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Guide to the Nancy Tatnall Fuller Research Collection on Joseph Swift

WA MSS S-2437



by Kathleen T. Burns

March 2003

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-2437

CREATOR: Fuller, Nancy Tatnall

TITLE: Nancy Tatnall Fuller Research Collection on Joseph Swift

DATES: 1858-1997

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.76 linear feet (4 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: Nancy Tatnall Fuller's collection on Joseph Swift was acquired during research for her book *Joseph Swift in the Wild West*. Over 40 letters between Joseph Swift and family members from 1858 to 1887 describe frontier life in Montana, the gold rush, cattle herding, the Civil War, settler relations with Piegan Indians, and local news. Swift omitted mention of his friendship with the Plummers and Joseph Slade in letters home though his father commented on vigilante executions in Montana. Also included are Fuller's research notes and correspondence, typescript transcripts of Swift's letters, photocopied articles and books about vigilante activity in Bannack, obituaries for Joseph Swift and Francis M. Thompson, background material for Fuller's book and a copy of *Joseph Swift in the Wild West*. Addition to the collection in 2004 includes financial records, receipts, correspondence and other material related to Swift's investment and participation in various companies, including the Tally-On-Top Salesbook Company, the Geometric Drill Company, and the Uncle Sam Gold Mining Company.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.swift>

Requesting Instructions

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To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of John Gambell, 2002 and 2004.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Nancy Tatnall Fuller Research Collection on Joseph Swift is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Nancy Tatnall Fuller Research Collection on Joseph Swift. Yale Collection of Western American, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

NANCY TATNALL FULLER AND JOSEPH SWIFT

In 1997 Nancy Tatnall Fuller published *Joseph Swift in the Wild West*, a biography of her great grandfather. The book, which described Swift's life in Montana from 1862 through 1864, was based on letters between Swift and family members that had been collected by Caroline Tatnall Welles.

Joseph Swift was born to Samuel Swift and Mary Ann Royer Swift in Norriton Township, Pennsylvania on December 16, 1843. After nine years the Swift family moved to Norristown, PA, where Joseph enrolled in a private school. Swift began working in Philadelphia as an office boy for David S. Brown & Co in 1859. Two years later Swift suffered a case of pneumonia that threatened to develop into tuberculosis. In 1862, at the age of 18, Swift set out on a journey up the Missouri River to Montana in hopes of restoring his health.

During his first year in Montana, Swift worked at the Blackfeet Indian Government Experimental Farm in Sun River. In July of 1863, he moved to the gold rush town of Bannack where he worked as a clerk for Francis M. Thompson. In Bannack, Swift and Thompson boarded with James and Martha Vail. Other boarders included Martha Vail's sister, Electa Bryan Plummer, and Electa's husband Henry Plummer, the sheriff of Bannack.

In January of 1864, Henry Plummer was captured and hanged by vigilantes who accused him of being complicit in a series of Montana robberies and murders. Vigilantes hung another of Swift's friends, Joseph Slade, in March. Following these events, the Vails left Bannack and Joseph Swift began rooming with another family, the Edgertons, until his own departure later that year.

By December 1864, Swift had returned to Pennsylvania where he was employed by the Sugar Creek Oil Company in Venango County. After a brief period he accepted a position with his brother William at Swift and Courtney (later the Diamond Match Company) and began a career in safety match manufacturing. During the years that followed, Swift married Gertrude Dorr and had six children. He retired from his position as vice-president of the Diamond Match Company in the 1880s, and moved with his family to Wilmington, Delaware. He died on July 13, 1917, at the age of 71.

Scope and Contents

The Nancy Tatnall Fuller Research Collection on Joseph Swift consists of correspondence between Joseph Swift and family members along with correspondence, transcripts, research notes, and other papers which Nancy Tatnall Fuller produced or consulted while researching *Joseph Swift in the Wild West* (1997). The papers have been organized into two series, *Family Correspondence of Joseph Swift* and *Research Files of Nancy Tatnall Fuller*, which span the dates 1858-1997. The collection is housed in three boxes. Box 3 contains Oversize material.

[Series I, *Joseph Swift Family Correspondence*](#), is organized into three subseries: Outgoing, Incoming, and Third Party. Each subseries is arranged chronologically. Transcripts and annotated photocopies of some letters, created by Nancy Tatnall Fuller during her research, are housed in folders at the end of the first two subseries (folders 10, 20, and 21).

