

VALENTINE NICHOLSON COLLECTION, 1841-1915

Collection #s:

M 641

OM 299

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Processed by:
Paul Brockman,
8 November 1993

USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 5 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize folder, (1.75 linear feet)

COLLECTION DATES: Inclusive 1841-1915, Bulk 1841-1890

PROVENANCE: Theodore L. Steele and Brandt F. Steele, Indianapolis, IN, 22 September 1993

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society.

RELATED HOLDINGS: Meredith Nicholson Papers (M 221), T. L. Steele Papers (M 263), Valentine Nicholson Transcripts (M 642)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 93.0674

NOTES: Transcripts of portions of this collection are contained in M 642, Valentine Nicholson Transcripts.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Valentine Nicholson (1809-1904), the son of Daniel and Elizabeth Nicholson, was born in Clinton County, Ohio. Nicholson was a member of the Society of Friends (Quaker) in his early life, but he withdrew from the faith because of his ardent abolitionist feelings, which were discouraged by the Friends. His abolitionist work included the housing of

fleeing slaves from the south and the establishment of a free town hall and academy in Harveysburg, Ohio. Valentine Nicholson married Jane Wales and they produced three daughters, Elizabeth, Mary Ellen and Martha Nicholson McKay, wife of Horace McKay. The Nicholsons also experimented in communalism with their establishment of "Prairie Home," a farm near Urbana, Ohio that attracted "inmates" from Europe, the east coast, and the middle west. Nicholson was also interested in "Spiritualism" and was involved in seances. Nicholson later lived in Wayne and Marion counties in Indiana and died in his home on Broadway in Indianapolis.

The collection also contains a number of the papers of Nicholson's brother-in-law, Thomas N. Wales, fl. 1860s-1890s, who lived in Harveysburg, Warren County, Ohio, and who served in the Ohio state legislature.

Sources: Information in collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection centers around the correspondence and diaries of Valentine Nicholson and the correspondence of Nicholson's brother-in-law, Thomas N. Wales. Nicholson's papers include letters from family, friends, and associates regarding his personal, political, spiritual, philanthropic endeavors, and some legal and business matters, 1845-1892. Topics include Nicholson's involvement in the underground railroad and abolitionism, his experiment in communalism, and his involvement in spiritualism.

There also are personal letters to and from other members of Nicholson's family including his wife, Jane, and daughters, Elizabeth (Libbie), Mary Ellen, and Martha in Harveysburg, Ohio and Indianapolis, Indiana. These letters are chiefly family related in nature. There are a number of letters of a personal nature between Valentine and Libbie Nicholson. The collection also contains Nicholson's diaries, writings, and newspaper clippings. The diaries include daily happenings, meetings attended, and views on subjects of interest to him such as spiritualism and religion in general.

Also included are reminiscences of Valentine Nicholson and scrapbooks containing subjects such as abolitionism, literature, philosophy, and spiritualism, and an account by Martha N. McKay written in 1895 of Nicholson's trip east in 1843 to attend an abolitionist meeting. There is also biographical and genealogical information about Nicholson and his ancestors and hand-copied articles from publications, 1844. In addition, there is a handwritten manuscript by Nicholson containing information about Prairie Home including land information and names of those involved in the venture. Also included is a composition book containing Valentine Nicholson's record of seances he attended, n.d., and a scrapbook kept by Martha N. McKay, 1880s-1910s.

The collection also contains correspondence of relatives including the Wales, McKay, Adams, and Fallis families. Most of the letters involve correspondence to Thomas N. Wales, chiefly of Harveysburg, Warren County, Ohio, and Columbus, Ohio, and mainly are of a personal nature regarding family news, religious views, and general information, 1850s-1890s.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

BOX 1: Correspondence and Papers, 1841- 1915 **FOLDER # and CONTENTS**

1. Correspondence, 1841-1849
2. Correspondence, 1850-1859 & n.d.
3. Correspondence and Papers, 1859-1865
4. Letter From Valentine to Libbie Nicholson, July 4, 1881
5. Biographical Sketch of Valentine Nicholson, n.d.
6. Reminiscences, August 7, 1894
7. Nicholson Family Correspondence, 1854-1876

8. Nicholson Family Correspondence, 1878-1915
9. Nicholson Family Correspondence, n.d.
10. Nicholson Family Letters to Thomas N. Wales, 1868-1898
11. Wales Family Correspondence, 1854-1876
12. Wales Family Correspondence, 1887- 1898
13. Wales Family, General Correspondence, A-E, 1857-1898
14. Wales Family, General Correspondence, F-N, 1849-1898
15. Wales Family, General Correspondence, P-W, 1855-1896
16. McKay Family Correspondence, 1864-1898
17. Adams Family Correspondence, 1886-1898
18. Fallis Family Correspondence, 1850-1887
19. Hand Copied Excerpts From Publications, 1844
20. (OM 299)Prairie Home Information, n.d.

BOX 2: Scrapbooks, Spiritualism and Philosophy, n.d.

FOLDER # and CONTENTS

1. Spiritualism, n.d.
2. Spiritualism (2 scrapbooks), n.d.
3. Spiritualism, n.d.
4. Philosophy and Literature, n.d.

BOX 3: Scrapbooks, 1880s-1910s

FOLDER # and CONTENTS

1. Orson S. Murray Obituaries & Life, 1885
2. Martha N. McKay Scrapbook, 1880s-1910s
3. Loose Copies of Clippings Removed From Martha McKay Scrapbook, 1880s-1910s

BOX 4: Diaries and Writings, 1879-1898 & n.d.

FOLDER # and CONTENTS

1. Diary, 1879-1881
2. Diary, 1879-1885
3. Miscellaneous Pages From Diary, n.d.
4. Martha N. McKay, Account of 1843 Journey, 1895
5. Poetry, n.d. (2 volumes)
6. Writings and Newsclippings, n.d.

BOX 5: Diaries, 1866-1895; Composition Book (Seances), n.d.

FOLDER # and CONTENTS

1. Diary, 1866-1871
2. Diary, 1876-1877, #1
3. Diaries (2), 1870-1895 (Spiritualism) & 1876- 1877, #2
4. Composition Book (Seances), n.d.
5. Copies of Clippings Removed From Diary, 1876-1877, #1

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Nicholson, Valentine, 1809-1904

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Nicholson, Valentine, 1809-1904

- Wales, Thomas N., fl. 1860-1890s
- McKay, Martha Nicholson, 1843-1934
- Nicholson family
- McKay family
- Adams family
- Murray, Orson
- Spiritualism-- Ohio
- Underground railroad--Ohio
- Slavery--United States-- Anti-slavery movements
- Abolitionists-- Ohio
- Philanthropists--Ohio
- Collective settlements--Ohio-- Urbana
- Religious communities--Ohio--Urbana
- Daires-- Authorship--Religious aspects
- Religious life
- Poetry
- Recipes--Ohio
- Folk medicine--Ohio-- Formulae, receipts, prescriptions
- Herbs--Ohio--Therapeutic use
- Travelers--Ohio
- Voyages and travels
- Fathers and daughters--Ohio
- Prairie Home (Urbana, Ohio)
- Urbana (Ohio)
- Harveysburg (Ohio)

END