

WITHERELL (W. FRANK) PAPERS
(Mss. 1498, 1503, 1555, 1776)

Inventory

Compiled

Luana Henderson
2003

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Revised 2009

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WITHERELL (W. FRANK) PAPERS

1839-1958

Mss. 1498

Special Collections, LSU Libraries

SUMMARY

Size.	6 linear ft., 1v.
Geographic locations.	Louisiana, West (U.S.), Chicago, New York, London
Inclusive dates.	1839-1912, 1958
Bulk dates.	1860-1889
Languages.	English, Spanish.
Summary.	Correspondence, financial and legal papers relating to the wholesale trade in hides and the mining of gold, silver and copper.
Arrangement.	Chronological order.
Access.	No restrictions.
Copyright.	Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by descendants of the creators of the materials in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Citation.	W. Frank Witherell Papers, Mss. 1498, 1503, 1555, 1776, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
Stack location.	W:129-135, OS:W, F:19

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

W. Frank Witherell, a businessman and entrepreneur, was a native of New York. He attended the Clinton Liberal Institute, Clinton, N. Y. (Jan.1860 to Jan.1861) and the United States Military Academy at West Point, N. Y., (July 1861- June 1865). After the Civil War he became a wholesaler of hides and leather in association with his uncle, W. H. H. Witherell, a New Orleans commission merchant and dealer. He was also involved in mining in Arizona, California and Colorado, and served as mining superintendent of the Arivaca Milling, Mining & Commercial Company.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Note: Collection is arranged in chronological order.

Correspondence comprises the majority of this collection, relating primarily to W. Frank Witherell's business enterprises, particularly his mining ventures in the West and his involvement in the wholesale trade of hides and leather.

Early papers (1839-1848) consist of promissory notes to W. H. H. Witherell and Catherine W. Witherell (1839), a reference to the purchase of two slaves by W. H. H. Witherell (Natchez, Miss. 24th 1850), and comments on a lawsuit between Catherine M. Bisland and Josephus Hewitt regarding a property dispute in Natchez, Miss. (June 5, 1848).

Papers of 1860-1865 reflect W. Frank Witherell's observations and experiences while attending Clinton Liberal Institute and West Point. He offers insight into the attitudes of West Point cadets towards the Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln (May 4, 1865). Other papers of this time period include accounts, bank notes, receipts, and a court settlement proposed by W. H. H. Witherell in the suit of Garvin, Bell and Co. vs. William West (Dec. 22, 1864). W. H. H. Witherell writes to W. F. Witherell about the business prospects in post-war New Orleans (June 17, 1865), and mentions the presence of yellow fever in the city. Witherell's business papers after 1865 consist of correspondence, legal documents and financial records relating mostly to in the wholesale market of hides and wool and to his mining interests in the western territories. Letters also include references to a slow down in trade due to an epidemic (Jan. 3, 1868), the acquisition of Audubon Plantation and renovations on the house (May 1868), a legal ruling upholding the confiscation of the steamer "T. D. Hine" (March 12, 1869), and a request to rent land in the proximity of Magnolia Plantation, Plaquemine Parish, La., Nov. 15, 1869).

1870-1875 papers include correspondence and legal documents related to Witherell's mining ventures in Colorado, and reflect his deteriorating financial situation. They pertain to a property transfer in St. Louis, Mo., stock transactions, and difficulties in securing financial backing for the St. Lawrence Mining Co. Letters from J. P. Arey, a

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business associate, report on the cost of provisions, back pay owed to laborers, and winter weather obstructing travel to the mine. Also documented are legal actions taken against Witherell by his creditors, the State of Louisiana, and the confiscation of his property. Documents include petitions, court judgments, and notification of property seizures. Several letters also show attempts made by attorney, A. C. Story, to raise funds for Audubon Plantation, its disputed sale, and legal claims made against it. Story also advises Witherell on bankruptcy and the seizure of his property in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, La., for back taxes.

1876 material contains correspondence, accounts, shipping records, invoices, bills of lading, bank drafts, and receipts pertaining to the wholesale trade in hides, fur and wool. Correspondence discusses types of hides, transactions, orders, quality of the merchandise, and possible trade with England.

1877-1879 papers contain some papers on the hide, fur and wool trade, but deal more with Witherell's mining ventures. Papers relate to price of stocks, sale of shares, attracting potential investors, and requests for payment by his creditors. Additionally, some correspondents seem to question ethical conduct with an inquiry into Witherell's unnecessary use of funds regarding the Pelican Mining Co. (May 1, 1879), and an accusation that he misled investors about the profitability of the Gadson Purchase Mine (Aug. 8, 1879). Others suggest that J. P. Arey is an unscrupulous character (Aug. 23, Sept. 21, 1877) and question Mr. Cobbs' honesty in the use of company money (Nov. 5, 1878), both men were associates of W. F. Witherell. Financial papers include invoices and money drafts for the Arivaca Milling, Mining and Commercial Co., and statements of accounts [some in Spanish], accompanied by correspondence related to the Ruisena Mining Co. Legal documents contain an agreement for the sale of "Napoleon Lode" and "Silver Wing Lode" situated on the Snake River (undated); power of attorney of L. H. Thomas regarding I. J. L. Rathbone's financial investment in Arivaca Milling, Mining, and Commercial Co. (Jan. 1, 1879); and a Bill of Complaint filed by Peter L. Kimberley against his business partner, Charles D. Arms, accusing him of fraud in regard to several mines in Arizona, but in particular the Grand Central Mining Co. Kimberley also claims that stock was purchased in the names of W. F. Witherell and John P. Airy [Arey] with misappropriated funds. Letters not related to Witherell's business enterprises, but worthy of note describe the Crystal Palace, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England (Aug. 13, 1878) and the National Guard in St. Louis, Mo., with references made to the "Socialists arming and becoming bolder" and a possible confrontation in the city (June 6., 1878). Also, entries in a plantation journal record weather conditions, daily work activities, and sugarcane production for Magnolia Plantation. (1877-1880).

