

Fisk Family Papers, 1858-1901

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Fisk Family
Title	Fisk Family Papers
Dates	1858-1901 (inclusive) 1858 1901
Quantity	5.4 linear feet of shelf space
Collection Number	MC 31
Summary	The Fisk Family gained prominence in Montana as emigrant guides and prominent newspapermen. Collection consists of correspondence, diaries, scrapbooks, and photographs. Topics presented include the Civil War, the Fisk expeditions of the 1860s, newspaper publishing in Helena, Montana, local politics, and pioneer life.
Repository	Montana Historical Society, Research Center Archives Montana Historical Society Research Center Archives 225 North Roberts PO Box 201201 Helena MT 59620-1201 Telephone: 406-444-2681 Fax: 406-444-5297 mhslibrary@mt.gov
Access Restrictions	Collection open for research.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

These papers center on four of the six sons of James B. and Jerusha T. Fisk, namely, Andrew Jackson, James Liberty, Robert Emmett, and Van Hayden Fisk, and on Robert's wife, Elizabeth "Lizzie" Chester Fisk. The brothers' involvement in Montana politics and their accomplishments in private enterprise combine with their work as emigrant guides to make the Fisks one of Montana's more historically notable families. Through her extensive letters to her family in the East, Lizzie Fisk documented the activities of her family and the milieu in which they lived.

Born ca. 1835, the eldest of the Fisk brothers, James Liberty Fisk, is noted primarily for organizing and leading emigrant expeditions from Minnesota to Montana, 1862-1866, using the "Northern Route." He was accompanied on one of these expeditions by his wife, Lydia (Burson) Fisk, and his daughter Dell. James was editor of the Helena Herald for a period in 1867 and was also active in the Montana militia. Withdrawing from the newspaper, he later promoted various projects in Montana, Dakota, Minnesota, and Washington. He died at the Minnesota Soldiers Home in Minneapolis in 1902.

Robert E. Fisk was born in Pierpont, Ohio, in 1837. He spent his early life as a newspaperman in Indiana and New York before becoming an officer in several New York volunteer regiments, beginning in 1861. During the Civil War, he corresponded with Miss Elizabeth Chester of Vernon, Connecticut,

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<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv38992>

and she later became his wife. He served as second-in-command under James during the 1866 Fisk Expedition to Montana and arrived in Helena in September of that year. He was an owner and editor of the Helena Herald for 36 years and actively promoted the Republican cause in Montana. He died in Berkeley, California, in 1908.

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Chester Fisk was born February 18, 1846, in East Haddam, Connecticut, of staunch Presbyterian and Republican parents. Following her marriage to Robert in 1867, Lizzie settled with him in Helena, and while running a large household, which included six children, she managed to write long, detailed letters to her family in Connecticut. Her correspondence, described her daily life in Helena and such occurrences as the fires that periodically devastated Helena's downtown area, vigilante lynchings, political crises and scandals, and major social events. Lizzie Fisk died April 21, 1927, in Berkeley, California, having spent her last 25 years in that state.

Andrew Jackson Fisk was born in Cattaraugus County, New York, in 1849. After military service, he too arrived in Helena with the 1866 Fisk Expedition. He soon entered into a partnership agreement with Robert, and together they began publishing the Helena Herald in November 1866. Andrew married Clara A. Wilcox on July 26, 1873. In 1898, he was appointed postmaster of Helena by President McKinley. He also served as adjutant general of Montana Territory during the administration of Governor B.P. Carpenter. He was very active in fraternal organizations, the Montana Department of the Grand Army of the Republic, and the Society of Montana Pioneers. He died February 3, 1910, in Helena.

Van Hayden Fisk was born in Ohio, December 19, 1840. An active soldier and frontiersman, he accompanied his brother James on two of the Fisk expeditions and served as wagon master in 1866. In Montana, he engaged in mining and farming and also worked at the Helena Herald in various capacities. He was at one time owner and publisher of the Townsend Tranchant. He died April 19, 1890, in Helena.

