

Frank H. Nowell photographs, circa 1900-1908

Overview of the Collection

Photographer	Nowell, Frank H., 1864-1950
Title	Frank H. Nowell photographs
Dates	circa 1900-1908 (inclusive) 1900 1908
Quantity	338 photographic prints (3 boxes and 1 folder)
Collection Number	PH0316
Summary	Photographs of Alaska towns and business enterprises, and local native populations, after the Gold Rush of 1900
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	The collection is open to the public.
Languages	English

Biographical Note

Frank Hamilton Nowell was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on February 19, 1864. He was from a prominent New England family whose ancestor, Peter Nowell, had come to America in the 1600s from the Isle of Jersey. Frank's great grandfather served in the Revolutionary War and his grandfather lived in the Longfellow House in Cambridge for many years. His father, Thomas Shepard Nowell, was the first child christened in the Thomas Shepard Congregational Church (after which he was named) and was held by Oliver Wendell Holmes as he was christened. In 1885, Thomas Nowell went out to Juneau, Alaska to join two of his brothers who were already out there. Thomas started a mining business and his son, Frank Nowell joined him there in 1886. Frank brought six cows and a bull and ran a dairy farm for a year. Eventually he started working for his father. Frank took up photography as a hobby some time before 1894. (One man remembered being photographed by Frank when he first arrived in Alaska and walked off the steamboat at Juneau.) Frank and his wife, Elizabeth Helen Davis, were married in 1894 in Helena, Montana at her brother's home and Frank made photographs while in Montana. They moved to San Francisco where their daughter Dorothy was born and Frank traveled between California and Juneau in his work as a purchasing agent for his father's mining company.

In 1900 there was a large stampede of gold seekers to Nome, Alaska. Because it was located on the Bering Sea and only open to travel part of the year, supplies were hard to get and expensive so the Ames Mercantile Company decided to open a branch of their store in Nome. Nowell went to Nome in about July 1900 to run the Ames Mercantile store then later that year moved to the new town of Teller, Alaska to open a new store for the company. When his wife and daughter joined him in Teller, they brought the camera that he had left behind. By 1902, he began taking photographs of the Eskimos and

reindeer herds at Cape Prince of Wales along with scenes in the Teller and Nome area. His Eskimo photographs became very popular and were eventually used in books and magazines about Alaska. In late 1903 or in 1904, he decided to leave the Mercantile business and become a full-time photographer. He built a tiny studio building in Nome, between the Golden Gate Hotel and the Post Office buildings

At the same time he was opening his photography studio in Nome, he also moved his wife and daughter to Seattle to live. He spent about nine years going back and forth between Nome and Seattle running his photography business. In Seattle, he was a member of the Alaska Club which was a group formed to support Alaskan commercial interests in the city. It was probably through his connections with the Alaska Club and with the Arctic Brotherhood that he was chosen as the official photographer for the AYPE. J.E. Chilberg, a member of the Alaska Club (and the president of the Miners and Merchants Bank in Nome), was elected the president of the AYPE. Nowell had photographed Chilberg's bank and Nome so Chilberg would likely have been acquainted with him from Nome and from the Alaska Club. Nowell's Alaska photographs were also featured in a large beautiful book *Artwork of Seattle and Alaska*, published in 1907 which may have impressed the AYPE officials.

Nowell photographed the opening day ceremonies and other pre-exposition activities such as the visiting delegations selecting the sites for their buildings, and the construction work. While the fair was open, he photographed the buildings, events, people, and activities on the grounds. His photographs were used in newspapers and magazines for pre-fair publicity and sold as souvenirs, made into postcards, used in guidebooks, etc. during the fair. He also sold copies of his Eskimo and Alaska photographs at the fair and won several awards for his work. In 1908, he took an extended trip through the Yukon and Alaska both photographing and collecting photographs from other photographers for the AYPE.

Shortly before the fair, he opened a photography studio in Seattle and he ran both the Nome and Seattle studios until about 1912 when he closed the Nome studio. During 1911 and 1912 he partnered with Orville Rognon (who had worked for Webster and Stevens for several years and then photographed for Nowell during the AYPE). In later years, the producers of the 1925 Charlie Chaplin movie, *The Gold Rush*, came to Nowell for photographs of cabins and snowdrifts to help them build authentic sets for the film. He retired from his studio in the late 1940s and died on October 19, 1950.

