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Guide to the Sugg Family and McDonald Family Papers

WA MSS S-2885



by Beinecke Staff

2013

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: WA MSS S-2885

CREATOR: Sugg Family

TITLE: Sugg and McDonald family papers

DATES: circa 1850-1973

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 50.1 linear feet (56 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: This collection documents the Sugg family and McDonald family in Sonora, California, circa 1850-1973. Papers in the collection include correspondence, financial records, school records, recipes, photographs, and scrapbooks, as well as material related to collecting postage stamps. A group of papers also document the relationship between the Sugg family and George W. Nicol, a superior court judge in Tuolumne County, 1891-1922. Photographs in the collection consist chiefly of family portraits and snapshots, as well as examples of news photography created by Vernon McDonald for the Modesto Herald newspaper and Associated Press. The collection also includes books and printed material accumulated by the family.

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

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.suggmcdonald>.

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

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Robert Brennan on the Frederick W. and Carrie S. Beinecke Fund for Western Americana, 2013.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Sugg and McDonald Family Papers 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

Sugg and McDonald Family Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during initial processing.

Sugg Family and McDonald Family

The Sugg family and McDonald family were prominent African American families in Sonora, California. The progenitor of both families, William Sugg (1828-1889) was born into slavery in Raleigh, North Carolina. Around 1850, he worked as a muleteer and bullwhacker traveling from Texas to Merced, California, with his master Francis Trale. In June 1854, Trale manumitted Sugg for one dollar. As a free black man, Sugg worked as a harness maker and teamster.

In 1855, Sugg married Mary Elizabeth Snelling (1839-1915). She was born in Johnson City, Missouri, the daughter of Julia Snelling (born circa 1800), an enslaved woman formerly held by the William Snelling family, the founders of Snelling, California. In 1851, Mary and her mother relocated to California with the Snelling family.

In 1857, William Sugg built a three-room brick-faced adobe house at 37 Theall Street in Sonora; in 1885, a multi-storied and wood framed addition added seven bedrooms to the residence. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Sugg home provided rooms to overflow guests from local hotels.

William and Mary Sugg had eleven children: Julia "Fannie" Sugg (born circa 1856), Sarah Ann Sugg (circa 1857-1914), Elizabeth Francis Sugg (born circa 1858), Mary Anita Sugg (circa 1859-1917); William Sugg (1862-1908), Rosa Adele Sugg (1865-1941), Napoleon "Poli" Bonaparte Sugg (1867-1944), Alonzo Sugg (circa 1869-1923), Nellie Sugg (1871-1959), Melpomene "Babe" Sugg (1874-1950) and Ernest Alaric Sugg (1876-1952). In 1877, the elder William Sugg relocated to Merced, where he operated a harness business until his death.

Only two of the children in the Sugg family married. In 1897, the younger William Sugg married Alice Elebeck (born 1869); they divorced two years later. In 1906, Rosa married Daniel William McDonald (1866-1952), and they had two sons, Earl Sugg McDonald (born 1903) and Vernon "Scoop" Sugg McDonald (1906-1982).

In 1912, Rosa, Earl, and Vernon McDonald relocated to Sonora and lived in the Sugg House. Earl reportedly moved to Sacramento, while Vernon remained in Sonora and became a correspondent with the *Modesto Herald* and Associated Press. Vernon also served as a sergeant in the United States Army during World War II.

In 1979, Robert Brennan purchased the Sugg family home, while Vernon McDonald continued to live there until his death in May 1982. In 1984, the Sugg House became a listed property on the National Register of Historic Places.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the Sugg and McDonald family of Sonora, California, circa 1850-1964. Papers in the collection include correspondence, financial records, school records, recipes, photographs, and scrapbooks, as well as material related to collecting postage stamps. A group of papers documents the relationship between the Sugg family and George W. Nicol, a superior court judge in Tuolumne County, 1891-1922. Photographs in the collection consist chiefly of family portraits and snapshots, as well as examples of news photography created by Vernon McDonald for the *Modesto Herald* newspaper and Associated Press. The collection also includes books and printed material accumulated by the family.

Arrangement

I. Papers, 1864-1962. II. Photographs, circa 1850-1973. III. Printed Material and Books, 1859-1964.

Collection Contents

Series I: Papers, 1864-1962

15.9 linear feet (20 boxes)

Series I is organized into nine subseries: Correspondence, Napoleon Sugg Papers, Financial Records, School Records, Scrapbooks, Family Material, Postage Stamp Collecting, Miscellaneous Material, and Oversize Material

