

William King Coffin Business and Family Papers, 1832-1929

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Summary Information

Title: William King Coffin Business and Family Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1832-1929

Creator: Coffin, William, 1850-1925

Call Number: Eau Claire Mss F

Quantity: 2.4 c.f. (6 archives boxes)

Repository: Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

Archival Locations: UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

Abstract: Papers of William King Coffin, a prominent Eau Claire (Wis.) banker and businessman, and papers of his grandfather, Nathaniel Coffin; his father, William Coffin; and his father's father-in-law, Samuel D. Lockwood, a justice on the Illinois Supreme Court. William King Coffin founded the Eau Claire National Bank and was its president from 1905 to 1925. The collection includes an 1869 diary and both business and personal correspondence of William King Coffin including exchanges with Milo Quaife, director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, while Coffin was on its Board of Curators. Samuel Lockwood correspondence is concentrated in the years 1857-1969. Other Lockwood items are included in unsorted business papers as are records of Nathaniel and William Coffin; several are land indentures from the 1850s for Illinois College, Jacksonville, Ill.

Language: English

Biography/History

William King Coffin, the son of William and Mary Lockwood Coffin, was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, on August 9, 1850. His family moved to Batavia, Illinois, in 1855, where William King attended public schools. Upon graduation from Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, in 1871, Mr. Coffin was employed as a clerk at the First National Bank in Chicago. From 1873 to 1875, he served as secretary-treasurer of the Menomonie Barge Line Company, a Wisconsin firm; and from 1875 to 1882 he worked as a cashier at his father's bank, The First National Bank of Batavia, Illinois. In the early 1880s, Mr. Coffin organized the Eau Claire National Bank of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He served as cashier of the bank from 1882 until 1902, when he became vice-president. He became president of the bank in 1905. During his banking career in Eau Claire, Mr. Coffin served as president of the Eau Claire Savings Bank, vice-president of the First National Bank of Fairchild, Wisconsin, and a member of the Land Mortgage Association. He was also one of the founders of the Wisconsin Bankers Association, a member of its executive council from 1894 to 1896, and president during the years 1897 and 1898.

In addition to banking, Mr. Coffin had large business interests in several lumber companies. He was president of the Eau Claire Library Board and of the State Library Association. He was a life member of the State Historical Society and served on its Board of Curators from 1916 to 1919. He was also a member of the Society of Colonial Wars, both in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In politics, Mr. Coffin was a Republican. He served one term on the Eau Claire City Council and was on the staff of Governor Edward Scofield. He later served as a trustee of the Eau Claire County Asylum and Poor Farm and of Mount Washington Sanatorium. In 1882, Mr. Coffin married May Gove Burroughs, the daughter of Dr. Lester M. Burroughs. They had two daughters, Mary Elmira (Mrs. B.G. Proctor of Eau Claire) and Grace Burroughs (Mrs. F.R. Bates of Seattle, Washington). Mr. Coffin died on March 26, 1925. Mr. Coffin's grandfather was Nathaniel Coffin, an intimate friend of William King, the first governor of Maine in 1822. His father, William Coffin, moved to Illinois as a young boy and later taught mathematics at Illinois College. In 1853 he moved to Batavia and engaged in farming and banking until 1880. William Coffin married Mary Lockwood, the daughter of Justice Samuel D. Lockwood of the Illinois Supreme Court.

Scope and Content Note

The William King Coffin Papers include the business and personal correspondence of William King Coffin, William Coffin, and Samuel D. Lockwood, 1832-1929. In addition there are letter press copies of William King Coffin's outgoing correspondence, 1881-1890. William King Coffin's correspondence for the 1860s and the 1870s is mainly personal, but from the 1880s to 1892 it is chiefly devoted to his varied business interests. Between 1892 and 1929 there is very little correspondence, except for the years 1916 to 1919, when Mr. Coffin was corresponding with Milo M. Quaife, director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The Samuel D. Lockwood correspondence is largely concentrated in the years 1857 to 1869. There are two boxes of miscellaneous unsorted business papers of William King Coffin, William Coffin, Nathaniel Coffin, and Samuel D. Lockwood. These papers are mainly indentures, federal land patents, mortgages, and bills and receipts. Although these papers are quite general, there are a considerable number of land indentures executed by Nathaniel Coffin and Samuel D. Lockwood in the 1850s for Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois. The one volume is William King Coffin's diary for 1869.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Acquisition Information

Presented by John Proctor, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, July 5, 1961.

Processing Information

Processed by Jack T. Ericson, September 6, 1966.

Search Terms

Subject Terms

- Quaife, Milo Milton, 1880-1959
- Batavia National Bank (Batavia, Ill.)
- Eau Claire National Bank (Eau Claire, Wis.)
- Illinois College
- Knox College (Galesburg, Ill.)
- State Historical Society of Wisconsin
- Banks and banking—Wisconsin—Eau Claire
- Eau Claire (Wis.)—Commerce
- Coffin, Nathaniel
- Coffin, William
- Lockwood, Samuel D. (Samuel Drake), 1789-1874

Contents List

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| dsfs | Correspondence |
| Box 1-3 | 1832-1919 |
| Box 4 | 1920=1929; undated |
| Box 4 | Letter press copies of outgoing correspondence, 1881-1890 |
| Box 4 | Ephemera |
| Box 4 Volume 1 | Diary of William King Coffin, 1869 |
| Box 5-6 | Miscellaneous unsorted business papers |