Content Description

Frank Nowell spent a portion of his career in Nome, Alaska documenting the events after the gold rush of 1900. The collection presents a picture of the towns and business enterprises as they developed during this early stage of Alaskan history. He also chronicled the local native populations with special focus on Eskimo life and customs.

The collection depicts panoramas, street scenes, etc. from the following locations: Nome, Teller, Cape Prince of Wales, Sullivan City, Dutch Harbor, Deering, Candle City, Fort Wrangell, Juneau, Valdez, Ketchikan, 40 Mile, Sitka, Solomon City, Metlakatla, Dawson and Fairbanks. Also included are images of Eskimos; steamships; Alaska mines and mining operations; reindeer herds; dog teams; freighting operations; roadhouses; various establishments such as public schools, hotels, telegraph stations, government buildings, churches, and hospitals; glaciers and icebergs; canneries; Nome Arctic Railroad and Seward Peninsula Railway. Also included is an image by Nowell and Rognon.

Use of the Collection

Alternative Forms Available

[View the digital version of the collection .](#)

Restrictions on Use

Restrictions may exist on reproduction, quotation, or publication. Contact Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries for details.

Administrative Information

BOX CONTENTS

NOWELL 13: Cape Prince of Wales reindeer herd, Alaska.

NOWELL 15: Cape Prince of Wales reindeer herd, Alaska.

NOWELL 20: Cape Prince of Wales reindeer obtaining feed by pawing snow from moss.

NOWELL 24: Sesnon Co. lightering freight at Nome, Alaska.

NOWELL 28: "Corwin" last boat leaving Teller, Alaska. Oct. 13, 1902.

NOWELL 29: The most Northerly public school house in the United States. Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska.

NOWELL 31: Whaler "Alexander" at Cape Prince of Wales . May 21, 1903. (NA2156)

NOWELL 32: Mission at Cape Prince of Wales where natives killed school teacher Thornton in 1893. circa 1900-1906. (NA2157)

NOWELL 38: Four beauties of Cape Prince of Wales with sled reindeer of the American Missionary Association herd. (Eskimo women) circa 1900-1906. (NA2158)

NOWELL 39: "Nawadluk". Cape Prince of Wales Eskimo. circa 1900- 1906. (NA2159)

NOWELL 43: Cape York, Alaska where tin mines were first discovered. (group with two dog sleds) circa 1900-1906. (NA2160)

NOWELL 51: (Two dogsleds)

NOWELL 56: Eskimo women showing their manner of carrying their young, Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska. circa 1900- 1906. (NA2161)

NOWELL 56a: Steamer "Independence" Teller, Alaska.

NOWELL 60: Eskimo salmon dance at Nook, (Teller?) Alaska. circa 1900-1906. (NA2162)

NOWELL 73: Sullivan City, Alaska.

NOWELL 76: Main Street, Nome.

NOWELL 77: Largest nuggets ever found in Alaska.

NOWELL 79: Glory Hole, Treadwell Mine, Alaska.

NOWELL 83: Dutch Harbor, Alaska.

NOWELL 93: Eskimo skin boat or "Omiak", Grantley Harbor, Alaska. circa 1900-1906. (NA2163)

NOWELL 94: Indian graves, Teller reindeer station, Port Clarence, Alaska. (bodies exposed on pylons on tundra) circa 1900-1906. (NA2164)

NOWELL 95: Teller reindeer station. Rev. T.L. Brevig, Supt. NOWELL 96: Golden Gate Hotel no. 3, Nome.

NOWELL 106: Birds-eye view of Deering, Alaska. Sept. 21, 1903.

NOWELL 109: Indian igloos, Inmachuk River. Deering in distance. Sept. 21, 1903. (NA2165)

NOWELL 112: "S.S. Sairdie" loading the "John Reilly" for Kobuk. Sept. 29, 1903.

NOWELL 113: "Keewalik Flyer" running between Keewalik Spit and Candle. Sept. 29, 1903.

NOWELL 116: Candle City looking up Keewalik River. Sept. 30, 1903.

NOWELL 118: Candle City, Fairhaven mining district. Candle Creek in foreground.

