

The STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY of MISSOURI

**R1308 Williams, Matthew Z.
Williams family papers, ca. 1861-1990
Ten folders; 121 images**

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PROVENANCE

Matthew Z. Williams of Rolla, Mo. loaned the collection for reproduction on 26 July 2011, accession number SHSMO-RA1536.

BIOGRAPHY

The Williams family papers represent members of the Williams, Sturgeon, and Watson families of Phelps and Texas counties. Genealogy material is included for the related families of Thomas, Via, Cragle [Kragle], Martin and Hawkins.

Elbert (Bert) Deer Williams was born near Licking, Missouri in 1883, and came to Rolla in 1910 after marrying Althea Sturgeon, the daughter of William Zadock Sturgeon, director of the Rolla State Bank. The Sturgeon family was from Beulah, Missouri and Bert became acquainted with them when he taught school there. Starting as assistant cashier, Bert Williams eventually became president of the bank and an eminent citizen of Rolla, serving many years on the Board of Education and the City Council. Bert and Althea had two children, Rex and Juanita, and are remembered in Rolla for the 200-acre Holloway Farm on the east side of town, which ultimately became BerJuan Park, the centerpiece of Rolla's park system. Juanita's husband H. D. (Tommy) Thomas inherited Holloway Farm after her untimely death in 1962, and donated the property to the city in 1966. The name BerJuan was derived from Bert and Juanita to honor them.

Rex Zadock Williams, Bert's son, graduated from the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy in Rolla in 1931 with a degree in metallurgical engineering. Joining the faculty as an instructor in mechanics, he later became department chair and, ultimately, associate dean of the school. In 1952, he resigned to become executive vice president at the Rolla State Bank under his father.

In the 1930s, Rex had a mining partnership with his sister Juanita's husband, H. D. (Tommy) Thomas. Among genealogical materials and family portraits in the collection are business papers including a few speculative mining leases, but the majority of the papers concern Moselle Mine No. 10, south of Rolla. They include photographs, mining leases, core reports, and financial calculations concerning the mining of pyrite (a sulfide ore of iron). Moselle No. 10, a filled-sink deposit, was first opened in 1872 and mined for hematite until about 1910. The mine remained abandoned until the Thomas and Williams Mining Company leased the land in 1934 and sank a shaft that revealed a substantial amount of pyrite. Moselle No. 10, in fact, turned out to contain the most remarkable mass of sulfide in any sink structure in the Ozarks known at that time. The company shipped its first batch of pyrite in the fall of 1934; however, it became apparent that

working underground was dangerous. Not only was the pyrite soft and easily caved-in, but also ground water in combination with the sulfide ore created sulfuric acid and a corrosive environment for the shaft timbering and equipment. In 1935, the company determined that the ore was close enough to the surface for open-pit mining. Peak production came in 1938 with the extraction of over 28,000 long tons of pyrite. When Thomas and Williams took over the mine in 1934, the depth was only 32 feet. By 1939, they had excavated to a depth of 185 feet, leaving sheer walls that resulted in a long-anticipated cave-in. Thomas and Williams then sold their mining rights and equipment to Rowe E. Carney, who continued digging until 1940 when a fatal cave-in stopped all mining at Moselle No. 10. As the Thomas and Williams Mining Company's biggest success, the Moselle mine made them the largest producer of pyrite in Missouri during the 1930s, and the papers in this collection help document Missouri's short-lived pyrite mining boom in that period.

The collection also features images from the Sturgeon family, early settlers at Beulah in southern Phelps County. There is a rare view Beulah's main street in 1906, as well as W. Z. Sturgeon's store and the Bert Williams with his students at the Beulah School. Other noteworthy photographs are of Gaines Ford in Maries County around 1920, the 7th Grade class from Central School in Rolla in 1922, the Rolla Rotary Club in 1935, and an aerial view of the Holloway Farm in 1954. In addition, there are papers from the Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity at the Missouri School of Mines, 1928-1947, when Rex Williams served as Secretary.

Additional materials with the collection include further information on Moselle Mine No. 10 and Missouri pyrites, Beulah news from the *Rolla Herald* from 1866 to 1933, and family genealogy.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

These are photographs, business papers, genealogical materials, and other items from the Williams, Sturgeon, Watson and allied families of Phelps County, Missouri. Included are papers concerning pyrite mining in Phelps County and a rare view of the village of Beulah around 1906. High quality scans of the images are available.

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INVENTORY

- Folder 1: Williams, Elbert Deer [E. D. or Bert], papers and photographs, ca. 1883-2004
- Folder 2: Sturgeon, William Zadock, papers and photographs ca. 1861-1986
- Folder 3: Williams, Rex Zadock, papers and photographs, ca. 1912-1978
- Folder 4: Williams, Marion Rowenna Watson, Watson family papers and photographs, ca. 1910-1992
- Folder 5: Moselle Mine No. 10, mining leases and photographs, 1933-1940
- Folder 6: Exploratory mining papers (Crawford, Maries, and Franklin counties, Mo.), 1935-1940
- Folder 7: Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity (Rolla, Mo.), papers, 1928-1947
- Folder 8: Gaines Ford (Maries County, Mo.), photographs of family picnics, ca. 1920
- Folder 9: Williams, John Zadock, family papers and photographs, ca. 1940s-1960s
- Folder 10: Photographs from folders 1-9, scanned to disk

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