Correspondence

This subseries consists of unsorted correspondence, as well as papers and correspondence related to George W. Nicol (died 1922), a superior court judge in Tuolumne County, 1891-1922

b. 1	Correspondence <i>19 Folders</i>	1864-1962
b. 2	Correspondence <i>13 Folders</i>	1920-1949
b. 3	Correspondence <i>22 Folders</i>	1930-1939
b. 4	Correspondence <i>19 Folders</i>	1930-1959
b. 5	Correspondence <i>17 Folders</i>	1940-1943
b. 6	Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) Correspondence	circa 1898-1899
b. 6	American Baptist Publication Society Correspondence	1916-1922
b. 6	Correspondence and papers related to George W. Nicol <i>2 Folders</i>	1889-1921
b. 6	Postcards <i>3 Folders</i>	1900-1930

Napoleon Sugg Papers

Chiefly employment records related to Napoleon "Poli" Bonaparte Sugg. He worked as a teamster for various union locals in the Stockton area.

b. 7	Union material and letters of inquiry <i>2 Folders</i>	undated
b. 7	Ledgers, photographs, and receipts <i>3 Folders</i>	undated
b. 7	Postcards	undated

Financial Records

This subseries consists of unsorted financial records related to family businesses, as well as daily domestic life

b. 8	Ledgers and account books <i>17 Folders</i>	1883-1925, undated
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Financial Records (continued)

b. 8	Receipts <i>10 Folders</i>	1858-1896
b. 9	Receipts <i>21 Folders</i>	1900-1930, undated
b. 9	Other financial records <i>4 Folders</i>	1867-1924, undated
School Records		
b. 10	School books and papers <i>17 Folders</i>	1878-1921, undated
b. 11	School books and papers <i>6 Folders</i>	1894-1924, undated
Scrapbooks		
b. 12	Scrapbooks 2 volumes	circa 1932-1940
b. 13	Scrapbooks 2 volumes	circa 1938-1940
b. 14	Scrapbook of sheet music	undated
Family Material		
b. 15	Family recipes and remedies	undated
b. 15	Scrapbook of family recipes 1 volume	undated
b. 15	Book of notes 1 volume	undated
b. 15	Autograph albums 2 volumes	1889
b. 15	Scrapbooks 2 volumes	undated
b. 15	Book of Odds and Ends 1 volume	undated
b. 15	Wallets of Napoleon Sugg	undated
b. 15	Pocket Books <i>2 Folders</i>	1896-1936
b. 15	Order blanks, advertisements, etc.	
b. 15	Map and Day Book covers	
b. 15	Cruise souvenir and envelopes	1901-1907, 1908

Family Material (continued)

b. 15	Membership cards	1940-1949
	Postage Stamp Collecting Vernon Sugg McDonald was a charter member of the Tuolumne County Stamp Club.	
b. 16	Postage stamps <i>17 Folders</i>	1899-1960, undated
b. 17	Stamp albums <i>2 Folders</i>	circa 1900-1902
b. 17	Postage stamp catalogs <i>4 Folders</i>	1936, undated
b. 17	Newspaper clippings and material about stamp collecting	1937-1938, undated
b. 18	Miscellaneous Material <i>13 Folders</i> This subseries consists of unsorted and unidentified material	1898-1945, undated
	Oversize Material	
b. 19	Hotel visitors Page from a ledger	1894, 1896
b. 19	Grammar school diploma for Melpomene Suggs	1893
b. 19	Grammar school diploma for Earl Sugg McDonald	1917

Series II: Photographs, circa 1850-1973*6.4 linear feet (7 boxes)*

Series II consists of unsorted photographic material.

b. 20	Cased photographs 8 cased photographs	circa 1850-1880
b. 20	Framed photograph	undated
b. 20	Lantern slides	undated
b. 21	Photograph albums 3 photograph albums	circa 1860-1900
b. 22	Photographic prints <i>15 Folders</i>	circa 1894-1966, undated
b. 23	Photographic prints <i>6 Folders</i>	circa 1892-1965, undated
b. 24	Photographic prints <i>10 Folders</i>	1949-1961, undated
b. 25	Photographic negatives and photographic prints <i>16 Folders</i>	undated
b. 25	Photographic negatives <i>3 Folders</i>	undated
b. 26	Slides <i>9 Folders</i>	1949-1973, undated
	Oversize Material	
b. 27	Photographic prints	1898-1914
b. 27	Photograph album	circa 1903-1907
b. 27	Portrait of Melpomene Suggs	undated
b. 27	Portrait of an unidentified male	undated

Series III: Printed Material and Books, 1859-1964*27.8 linear feet (29 boxes)*

Series III consists of unsorted printed material and books collected by the Sugg family and McDonald family.

Series III is organized into two subseries: Print Material and Boks.