Frank H. Nowell photographs, circa 1900-1908

<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv75506>

NOWELL 119: Candle City. Sept. 30, 1903.
NOWELL 130: "Record City", Mouth Punnell, Inmachuk River. Sept. 23, 1903.
NOWELL 131: "Gurry Business Block", Deering, Alaska. Sept. 25 1903.
NOWELL 143: Homestake camp in Inmachuk River. Sept. 23, 1903.
NOWELL 147: U.S. Jail, Candle City, Alaska. Sept. 30, 1903.
NOWELL 175: Native house, Captain's Harbor, Alaska. (Aleut sod dwelling, Unalaska Island) circa 1900-1906. (NA2166)
NOWELL 179: P.C. Co. steamer "Spokane" at Taku Glacier, Taku Inlet, Alaska. 1907.
NOWELL 200: "Mickaninies Kow-Kow", Arctic motherhood (Native woman nursing two children) circa 1904. (NA2167)
NOWELL 327: Miners Supply Company Store, Teller, Alaska (copy print)
NOWELL 474: Ft. Wrangell, Alaska.
NOWELL 475: Ft. Wrangell, Alaska. (Street scene)
NOWELL 480: Skak-Ish-Stin. 108 years old. 1904. (Indian woman wearing Hudson's Bay Co. blanket and labret in lower lip. circa 1904. (NA2168)
NOWELL 481: Court house, Juneau, Alaska.
NOWELL 485: Seward Street, Juneau, Alaska.
NOWELL 490: Valdez panorama. 7-12-1904.
NOWELL 491: Valdez. 7-12-1904.
NOWELL 492: Valdez. 7-12-1904.
NOWELL 495: McKinley Street, Valdez. (Halftone)
NOWELL 507: Panorama of Dutch Harbor and Unalaska. 1904.
NOWELL 508: Panorama of Dutch Harbor and Unalaska. 1904.
NOWELL 514: Russian cemetery, Unalaska.
NOWELL 516: Russian cannon's, Unalaska.
NOWELL 1000: No 6 Moonlight Creek opposite Discovery Anvil Creek. Operated by Pioneer Mining Co. Oct. 2, 1904.
NOWELL 1005: Pacific Coast Steamship Co.'s "S.S. Valencia"
NOWELL 1011: Teller, Alaska (Halftone)
NOWELL 1014: Northwestern Steamship Co.'s "S.S. Tacoma" leaving Seattle for Nome. June 1, 1904.
NOWELL 1018: No 7 Moonlight. Operated by Pioneer Mining Co. Nome, Alaska.
NOWELL 1024: Eskimo underwear made of reindeer skin. circa 1904. (NA2169)
NOWELL 1045?: Family of King's Island Eskimos living under skin boat. circa 1904. (NA2153)
NOWELL 1049?: Kow Kow Pe Chuk Tuk "Too many cooks spoil the Broth" (Eskimo family around cooking fire) circa 1904. (NA2155)
NOWELL 1073: Shel Wettach's roadhouse on Dexter Creek, 7 miles from Nome. 1904.
NOWELL 1082: Headquarter's of the Pioneer Newspaper of Nome, Alaska. (Nome News, 1904)
NOWELL 1084: "August C." plying between Tishu Teller and Lost River, Alaska
NOWELL 1096: Eskimo squaw stringing Tom cod, Nome beach. circa 1904. (NA2170)
NOWELL 1101: Landing through the surf, Nome beach. Aug. 22, 1904.
NOWELL 1104: No 2 below Glacier Creek, Nome (halftone)
NOWELL 1118: Passengers being towed aboard "S.S. Victoria" through heavy surf, Nome. Sept. 14, 1904.
NOWELL 1120: Eskimo skulls on tundra at Cape Rodney, Bering Sea coast. circa 1904. (NA2171)
NOWELL 1125: Totem, Ft. Wrangle, Alaska. (pole standing in front of large European-style house) circa 1902-1906. (NA2172)
NOWELL 1126: Totem, Ft. Wrangle, Alaska (Chief Kahlteen's) circa 1902- 1906. (NA2173)
NOWELL 1145: Eskimo salmon dance, Nook, (Teller?) Alaska. circa 1905. (NA2174)
NOWELL 1146: Birds-eye view of Nome from Lane's derrick. 1903.
NOWELL 1154: Tourists at Whalen, Siberia. (White visitors in Eskimo village) (1907) (NA2175)
NOWELL 1169: Nome Courthouse, U.S. District Court, Dist. of Alaska, 2nd Div. 1904.