Topics covered in letters sent by Joseph Swift include steamboat travel, his health, mail delivery on the Montana frontier, his employment with Francis M. Thompson, settler relations with Piegan Indians, cattle herding, and the Montana gold rush. Incoming correspondence consists of letters from Swift's father and siblings which describe local news, Civil War battles, the draft, and unrest among "the Sioux in Minnesota" (folders 13, 14). Swift appears to have written a letter (not included in the collection) to his mother shortly after Henry Plummer's execution in January 1864. Samuel Swift's reply on March 16, 1864 indicates that his son's account of the execution in Bannack did not explain the connection he harbored to the dead man (folder 16). In the two existing 1864 letters Swift wrote to his family, he made no further mention of vigilante activities.

Third Party correspondence includes letters between Swift's wife, Gertrude Dorr Swift, and family members, a brief letter from Horatio Dorr to Joseph's brother William and an 1876 letter from Adeline Dorr, Gertrude's sister, to Joseph Swift's son and daughter-in-law (folder 26). The letters are primarily about family matters. Transcripts and annotated photocopies created by Nancy Tatnall Fuller are housed in folders at the end of the first two subseries (folders 10, 20 and 21).

[Series II, *Nancy Tatnall Fuller Research Files*](#), is organized into four subseries: Correspondence, Printed Material, Subject Files, and Other Papers. Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent and consists predominantly of letters between Fuller and individuals or organizations she believed could supply her with material for her book.

Printed Material is arranged alphabetically by name of author. The subseries includes Fuller's book, *Joseph Swift in the Wild West* (1997), *Bannack: Cradle of Montana* (1991) by F. Lee Graves, and photocopies of articles and other works which Fuller consulted during her research. Some of the photocopies are annotated.

Subject Files contains obituaries for Francis M. Thompson and Joseph Swift along with photocopied articles and a series of Montana highway maps.

Other Papers is arranged alphabetically by type of material and includes Fuller's labelled binder dividers; manuscript and typescript notes for *Joseph Swift in the Wild West*; drafts of a timeline for Joseph Swift's life; and photocopies of title pages for works included in Fuller's bibliography.

[Series III, *Additions Since 2003*](#), includes correspondence relating to Joseph Swift's investments as well as to the settlement of the estates of Samuel and Elizabeth Swift. A group of letters relates to Joseph Swift's investment in the Tally-on-Top Salesbook Company. The Joseph Swift Personal Papers subseries is arranged in chronological order and consists of insurance forms, a stock certificate from the Uncle Sam Gold Mining Company (Joseph Swift was secretary of the company), accounting sheets, receipts, property tax receipts, and Elizabeth Swift's account with the Pennsylvania Company for Insurance. Includes a manuscript tally of Joseph Swift's interest in the estate of Elizabeth Swift. Geometric Drill Company material includes a prospectus for the company, a contract, and company financial information.

Nancy Tatnall Research Files is organized into Printed Material and Other Papers. Printed Material includes maps, periodicals, and photocopies which Tatnall consulted while writing her book. Other Papers consists

of a tracing of an overland journey by rail, steamship and foot from Philadelphia to Bannack; a photocopy of the tracing; and several photocopied images of the Swift family, with identification in ink by Tatnall.

Collection Contents

Series I: Joseph Swift Family Correspondence, 1858-1886

0.2 linear feet (.5 boxes)

Series I., *Joseph Swift Family Correspondence*, is organized in three subseries: Outgoing, Incoming and Third Party. Material within each subseries is arranged chronologically.

OUTGOING

b. 1, f. 1	Correspondence	1858
b. 1, f. 2	Correspondence	1862
b. 1, f. 3	Correspondence	1863
b. 1, f. 4	Correspondence	1864
b. 1, f. 5	Correspondence	1865
b. 1, f. 6	Correspondence	1866-68
b. 1, f. 7	Correspondence	1869
b. 1, f. 8	Correspondence	1870 Aug 16
b. 1, f. 9	Empty envelope	n.d.
b. 1, f. 10	Transcripts and annotated photocopies of correspondence	n.d.

INCOMING

b. 1, f. 11	Correspondence	1862 Apr-May
b. 1, f. 12	Correspondence	1862 Jul
b. 1, f. 13	Correspondence	1862 Oct
b. 1, f. 14	Correspondence	1862 Dec
b. 1, f. 15	Correspondence	1863 Oct
b. 1, f. 16-17	Correspondence	1864
b. 1, f. 18	Correspondence	1868 Apr 26
b. 1, f. 19	ALS from Samuel Swift (son)	1886 Feb 21
b. 1, f. 20-21	Transcripts and annotated photocopies of correspondence Also stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 64	n.d.

