Katie. Ambrose would have been at least 75 years old at this time and the writing is very difficult to read. There is also a letter written to George and Katie's daughter Ruth. The letter is from a friend who was in Europe at the time that World War One started. The friend describes the difficulty of travel and the anxiety and excitement experienced by the people of Europe during this period.

The [Ledger Series](#) contains two ledgers written by George Soule and one diary written by Ada Soule. The two ledgers kept by George Soule were during his time as a railroad employee. The first ledger documents George's work from November 28, 1885 to March 24, 1888. George lived in Russia and then Crookston, Minnesota when he wrote these ledgers. The entries concern themselves with weather, especially snow that could stop the trains if it was deep enough, and the daily operations of the railroad. Mr. Soule does report going to dances and seeing a play in Red Lake Falls that was performed in French. He also comments on the poverty of the people who live in this part of northern Minnesota. The other ledger kept by George Soule chronicles his time working for the railroad in Harvey, North Dakota from

September 14, 1895 to October 17, 1900. This ledger, like the other in the collection, talks extensively about the weather and snowfall and how it affects the operation of the railroad. This ledger also talks about his wife and children as well as the number of immigrants that are coming into the area. There is also a diary written by George's daughter Ada Soule from February 11, 1900 to November 15, 1900. Ada is ten years old while she writes this diary while living in Harvey, North Dakota. Her observations give us a picture of life on the North Dakota prairie in 1900. She is reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and spends time making dolls, riding her bicycle, and doing chores. There is one short entry on the date June 1, 1901 and a last short entry on March 12, 1906.

The [Subject Files Series](#) includes a map titled *The Free Government Lands along the Minneapolis, St Paul, and Sault Ste. Marie R'y. In Ward County, North Dakota*. Sections that have been taken are shaded on the map. Someone has written Dec. 22, 1897 in pencil on the bottom of the map. This collection also contains the 1860 obituary of Ambrose and Charles' father Nathan Soule. Nathan Soule was a judge and a representative in the U.S. House of Representatives from Onondaga County, New York.

SEPARATIONS RECORD

The following non-manuscript items have been removed from the Soule Family Papers and sent to the location indicated.

Photographs (Photograph 476)

- Six images: Union officer taken in Washington D.C. This is possibly Ambrose Soule but the person and date of the photograph are unknown. There is a photograph of seven people gathered in front of a car. Someone has written on the back "Grand Forks 192?." No other information is known. There is a picture of a young man in a sailor's uniform. The picture was taken in Puerto Rico but the date of the photo and the person in the picture are unknown. There is a picture of a woman with two children. Someone has written on the back "Katie Soule and daughters Ada and Ruth." Though no date is given, the age of the girls in the picture would date the picture about 1900. There is a portrait of a little girl, identified on the back as "Ruth", taken in Sauk Center, Minnesota. There is no date but Ruth appears to be about ten years old in the picture and that would place the picture at about 1905. There is a picture of a group of men in military uniforms gathered between two cannon. They appear to be Union soldiers from the Civil War period. This is possibly Ambrose Soule's Civil War unit. There is also a copy of this picture in the collection. The sepia toned original photograph is clearer than the copy.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
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1/1 Finding aid, and Biographical material

Ledger Series

1/2 Ledger, George Soule, November 28, 1885 – March 24, 1888

1/3 Ledger, George Soule, Sept. 14, 1895 - Oct. 17, 1900

1/4 Diary, Ada Soule, Feb. 11, 1900 - March 12, 1906

Letter Series

1/5 Letters, Sept. 23, 1859 - Feb. 21, 1860

1/6 Letter, June 4, 1864

1/7 Letter, June 19, 1864

1/8 Letter, June 31, 1864

1/9 Letter, July 20, 1864

1/10 Letter, circa 1864

1/11 Letters, July 9, 1874 - April 9, 1876

1/12 Letters, Nov. 20, 1877 - Dec. 18, 1881

1/13 Letters, May 12, 1882 - Dec. 1, 1884

1/14 Letters, June 19, 1885 - April 27, 1889

1/15 Letters, Nov. 9, 1890 – Dec. 28, 1894

1/16 Letters, Sept. 27, 1896 – Feb. 20, 1899

1/17 Letters, Nov. 24, 1900 – Jan. 15, 1910

1/18 Letters, Feb. 9, 1914 – Sept. 24, 1914

1/19 Letters, undated

Subject Files Series

1/20 Obituary, Nathan Soule, 1860

1/21 Map, *The Free Government Lands Along The Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie R'y. In Ward County, North Dakota, circa 1897*