NOWELL 1171: Ft. Wrangell.

NOWELL 1199: Hydraulic mine on Nome Beach. Sept. 23, 1904.

NOWELL 1204: Nome Arctic RR train at Banner Station, Anvil Creek. Most Northerly railroad station in the world. 1904.

NOWELL 1241?: An Eskimo chief. 1906. (Halftone) (NA2151)

NOWELL 1250: Inside of church. Sitka?

NOWELL 1251: Icon with Madonna.

NOWELL 1254: (Chief Shake's Bear and Whale totem poles in front of house, Fort Wrangell). circa 1902-1906. (NA2176)

NOWELL 1255: (Chief Katashan's totem poles in front of large Victorian style house, Fort Wrangell.) circa 1902-1906. (NA2177)

NOWELL 1256: (Chief Kahl-teen's totem pole at Fort Wrangell. circa 1902- 1906. (NA2178)

NOWELL 1268: Stickene River boats at Ft. Wrangell.

NOWELL 1440: "S.S. Queen" showing portion burned Saturday morning. Feb. 27, 1904 at sea. 218 people aboard, 14 lives lost.

NOWELL 1451: Sheep Creek, Alaska.

NOWELL 1457: Silver Bow Basin, Alaska.

NOWELL 1615: Totem grave.

NOWELL 1896: Dog team. Nome. 1901?

NOWELL 1915: Front Street with dogsled team, Nome, Alaska

NOWELL 1918: (Puget Sound (probably Duwamish) spirit canoe boards and carving on exhibit at Forestry Building, Alaska- Yukon-Pacific Exposition. These objects were collected in 1901.) 1909 (NA679)

NOWELL 1985: Waiting for mail at Dawson City Post Office.

NOWELL 1992: Celebration at Dawson of U.S. Naval victories.

NOWELL 1998: Steamer unloading passengers. Location?

NOWELL 2115: Totem grave (Tlingit) Hegg 1615 copied by Nowell. circa 1902-1906. (NA2179).

NOWELL 2119: Figure head on Indian canoe. Alaska.

NOWELL 2120: Totem poles, Ft. Wrangell.

NOWELL 2131: Swatka and companions in dancing costumes. (Tlingit) circa 1900-1906. (NA2182)

NOWELL 2153: Dog and puppies.

NOWELL 2163: Dog team hauling freight.

NOWELL 2181: (Chief Katashan's totem poles in front of Victorian style house, Fort Wrangell) circa 1902-1906. (NA2183)

NOWELL 2184: Settlement at Keewalik Spit.

NOWELL 2189: The California Roadhouse near Cape Rodney.

NOWELL 2194: Wreck of steamer "Townsend". Jan. 16, 1900.

NOWELL 2204: Moors wharf, Skagway and steamer "Ningchow"

NOWELL 2216: Steamer "W.K. Merwin" at Rink Rapids, Yukon River.

NOWELL 2219: Indian grave, Taku Village, Alaska. (Taku Harbor, 22 miles southeast of Juneau) circa 1902-1906. (NA2184)

NOWELL 2221: Indian graves at Ketchikan (Ketchikan), Alaska (carved bear on right) Hegg copied by Nowell. circa 1902-1906. (NA2185)

NOWELL 2222: Totem poles at Ketchikan. (in graveyard) circa 1902- 1906. (NA2186)

NOWELL 2223: Totem poles at Ketchikan.

NOWELL 2241: Street scene at Candle City.

NOWELL 2246: No 17 Candle Creek.

NOWELL 2252: Old Sunnyheart Home, Prince of Wales Island. (with totem poles) circa 1900-1908. (NA2188)

NOWELL 2367: Tlingit baskets (Including a tea kettle basket)

NOWELL 2383: Native village, Kasaan, Alaska. 1908.