THIRD PARTY

b. 1, f. 22	ALS to Gertrude Swift from Adeline Dorr	1861 Jul 16
b. 1, f. 23	ALS to William Swift from Horatio Dorr	1869 Mar 29
b. 1, f. 24	ALS to Eliza Swift from Gertrude Swift	1869 Dec 17

THIRD PARTY (continued)

b. 1, f. 25	ALS to Eliza Swift from Gertrude Swift	1870 May 11
b. 1, f. 26	ALS to Samuel and Franny Swift from Adeline Dorr	1876 Mar 31

Series II: Nancy Tatnall Research Files, 1987-97*0.63 linear feet (1.5 boxes)*

Series II. *Nancy Tatnall Research Files*, is organized into four subseries: Correspondence, Printed Material, Subject Files, and Other Papers. Material in each subseries is arranged alphabetically by name, subject or type of material.

CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 27	Birney, Hoffman Correspondence with Frances Swift Tatnall (photocopy). See also: McEwan, W. L., box 2, folder 34	n.d.
b. 1, f. 28	Cruse, William T. Also stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 65 Includes <i>Virginia City Gazette</i> , v. 10, Summer 1989.	1989 Sep 12
b. 1, f. 29	Dedera, Don	1989
b. 1, f. 30	Dempsey, Al Includes map of Bannack (photocopy).	1992
b. 1, f. 31	Great Falls Public Library Includes description of Blackfeet Indian Governmental Farm from <i>A Pictorial History of the Sun River Valley</i> (photocopy).	1992
b. 1, f. 32	Greenfield Massachusetts Public Library	1992
b. 1, f. 33	Massachusetts Historical Society	1987-92
b. 1, f. 34	McEwan, W. L. Enclosing a copy of a letter between Hoffman Birney and Mrs. Lea, 1929; a letter between Martha Plassman and Hoffman Birney, 1929; and passages from <i>Vigilantes</i> .	1996, n.d.
b. 1, f. 35	Montana Historical Society	1992
b. 1, f. 36	New England Historic and Genealogical Society Plassman, Martha Edgerton See: McEwan, W.L., box 2, folder 34 and Oversize, box 3, folder 66	1987
b. 1, f. 37	Unidentified recipients Form letter asking for copies of Joseph Swift correspondence.	1992 Jul 24

PRINTED MATERIAL

b. 1, f. 38-39	Birney, Hoffman. <i>Vigilantes</i> , 1929 (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 40	Dedera, Don. "Ghost Towns with Spirit", <i>Historic Preservation</i> , 1989 (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 41	Dimsdale, Thomas J. "The Hanging of Captain Slade", <i>Montana Margins</i> , 1946 (photocopy)	n.d.

PRINTED MATERIAL (continued)

b. 2, f. 42	Edgerton, Mary Wright. <i>Passages from A Governor's Wife on the Mining Frontier</i> , 1976 (photocopy) Includes copy of bibliography.	n.d.
b. 2, f. 43	Frohlicher, S. V. <i>Stone Age to Space Age in 100 Years</i> , 1981, p. 14-15 (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 44	Fuller, Nancy Tatnall. <i>Joseph Swift in the Wild West</i>	1997
b. 2, f. 45	Graves, F. Lee. <i>Bannack: Cradle of Montana</i>	1991
b. 2, f. 46	Hough, Emerson. <i>The Passing of the Frontier: a Chronicle of the Old West</i> , 1921, p. 66-81 (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 47	Overholser, Joel. Pages from <i>Fort Benton: World's Innermost Port</i> (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 48	Plassman, Martha Edgerton. News articles (photocopy) Also stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 67	n.d.
b. 2, f. 49	Rowe, Jean Conrad. "St. Peter's Mission" from <i>Mountains and Meadows: a Pioneer History of Cascade, Chestnut Valley, Hardy, St. Peter's Mission and Castner Falls</i> , [1970] (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 50	Sun River Valley Historical Society. Pages from <i>A Pictorial History of the Sun River Valley</i> , 1989 (photocopy)	1992 Aug 18
	Thompson, Francis M. "Pioneer Experiences in Great Northwest", 1911 (photocopy) Stored in: Oversize, box 3, folder 67	1992 Aug 18
b. 2, f. 51-52	Thompson, Francis M. <i>Reminiscences of Four-Score Years</i> , 1912-14 (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 53	Towle, Virginia Rowe. "Electa Bryan Plummer: A Good Woman who Loved a Bad Man" from <i>Vigilante Woman</i> , 1966 (photocopy)	n.d.
b. 2, f. 54	Vaughn, Robert. Pages from <i>Then and Now; or, Thirty-Six Years in the Rockies</i> , 1900 (photocopy)	n.d.
SUBJECT FILES		
b. 2, f. 55	Bannack	[1995]
b. 2, f. 56	Montana	1990-94
b. 2, f. 57	Thompson, Francis M.	n.d.
b. 2, f. 58	Swift, Joseph	n.d.
OTHER PAPERS		
b. 2, f. 59	Binder dividers	n.d.
b. 2, f. 60-61	Notes for <i>Joseph Swift in the Wild West</i>	n.d.
b. 2, f. 62	Timeline drafts, typescript	n.d.
b. 2, f. 63	Title pages for bibliography (photocopy)	n.d.

