

The Howell Witherill Hotel and Family Papers

Special Collections
Benjamin F. Feinberg Library
Plattsburgh State University College
Plattsburgh, N.Y. 12901

By
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Introduction

The Howell Collection contains a variety of items pertaining to Plattsburgh, the Howell Family, and the Witherill Hotel from the 1800's through the 1960's. Gifts from the Emily McMasters estate (marked with an M), Maitland C. Desormo (marked with either D or Des), and Margaret Englehart add depth to this collection.

Major William T. Howell (1843-1894) came to the Plattsburgh area as a special agent for the Treasury Department. The collection contains 41 transportation passes issued to him while working as a customs agent. In 1884, Major Howell bought the Witherill Hotel at 25 Margaret Street, which he reopened for business in 1886.

Following Major Howell's death in 1894, his son, William H. Howell (1874-1958), only 19 at the time, took over the management of the Witherill. Marrying a Plattsburgh girl, Rose Sterns, in 1903, William Howell went on to become a leading member of the community, becoming involved in both business and charitable ventures.

At the close of World War II Mr. Howell relinquished control of the Witherill to his son, William H. Howell, Jr., who managed the hotel until it closed in 1967. He left the area and the Witherill was torn down.

The Howell Collection consists of correspondence, hotel registers, account books, and a wide assortment of ephemera, such as liquor licenses, photographs, and newspaper clippings. There is a collection of menus and winelists from the Witherill and many other hotels. One of the registers was used as a scrapbook for menus and winelists.

Both William H. Howells, senior and junior, had an interest in history and collected items and newspaper clippings of local historical interest.

The correspondence, which dates from 1882 to 1969 is most concentrated between 1935 and 1955 and primarily concerns itself with the Howell Weathervane Collection, housed in the Witherill Hotel, and with community efforts to attract military usage of the Plattsburgh Barracks.

The Howell Collection is useful in understanding the interests and concerns of several generations of a Plattsburgh family and in reconstructing Plattsburgh's past. Information on the Witherill Hotel is of special interest as it no longer exists. In general, the Howell Collection will add to the researcher's knowledge of local history.

BACKGROUND SOURCES LOCATED IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY

Pam 133/6 McMasters, Emily. The Witherill - Gleanings from William H. Howell's Papers. March 17, 1970

CONTENTS OF THE HOWELL COLLECTION

The collection is housed in 2 upright, 2 half upright, and 10 flat Hollinger boxes. Box 1, contains correspondence and ephemera, and Boxes 2 and 3, ephemera. Boxes 4-13, flat Hollinger boxes, contain Witherill Hotel registers arranged chronologically. The register in box 4 was used as a scrapbook for menus and wine lists. Boxes 14 and 15 contain 3 Witherill Hotel account books. Box 16, a half box, contains material of special value designated AUTOGRAPH-THEFT VALUE material. Photocopies of these materials are filed in the appropriate folders and the originals are available only with the permission of the Head of Special Collections.

Box 1 CORRESPONDENCE 1882-1969

Folder

1	29 Aug. 1882-10 Feb. 1938	18 ITEMS
2	13 Feb. 1940-4 Dec. 1942	17 ITEMS
3	13 Jan. 1943-21 Oct. 1949	21 ITEMS
4	27 Sep. 1950-1 Sep. 1954	24 ITEMS
5	4 Oct. 1955-11 Mar. 1969	22 ITEMS
6	UNDATED EPHEMERA	4 ITEMS
7	Howell Family	47 ITEMS
8	Witherill Hotel, advertising brochures, menus, programs	21 ITEMS
9	Witherill Hotel, U.S. liquor tax certificates	17 ITEMS
10	Witherill Hotel, N.Y.S. liquor tax certificates	22 ITEMS
11	Witherill Hotel, miscellaneous	15 ITEMS
12	Witherill Hotel, miscellaneous	29 ITEMS
13	Weathervane Material	17 ITEMS
14	Hotels	27 ITEMS

Box 2

15	Miscellaneous News Clippings	15 ITEMS
16	Miscellaneous News Clippings	21 ITEMS
17	Miscellaneous News Clippings	10 ITEMS
18	Miscellaneous Items	21 ITEMS
19	Miscellaneous Items	9 ITEMS
20	Miscellaneous Items	21 ITEMS

Box 3

21 Miscellaneous Items

1 ITEM

REGISTERS

Box

4 Jan. 1895 - Apr. 1895

5 31 Aug. 1919 - 5 Jun. 1920

6 5 Jun. 1920 - 23 Dec. 1920

7 27 Dec. 1920 - 21 Dec. 1921

8 30 Dec. 1921 - 21 Dec. 1922

9 10 Jan. 1923 - 16 Dec. 1923

10 19 Dec. 1923 - 29 Dec. 1924

11 4 Jan. 1926 - 29 Dec. 1926

12 30 Dec. 1927 - 18 Dec. 1928

13 4 Jan. 1930 - 24 Dec. 1930

Box

14 ACCOUNT BOOKS

15 ACCOUNT BOOKS

16 Folder 22 AUTOGRAPH-THEFT VALUE

NUMBER OF ITEMS:

Box 1: 296

Box 2: 97

Box 3: 1

Box 4-13: 10

Box 14: 2

Box 15: 1

Box 16: 41

TOTAL: 407