NOWELL 2388: Native village, Killisnoo, Alaska. circa 1908. (NA21919)
NOWELL 2392?: P.C. & N.P. Co. Cannery, Petersburg, Alaska. 1908.
NOWELL 2403: Icebergs at Taku Glacier. 1907.
NOWELL 2415: Perseverance Mine, Silver Bow Basin, Alaska. 1908.
NOWELL 2421: Tlinget Packing Co. Native employees handling fish. circa 1908. (NA2192)
NOWELL 2427: Kaw Claa. Tlingit woman in full potlatch dancing costume. (head and shoulder portrait, beaded shirt, bear claw headdress, nose ring and face painting) circa 1906. (NA2193)
NOWELL 2433: Eskimo belle, St. Michael, Alaska. circa 1900-1906. (NA2194)
NOWELL 2438: Indian witch doctor or Sha-man healing a sick woman. (posed view, patient on fur blanket, shaman in costume holding rattle and painted bone; Chilkat blanket and totems in background) circa 1906. (NA2195)
NOWELL 2456: Gorman & Co. Cannery and Sawmill, Kasaan, Alaska. 1908.
NOWELL 2476a: Steamer "White Horse" at Five Finger Rapids, Alaska.
NOWELL 2493: Whitehorse shipyards.
NOWELL 2520: A Siwash village on the Yukon. (Indian village with canoes and fish racks) circa 1907. (NA2196)
NOWELL 2524: Ice jam at 40 Mile. Huge ice blocks driven up banks to cabins.
NOWELL 2528: North Coast Commercial Store at 40 Mile.
NOWELL 2548: Government Telegraph at 40 Mile.
NOWELL 2684: Town of Chinik, Golovin Bay.
NOWELL 2753: S.S. Ohio anchored outside Nome, Alaska, 1907
NOWELL 4000: The A.Y.P. Exposition from captive balloon a quarter of a mile above the earth (Oversize)
NOWELL 4031: Taking a sun bath on Nome beach. (Eskimo woman and children) circa 1905. (NA2197)
NOWELL 4035-39: Nome panorama.
NOWELL 4040: U.S. Freighting team plying between Ft. Davis and Nome. July 29, 1905.
NOWELL 4050: W.M. Johnston & Co. floating breakwater, Nome. July 30, 1905.
NOWELL 4056: Steam shovel, Nome.
NOWELL 4069: Alaska Mercantile Co. shipping goods to Kotzebue Sound and Way ports, Nome. July 30, 1905.
NOWELL 4077?: "Two bits" (Two Eskimo children) circa 1904. (NA2152)
NOWELL 4048, 4087: Nome Improvement Co. showing first day's work of Longshoreman's Union, Nome. Aug 9, 1905.
NOWELL 4086: First day's work of the Longshoreman's Union on Nome Harbor. Aug 9, 1905. Cost of unloading 9 piles "144.00.
NOWELL 4088: A-Pa-Look and Wy-Uns-Ena, Cape Douglas, Alaska. Married at Teller, Alaska. Apr. 10, 1905. (NA2198)
NOWELL 4089: A-Pa-Look and family, Cape Douglas, Alaska. circa 1905. (NA2199)
NOWELL 4090: Eskimo Automobile Transportation Co., Nome, Alaska. All aboard for Washington D.C. We don't believe in taxation without representation. 1905. (NA2200)
NOWELL 4105: Alaska Dairy Co. and Poultry Yard, Nome. Aug. 11, 1905. John Schafer, Prop.
NOWELL 4125: Second day's work on Nome Harbor. Aug. 10, 1905. Cost of landing 103 piles "42.00.
NOWELL 4126: City Hall, Nome. 1905.
NOWELL 4128: Northwestern Commercial Co., Nome. 1905.
NOWELL 4175: Keat-Kona. (Eskimo woman) 1905. (NA2201)
NOWELL 4186: Gen. Greely and party arriving at Golden Gate Hotel, Nome. Aug. 22, 1905.
NOWELL 4207: Alaska and Siberian Fur Co. 203 Front Street, Nome. 1905.
NOWELL 4238: Mickaninnies laundry. Sandspit, Nome. (Eskimo child with washtub) 1905. (NA2148)
NOWELL 4249: Nome harbor from River Street. Aug. 29, 1905.
NOWELL 4253: U.S. Commissioner's Court and Recording Office, Nome. Aug. 20, 1905.