Series III: Additions Since 2003, 1882-1993

0.42 linear feet (1 box)

JOSEPH SWIFT FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE

b. 4, f. 68	Correspondence	1891-1919
b. 4, f. 69	Correspondence with Tally-on-Top Salesbook Company	1895 May-Jun

JOSEPH SWIFT PERSONAL PAPERS

Financial and Insurance Records

Material arranged in chronological order.

b. 4, f. 70	Equitable Life Assurance. Tontine policy tables, 3 blank forms completed in manuscript	1882, 1893
b. 4, f. 71	Uncle Sam Gold Mining Company. Stock certificate for 500 shares	1886 May 17
b. 4, f. 72-73	Accounts	1887-1894, n.d.
b. 4, f. 74-78	Receipts	1888-1910
b. 4, f. 79	Receipts, property taxes	1893-1912
b. 4, f. 80	Pennsylvania Company for Insurance. Elizabeth Swift account, statements, typescript on carbon	1912-16, n.d.
b. 4, f. 81	Pennsylvania Company for Insurance. Original folder for Elizabeth Swift account	n.d.
b. 4, f. 82	"Estimate of Value of Joseph Swift's Interest in Estate of Elizabeth Swift," manuscript balance sheets	n.d.

Geometric Drill Co.

b. 4, f. 83	Contract with Wharton Switch Company, draft	1893
b. 4, f. 84	Inventory and balance sheet	1894 Nov 1
b. 4, f. 85	Prospectus	[189?]

NANCY TATNALL RESEARCH FILES

Arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Printed Material

b. 4, f. 86	<i>Bannack State Park</i> , printed map	n.d.
b. 4, f. 87	De Lacy, W. W. <i>Map of the Territory of Montana with Portions of the Adjoining Territories...1865</i> , partial photocopies	n.d.
b. 4, f. 88	Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. <i>Bannack Free Press</i> 1, no. 1	n.d.
b. 4, f. 89	<i>Montana's Gold West Country Travel Guide</i> 4, magazine	1993
b. 4, f. 90	Ovitt, Mabel. Map and appendix from <i>Golden Treasure</i> , annotated photocopies	n.d.

NANCY TATNALL RESEARCH FILES > Printed Material (continued)

b. 4, f. 91	Travel Montana, Department of Commerce. <i>Montana: 1993-94 Official Highway Map</i>	1992
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Other Papers

b. 4, f. 92	Map of journey from Philadelphia to Bannack, tracing on carbon and photocopy of tracing	n.d.
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b. 4, f. 93	Swift family photographs, annotated photocopies	n.d.
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Oversize

0.34 linear feet (1 box)

Oversize contains material from Series I-II, and is arranged in box order.

b. 3, f. 64	Annotated photocopies of correspondence (in Series I)	n.d.
b. 3, f. 65	<i>Virginia City Gazette</i> , vol. 10, Summer 1989 (in Series II)	1989
b. 3, f. 66	Plassman, Martha Edgerton. News articles, 1928 (in Series II)	n.d.
b. 3, f. 67	Thompson, Francis M. "Pioneer Experiences in Great Northwest", 1911 (in Series II)	n.d.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Cattle herding -- Montana
Frontier and pioneer life -- Montana
Gold mines and mining -- Montana
Indians of North America -- Great Plains
Piegan Indians
Vigilantes -- Montana

Geographic Names

Bannack (Mont.)
Norristown (Pa.)
Sun River (Mont.)
United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865
Wilmington (Del.)

Genres / Formats

Receipts (financial records) -- United States --
19th century
Receipts (financial records) -- United States --
20th Century
Stock certificates -- Dakota Territory

Names

Fuller, Nancy Tatnall
Swift, Joseph, 1843-1917

Corporate Bodies

Geometric Drill Company (New Haven, Conn.)
Tally-On-Top Salesbook Company
Uncle Sam Gold Mining Company