1880-1886 papers continue with Witherell's mining ventures. Reports on mines include location, quality of ore, future productivity, proximity to railroads, and detailed description interior of mines; diagrams accompany some reports. Mining correspondence pertains to the price by refining ore, the preparation of gold and silver ore for processing, description and function of chemical processes, mining equipment and machinery. Financial and legal documents contain assay certificates, invoices from smelting

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companies, contracts, deeds, and a draft of "Provision of Articles" for the organization of the St. Louis, Kirkwood, and Kansas City Railway Co. Papers also reflect Witherell's diverse business interests. In a letter to the Board of Directors of the Inter-State Telephone and Telegraph Co. Witherell proposes the organization for a subsidiary to establish a system of telephone exchanges west of the Mississippi River. Subsequent correspondence and documents include list of applicable patents (Oct. 8, 1883), unsigned contract assigning the use of patents to Inter-State Telephone and Telegraph Co., drafts of contracts pertaining to the Metropolitan Telephone Co. of Chicago, Ill. (Sept. 6, 1884), and attempts to raise capital for a telephone franchise (Oct. 26, 1884). Other correspondence reflects Witherell's interest in acquiring residential property, acreage, and open range in the West and Louisiana. Descriptions submitted to his inquiries on available property include the southernmost region of the Atchafalya Basin (Aug. 13, 1884). Among the correspondents is Charles Gayarre, who depicts the topography of Iberville Parish, near the Lafourche and Mississippi rivers and comments on the potential profitability of logging and sugar cane farming in the area (Jan. 11, 1885). He also mentions that Union soldiers obstructed the road through this area during the Civil War (Jan. 11, 1885) and he reports on the New Orleans World Exposition (Feb. 2, 1885).

1887-1912 material consists of personal papers concerning family matters, health, and social activities; records of the C & C Electric Co. containing proposals and correspondence regarding machinery specifications (1890); shipping records (1912); and printed material. Printed material is primarily miscellaneous advertisements and newspaper clippings. There are also two letters discussing the sale of used books (Aug. 19, 22, 1958).

Undated papers include both personal and business correspondence, reports on mines, diagrams related to mines, and miscellaneous financial records. The majority of printed and graphic material is undated and consists of miscellaneous advertising cards, handbills, flyers, informational booklets, business cards, and newspaper clippings.

INDEX TERMS

Advertising – United States
Arivaca Milling, Mining and Commercial Co.
Atchafalaya Basin -- Description and travel
Audubon Plantation (La.)
C & C Electric Co.
Commerce – England
Copper mines and mining
Crystal Palace (London, England)
Exhibition buildings – England
Gadson Purchase Mine (Ariz.)
Gayarre, Charles
Gold mines and mining – Arizona
Gold mines and mining – California
Gold mines and mining – Colorado
Gold ores – West (U.S.)
Grand Central Mining Co.
Hides and skins
Iberville Parish (La.) – Description and travel
Iberville Parish (La.) – History – Civil War, 1861-1865
Inter-State Telephone and Telegraph Co
Historic buildings—England -- London.
London (England) --
Napoleon Lode (Ariz.)
New Orleans World Exposition (1885)
Pelican Mining Co.
Ruisena Mining Co. (Ariz.)
Saint Louis (Mo) – History – 19th century
Silver mines and mining
Silver ores -- West (U.S.)
Silver Wing Lode (Ariz.)
Socialists – United States – Missouri
St. Lawrence Mining Co.
St. Louis, Kirkwood, and Kansas City Railway Co.
Sugar growing -- Louisiana
Sugarcane
United States – National Guard
Westminster Abbey – History – 19th century
Wholesale trade -- Louisiana – New Orleans

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folders</u>	<u>Date range</u>
W:129	1	1-10	1839-1869
	2	1-6	1870-1872
	3	1-11	1873
W:130	4	1-12	1874
	5a	1-6	1875: Jan.-July
	5b	7-11	1875: Aug.-Dec.
W:131	6a	1-4	1876: Jan.-April
	6b	5-10	1876: May-Dec.
W:132	7a	1-11	1877-1878
	7b	12-16	1879
W:133	8a	1-10	1880-1881: May
	8b	11-21	1881: June-1883
	9a	1-10	1884-1885: Aug.
W:134	9b	11-18	1885: Sept.-1889
	10	1-7	1890-1912, 1958
W:135	11	1-13	undated
	12	1-7	undated
	OS:W F:19	1	1-5