NOWELL 4337: Miners and Merchants Bank of Alaska, Nome. Sept. 5, 1905.
NOWELL 4347: Herr Oscar Iden-Zeller. The first white man to cross the Tschaun Mts., Siberia on foot. 1905.
NOWELL 4368: Schooner "Nome" stuck in mouth of Snake River.
NOWELL 4384: Atty. A.J. Bruner doing business at his office on Nome beach while fire was in progress. Sept. 13, 1905.
NOWELL 4395?: Winter dumps in Little Creek. 1906 (Halftone)
NOWELL 4429: Camp on Beach Lakeside Mine near Penny River, Nome. Sept. 17, 1905.
NOWELL 4434: Busy day on Nome wharf. Sept. 19, 1905.
NOWELL 4438: Mining in the tundra.
NOWELL 4439: Mining in the tundra.
NOWELL 4458: No 2 Glacier Creek operated by the Miocene Ditch Co. Sept. 27, 1905.
NOWELL 4460: Hydraulic lift on No. 2 Glacier Creek, Nome. Sept. 27, 1905.
NOWELL 4462: No 2 Glacier owned by Price Bros. and operated by Miocene Ditch Co.
NOWELL 4835: Judge S.C. Henton and H.H. Davies leaving Nome for Teller, May 20, 1906.
NOWELL 4940: Wild Flowers of the Seward Peninsula, 1906.
NOWELL 5384: Landing of steamer "Corwin" at the edge of the ice 5 miles from shore, Nome. June 1, 1907.
NOWELL 5385: Landing of steamer "Corwin" at edge of ice 5 miles from shore on Bering Sea, Nome. June 1, 1907.
NOWELL 5433 1/2: Lightering passengers from "S.S. Victoria". July 2, 1907.
NOWELL 5465: Mabel Bench.
NOWELL 5505: Whalen, Siberia. (Eskimo village in summer) circa 1907. (NA2202)
NOWELL 5509: Whalen, Siberia. "S.S. Corwin" in distance.
NOWELL 5534: Teller, Alaska. July 27, 1907.
NOWELL 5605-5606: Kuzgampa Hot Springs, Kougarak, Alaska. July 11, 1907.
NOWELL 5624: Eskimo berry picker. circa 1900-1906. (NA2203)
NOWELL 5626: Summer day on the Kustarin River, (Kuzitrin?) Alaska. (camp site with fish drying racks and boat set up for shelter) circa 1900-1906. (NA2204)
NOWELL 5667: Campbell hydraulic elevator at work on John L. Bench. Kugarok River.
NOWELL 5718: Perry Island, Bogosloff Group. "Rose" in Bering Sea. Spring 1906.
NOWELL 5758: Arctic Sisterhood Basketball team, Nome. 1908- 1909.
NOWELL 5763: Three Friend's Mining Co.'s dredge, Salmon River, Alaska. Sept. 21, 1907.
NOWELL 5765: Main Street, Solomon City, Alaska. Sept. 22, 1907.
NOWELL 5766: Solomon City, Alaska. Sept. 22, 1907.
NOWELL 5808: Farewell concert and dance to the A.B. basketball team at Eagle Hall, Nome. Oct. 4, 1907.
NOWELL 5885: W.J. Rowe Transfer., Nome. Oct. 20, 1907.
NOWELL 5928: Pile no. 1, John J. Sesnon Co.'s coal supply, Nome. Oct. 28, 1907.
NOWELL 5944: Elks Club Day, Nome. Jan. 10, 1908.
NOWELL 6024: "S.S. Senator" in ice jam in Bering Sea. June 15, 1908.
NOWELL 6037: Northern Commercial Co.'s plant, St. Michael, Alaska. Sept. 1908.
NOWELL 6110: Unknown location.
NOWELL 6122: U.S. Telegraph Station, Hot Springs, Alaska.
NOWELL 6132: Chena, Alaska.
NOWELL 6137: Fairbanks, Alaska taken from bridge.
NOWELL 6138: Fairbanks, Alaska taken from schoolhouse.
NOWELL 6198: Residence of Judge Wickersham. Fairbanks, Alaska.
NOWELL 6221: Indian fishing camp on Yukon River.
NOWELL 6231: Russian Mission, Yukon River.
NOWELL 6232: Nulato Store, workers and men gathered outside, Alaska