Content Description

The collection consists primarily of intrafamily correspondence, the largest percentage of which is the incoming and outgoing correspondence (1857-1906) of Elizabeth Chester Fisk. The collection also contains correspondence (1859-1905) of Robert Fisk including letters from Montana Territorial Secretary James E. Callaway and Governor Benjamin F. Potts; the Civil War letters (1862-1865) of Robert and Van Hayden Fisk; letters (1870-1891) between Robert and Lizzie Fisk's children (Asa, Florence, Grace, James K., and Robert) and Elizabeth's mother, Mrs. Isaac Chester; and a photocopy of a letter (1864) to James L. Fisk from the Secretary of War, appointing him to lead an expedition via Fort Benton. Also included are diaries (1864-1873) written by Andrew J. Fisk, chronicling the Fisk expeditions (see also Microfilm 81 for 1864-1873 diaries), and photocopies of writings (1858-1860) by James Liberty Fisk.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Researchers must use collection in accordance with the policies of the Montana Historical Society. The Society does not necessarily hold copyright to all materials in the collection. In some cases permission for use may require additional authorization from the copyright owners. For more information contact an archivist.

Preferred Citation

Item description and date. Collection Title. Collection Number. Box and Folder numbers. Montana Historical Society Research Center, Archives, Helena, Montana.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Arranged by subgroup and series, oversized material housed in archives map case. See inventory below for more information.

Location of Collection

1:3-4

Acquisition Information

Acquisition information available upon request

Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection

Andrew Jackson Fisk

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Biographical Materials		
Box/Folder		
1 / 1	Autobiographical notes; obituary	undated, 1910
Incoming Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
1 / 2	Fisk family	1861-1865, undated
Outgoing Correspondence		
Box/Folder		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1 / 3	To Charles N. Kessler	1901
Diaries		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
1 / 4	Diaries [2]	1964-1870
1 / 5-8	Diaries [typed transcripts]	1866-1870
1 / 9	Diary	1871, 1873
1 / 10	Diary [typed transcript]	1871, 1873
1 / 11	Diary: "Mem. of trip to Yellowstone National Park in 1881. Also mem. of other trips"	1873-1896
Clippings		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
2 / 1	Scrapbook #1 (re Fisk Family, Yellowstone Park, Montana history, Helena buildings, obituaries; also includes a few original letters, cancelled checks, Algeria Shrine membership lists, photos of Fisk Family and Helena scenes, calling cards, etc.) [no apparent order]	undated
3 / 1-2	Scrapbook #2-3 (re Fisk Family, general Montana history, art, Yellowstone Park, ; also includes roster of First Regiment U.S. Volunteer Infantry, 1898; "Rambles in the Rockies" by F.R. Wallace; photos of Fisk Family and Helena scenes; ribbons; maps; certificates; etc.) [no apparent order]	undated

Asa J. Fisk

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Outgoing Correspondence		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
4 / 1	Fisk family; miscellaneous	1898, 1901

Elizabeth Chester Fisk

Container(s)	Description	
Biographical Materials		
Box/Folder		
4 / 2	"The Autograph Quilt" by Florence Fisk White (tells the story of quilt made for Civil War soldiers, and how it led to Elizabeth meeting her future husband)	
Incoming Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
4 / 2a-11	Azuba Chester (Mrs. Isaac)	1871-1892
4 / 12	Fisk family	1880-1886, 1892
4 / 13-17	Robert Emmett Fisk	1864-1867
5 / 1-7	Robert Emmett Fisk	1868-1881, 1886, 1906
5 / 8	Grandmother	1857-1867
5 / 9	Sarah E. Lord; U.S. Bureau of Pensions	1859, 1880, 1909
Outgoing Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
5 / 10-15	Miscellaneous (arranged chronologically; includes typescript copies)	1867-1868
6 / 1-11	Miscellaneous (arranged chronologically; includes typescript copies)	1869-1876
7 / 1-10	Miscellaneous (arranged chronologically; includes typescript copies)	1877-1886

Container(s)	Description	Dates
8 / 1-8	Miscellaneous (arranged chronologically; includes typescript copies)	1887-1893
Miscellany		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
8 / 9	Report cards; invitations; valentine	1859-1860, undated
8 / 10	Pencil sketches of trip up the Missouri River (copies; originals transferred to Museum)	1867, undated
Writings		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
8 / 11	Impressions of Montana events (with an additional copy by James K. Fisk)	undated