Printed Material		
b. 28	Family Bible 1 volume	1859
b. 28	<i>The Bride's Cookbook</i> 1 volume	undated
b. 28	<i>The Cabinet Cookbook</i> 1 volume	1937?
b. 28	Recipe books and booklets <i>4 Folders</i>	1911-1941, undated
b. 28	Household booklets	1904-1926, undated
b. 28	Medical booklets	1860-1871, undated
b. 28	Informational booklets	1915-1932, undated
b. 28	Game and toy booklets	1895-1940
b. 28	Music books	1895, undated
b. 28	Poetry books	1894-1938
b. 28	Devotional booklets	1905, undated
b. 28	Official Lawn Tennis Guide 1 volume	1933
b. 28	<i>California Historian</i> <i>2 Folders</i>	1964 January- June
b. 28	California Football Programs	1931, 1938
b. 29	<i>Chesterfield's Letter Writing and Complete Book of Etiquette</i> 1 volume	1857
b. 29	<i>Webster's Reliable Dictionary for Home, School and Office</i> 1 volume	1911
b. 29	Dictionary 1 volume	undated

Printed Material (continued)

b. 29	<i>Aunt Lindy</i> 1 folder	1893
b. 29	<i>The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition</i> 1 volume	undated
b. 29	<i>History of Marie Antoinette of France</i> 1 volume	1864
b. 29	<i>The Homing Instinct</i> 1 volume	1913
b. 29	<i>The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism</i> 1 volume	undated
b. 29	<i>Advanced Arithmetic</i> 1 volume	undated
b. 29	<i>The Caxtons</i> 1 volume	undated
b. 29	<i>The Fur Seal's Tooth</i> 1 volume	1894
b. 29	<i>Under Both Flags: An Illustrated Story of the Civil War</i> 1 volume	1896
b. 29	<i>The Great South: A Record of Journeys</i> 1 volume	1875
b. 30	Periodicals and programs	1879-1941
b. 30	Yearbook and booklets	1928-1934
b. 30	Newspaper clippings 4 Folders	
Books		
b. 31	<i>The Book of Knowledge</i> (Children's Encyclopedia), Volumes 1-10	circa 1912
b. 32	<i>The Book of Knowledge</i> (Children's Encyclopedia), Volumes 11-20	circa 1912
b. 33	<i>The Chautauquan</i> , Volumes 20-25	1897
b. 34	Encyclopedia and reference 9 volumes	circa 1904-1976
b. 35	<i>Chambers Encyclopædia</i> , Volumes 1-5	1893
b. 36	<i>Chambers Encyclopædia</i> , Volumes 6-9	1893
b. 37	Dictionaries 6 volumes	circa 1868-1948

Books (continued)

b. 38	Dictionaries, reference, and non-fiction 11 volumes	circa 1888-1937
b. 39	Non-fiction and business 10 volumes	circa 1879-1957
b. 40	Textbooks 25 volumes	circa 1863-1923
b. 41	Textbooks and cookbooks 26 volumes	circa 1868-1940
b. 42	Instruction and other 25 volumes	circa 1880-1936
b. 43	Poetry and literature 21 volumes	circa 1874-1916
b. 44	Literature 17 volumes	circa 1853-1969
b. 45	Medicine and biography 9 volumes	circa 1866-1934
b. 46	History 8 volumes	circa 1870-1919
b. 47	History 15 volumes	circa 1849-1938
b. 48	Music 12 volumes	circa 1863-1914
b. 49	Music 17 folders	circa 1894-1909
b. 50	Young adult and humor 18 volumes	circa 1889-1936
b. 51	Fiction 17 volumes	circa 1855-1955
b. 52	Fiction 18 volumes	circa 1886-1951
b. 53	Bibles and devotional literature 17 volumes	circa 1852-1952
b. 54	Fragile books 9 volumes	circa 1890-1915

Books (continued)

b. 55	Fragile books 16 volumes	circa 1863-1900
b. 56	Oversize sheet music <i>13 Folders</i>	

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.

Preferred Titles

McDonald (Family)
Modesto Herald

Subjects

African Americans -- California -- Sonora
Historic sites -- California -- Sonora
Urban African Americans -- California -- Sonora

Geographic Names

Sonora (Calif.)
Sonora (Calif.) -- Social life and customs

Genres / Formats

Negatives (photographic)
Photographic prints
Postage stamps

Families

McDonald family
Suggs family

Names

McDonald, Earl Sugg, 1903-
McDonald, Vernon Sugg, 1906-1982
Nicol, George W., -1922
Sugg, Alonzo, approximately 1869-1923
Sugg, Elizabeth Francis, approximately 1858-
Sugg, Ernest Alaric, 1876-1952
Sugg, Julia, approximately 1856-
Sugg, Mary Anita, approximately 1859-1917
Sugg, Mary Elizabeth Snelling, 1839-1915
Sugg, Melpomene, 1874-1950
Sugg, Napoleon Bonaparte, 1867-1944
Sugg, Nellie, 1871-1959
Sugg, Rosa Adele, 1865-1941
Sugg, Sarah Ann, approximately 1857-1914
Sugg, William, 1828-1889
Sugg, William, 1862-1908