NOWELL 6233: Old Russian Mission, Yukon River. Mission school in background.
NOWELL 6240: Klondike Mill Co.
NOWELL 6245: Front Street, Dawson.
NOWELL 6267: Dawson City, street scene.
NOWELL 6275: Northern Navigation Co.'s passenger and freight depot, Dawson.
NOWELL 6297: Pipeline? Alaska?
NOWELL 6300: Pipeline? Alaska?
NOWELL 6314: Dredging operation?
NOWELL 6317: Steamer "Whitehorse" en route to Dawson.
NOWELL 6333: "S.S. Jefferson", Skagway.
NOWELL 6335: U.S. Courthouse, Skagway.
NOWELL 6357: Steamer "Gleaner", Windy Arm, Yukon Territory.
NOWELL 6388: Barracks Square, Sitka showing residence of early governor. (with painted war canoe on display) (1908) (NA2206)
NOWELL 6393: Valdez, Alaska.
NOWELL 6394: Sitka, Alaska, street scene.
NOWELL 6395: (Totem pole at Sitka, cows in foreground; carved by a Haida) 1908. (NA2207)
NOWELL 6396: (Totem poles at Sitka that were exhibited at St. Louis Exposition; carved by a Haida) 1908. (NA2208).
NOWELL 6397: (Sitka, totem pole carved by a Haida) . 1908. (NA2209)
NOWELL 6405: Greek church in Sitka. 1908.
NOWELL 6406: Greco-Russian church, Sitka. 1908.
NOWELL 6408: Russian blockhouse, Sitka. 1908.
NOWELL 6410-12: School, Sitka. 1908
NOWELL 6421: U.S. Custom Building, Juneau.
NOWELL 6461: Panorama, Ketchikan, Alaska.
NOWELL 6463: Ketchikan, street scene.
NOWELL 6467: Church at Metlakatla. Aug. 1908.
NOWELL 6468: Firehouse at Metlakatla. 1908.
NOWELL 6475: Duncan's residence at Metlakatla.
NOWELL 6478: Nowell studio.
NOWELL 6494: (Chilkat blanket.) (1908) NA2210)
NOWELL 6650: Bessie Roadhouse on Third Bench Line. Sept. 29, 1908.
NOWELL 6659: U.S. Life Saving Station, Nome. Oct. 5, 1908.
NOWELL 6670: Panorama of Nome. 1908.
NOWELL 6672-74: Panorama of Nome. 1908.
NOWELL 6693: Nome Public School, Nome. Oct. 1908.
NOWELL 6779: Northern Commercial Co. Building, Circle City.
NOWELL 7320: Skagway panorama.
NOWELL 8181: Returning from a polar bear hunt in the arctic. (Halftone)
NOWELL 8516: 3rd Avenue downtown Seattle looking North-Nowell and Rognon Photograph
NOWELL10237: East Green Lake Bay, circa 1913
NOWELL13657: Man and boy standing in front of house at 610 23rd Avenue East designed by Voorhees.
NOWELL 13658: Interior of house at 610 23rd Avenue East.
NOWELL 14143: Woman behind counter in shop. Oct. 7, 1914. (Hand-colored).
NOWELL 14814: The intersection of 4th Avenue and Seneca Street, Seattle, circa 1923.
NOWELL 15981: (Young Alaskan Indian boy wearing beaded vest, seated on box) circa 1900-1908. (NA2211) (Halftone)
NOWELL 17330: Mining students modeling safety equipment, University of Washington, circa 1915.