James Liberty Fisk

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Incoming Correspondence		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9 / 1	Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War (re Fisk's Expedition via Fort Benton; photocopy)	1864
Diaries		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9 / 2	Journal of Fisk Expedition of 1864 (typescript copy)	1864
Writings		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9 / 3	"Record of Original and Selected Miscellany" (photocopy)	1858-1860

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Miscellany		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9 / 4	History of Dell Fisk, with photo of James Liberty Fisk family (photocopies)	undated
9 / 5	Testimonial signatures; 1866 expedition subscription list (typescript copy); soldier's certificate signed by Fisk	1862-1865

Jerusha Fisk

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Incoming Correspondence		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9 / 6	James Liberty Fisk	undated
9 / 7	Van Hayden Fisk	1863

Robert Emmett Fisk

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Incoming Correspondence		
<i>Box/Folder</i>		
9 / 8	B (correspondents include T.C. Bailey, U.S. Surgeon General; Alex C. Botkin; Seth Bullock)	1873-1874, 1901
9 / 9-10	James Edmund Callaway	1871-1877
9 / 11	C-E (correspondents include S.A. Douglas, R. Cowen, Thomas H. Carter, Daniel C. Corbin, J.R. Edwards, R. Emmett)	1860-1905
9 / 12	Andrew J. Fisk	1859-1901
9 / 13	Asa F. Fisk; Daniel W. Fisk	1861, 1899-1901

Container(s)	Description	Dates
9 / 14-17	Elizabeth Chester Fisk (includes typescript copies)	1864-1901
10 / 1	James Liberty Fisk	1860-1861
10 / 2	Fisk family	1860, 1900-1901, undated
10 / 3	H-P (correspondents include O.D. Howard, J.W. Maginnis, Lee Mantle, John H. Mitchell, John L. Murphy, Benjamin F. Potts, Thomas C. Power)	1870-1877, 1892-1895
10 / 4	R-W (correspondents include Alexander Ramsey, John E. Rickards, Charles Rumley, Wilbur F. Sanders, W.S. Scribner, Andrew J. Smith, U.S. Post Office Dept., W.L. White, Oliver M. Wilson, unidentified letter re territorial politics)	1872-1895
10 / 5	Letters of recommendation (mostly handwritten copies)	1861-1897
Outgoing Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
10 / 6	Miscellaneous	1859-1892
Diaries		
Box/Folder		
10 / 7	Diary of prospecting expedition to Sun River under James Fisk (typescript copy)	1866
Speeches and Writings		
Box/Folder		
10 / 8	Miscellaneous	1863-1864
Miscellany		
Box/Folder		
10 / 9	Miscellaneous certificates	1873, 1881

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Oversize Folder		
1	Miscellaneous certificates	1873, 1881
Box/Folder		
10 / 10	"History of the 132nd N.Y. Infantry as reported to the N.Y. State Historian by P.J. Claassen"	undated

Robert L. Fisk

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Incoming Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
10 / 11	Azuba Chester (Mrs. Isaac)	1881

Azuba Chester (Mrs. Isaac)

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Incoming Correspondence		
Box/Folder		
10 / 12	Carrie Alfred	1870
10 / 13-15	Fannie Chester	1870-1871
10 / 16	Asa Fisk	1886, 1889
10 / 17	Florence Fisk	1886, 1889, 1891
10 / 18	Grace Fisk	1875-1888
10 / 19	James Fisk	1886, 1891

Container(s)	Description	Dates
10 / 20	Robert L. Fisk	1886
10 / 21	Jennie E. K. Howe	1870

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Fisk Expeditions, 1862-1871.

Frontier and pioneer life--Montana.

Gold mines and mining--Montana--Lewis and Clark County.

Newspaper publishing--Montana--Helena.

Overland Journeys--[1866]

Prospecting--Montana.

Steamboat travel--Missouri River.

Women pioneers--Montana--Helena.

Family Names :

Fisk Family

(creator)

Geographical Names :

Helena (Mont.)--Commerce.

Helena (Mont.)--Social life and customs

Missouri River--Description and travel.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865

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2005



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