NOWELL 18075: (Bear totem at Klukwan.) Hegg copied by Nowell. 1900 (?) (NA2212)NOWELL 18075:
 (Bear totem at Klukwan.) Hegg copied by Nowell. 1900 (?) (NA2212)
 NOWELL 18069: Tlingit baskets, Alaska, circa 1912. (NA675)
 NOWELL 18077: Fish drying camp.
 NOWELL 23066: Architecture photograph exhibit, Seattle, April 1-15, 1920
 NOWELL 24903: Shooting Whitehorse Rapids.
 NOWELL 26393: Nowell studio.
 NOWELL 27382: Group photo of hikers in the forest.
 NOWELL 27693: Seattle waterfront with ships and construction
 NOWELL 27694: Men standing on waterfront construction site, possibly wooden frame for a dock or
 building
 NOWELL 31019: The Olympic Hotel interior, Seattle. (UW4678)
 NOWELL 33203: The Olympic Hotel, Seattle. (UW4677)
 Unnumbered prints
 NOWELL N1: Mexican Mill 500 ft level mill, Treadwell Mine, Douglas, Alaska.
 NOWELL N2: Railroading through White Pass. (Halftone)
 NOWELL N3: Native street scene in Sitka, Alaska. (NA2473)
 NOWELL N4: Cape Prince of Wales reindeer herders. (NA2147)
 NOWELL N5: Eskimo skin boat or "omiak". (Halftone)
 NOWELL N6: Eskimo women and "Mickaninny's Nook". Teller, Alaska. (NA2146)
 NOWELL N7: Dawson street scene.
 NOWELL N8: A Day's clean-up of "28,000 on Bessie Mine, Nome (Halftone)
 NOWELL N9: Moonlight on the Bering Sea. (Halftone)
 NOWELL N10: St. Michael,, Alaska. Old Russian fort and cannons. (Halftone)
 NOWELL N11: The dividing line between Alaska and Canada. (Halftone)
 NOWELL N12: An Eskimo belle (Halftone) circa 1904. (NA2154)
 NOWELL N13: Eskimo friends (Portrait of two girls, facial view) circa 1905. (Halftone)(NA2150)
 NOWELL N14: A bottle house on White Pass summit. 1898.
 NOWELL N15: N.C. Co. offices. Dawson.
 NOWELL N16: Dredges.
 NOWELL N17: Dredges.
 NOWELL N18: Unidentified settlement on riverbank.
 NOWELL N19: Six little Arctic natives. (Three Eskimo girls with three puppies) circa 1904. (NA2149)
 NOWELL N20: Gold bricks loaned for exhibition purposes from Scandinavian-American bank. (See
 oversize)
 NOWELL N21: Federal Building housing the U.S. Post Office, Seattle, circa 1909. (UW26506)
 NOWELL N22-25 Moved to PH 727, Frank H. Nowell AYPE Photographs
 NOWELL N25: Automobiling by Eskimos in the Arctic, circa 1905. (See oversize)
 Attributed to Nowell
 NOWELL 2472: Steamer "Wilbur Cummin" and lighter.
 NOWELL 2473: Steamer "Louise"
 NOWELL 2474: Steamer "Bailey"
 NOWELL 2480: Steamer "Rock Island"
 NOWELL 2485: Steamer "Victorian"
 NOWELL 2491: Steamer "T.C. Power"
 NOWELL 2496: Steamer "Robert Kerr" and barges
 NOWELL 2500: Steamer "Monarch"
 NOWELL 2503: Steamer "Leah" and "Louise" caught in ice.
 NOWELL 2504: Steamer "Leah: and "Sarah"
 NOWELL 2508: Steamer "Monarch" on river landing with miners on bank
 NOWELL 2510: Steamer "Monarch" with lighter

NOWELL 2639: Steamer "Monticello"

NOWELL 6218: Steamer "Hannah"Reindeer Bill from Kotzebue Sound

H. M. Huber was a news agent for the Seattle Times, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, the New York World, the New York Herald and New York Journal as well as other papers. He was also a mail carrier. He had a store on Front Street in Nome, Alaska during the gold rush.

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Buildings--Alaska--Photographs
Business enterprises--Alaska--Photographs
Eskimos--Alaska--Photographs
Freight and freightage--Alaska--Photographs
Frontier and pioneer life--Alaska--Photographs
Gold mines and mining--Alaska--Photographs
Ships--Alaska--Photographs
Sled dogs--Alaska--Photographs
Sleds--Alaska--Photographs
Steamboats--Alaska--Photographs
Streets--Alaska--Photographs
Visual Materials Collections (University of Washington)

Geographical Names :

Alaska--Gold discoveries--Photographs
Dawson (Yukon)--Photographs
Juneau (Alaska)--Photographs
Nome (Alaska)--Photographs
Prince of Wales, Cape (Alaska)--Photographs
Sitka (Alaska)--Photographs
Teller (Alaska)--Photographs

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