

Guide to William R. Kelly Collection – AI-4200

Reference code US CoGrCGM AI4200
Title William R. Kelly
Processed by William Crabbe
Finding aid prepared by William Crabbe

Name and location of repository Hazel E. Johnson Research Center
Greeley History Museum
714 8th Street
Greeley, CO 80631
Phone: (970) 336-4187
Email: museums@greeleygov.com
URL: <http://greeleymuseums.com/>

Collection Summary

Dates 1886-1978
Bulk dates 1923-1966
Level of description Collection
Extent 2 cubic feet
Creator(s) Unknown

Administrative/Biographical History

Biographical note on William R. Kelly

William Robert Kelly was born February 22, 1883 in Mound City, Missouri to David and Christian Kelly. Kelly was one of six children. His siblings were David E., Edith C., Maude F. Ralph, and Helen Gladys. Kelly spent most of his early childhood living with the family of his maternal aunt, but returned to live with his parents when they moved to Union Colony in 1890. His father was a farmer and his mother a farm wife.

Kelly attended elementary and high school in Greeley and went on to earn his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Colorado, in Boulder, Colorado.

Kelly had originally intended to attend the School of Mines in Golden to become a mining engineer. However, a severe hail storm occurred on August 29th, 1901 that caused damage to his father's mature potato crop. Upon the advice of his mother who feared his father would change his mind about funding Kelly's education, he left immediately for the University of Colorado

instead. This decision was based solely on the fact that classes there began a week earlier than the School of Mines, which enabled him to establish his enrollment before his father retracted his offer.

While attending the University of Colorado, Kelly held the Editor (Junior year) and Manager (final year) positions for the student newspaper The Silver and Gold. He also worked as a reporter for the Boulder Camera and the Boulder Herald.

After graduating law school in 1907, Kelly worked briefly in New Mexico and then opened a law office in Fort Collins, which he closed within one year, citing a saturated market. On April 1st, 1909 Kelly opened his own law practice in Greeley and maintained this office for the duration of his 60-year career. Kelly earned a good reputation on some of his earliest cases involving irrigation and water which helped provide the foundation for his extensive involvement in Colorado water rights issues. He was nicknamed "Mr. Water Law" by Senator Ed Johnson.

William Kelly married Caroline Ettella "Tella" Smith on June 29, 1911 in Los Angeles, California. They had one son, David, born in 1918, adopted.

In August 1918, Kelly voluntarily enlisted and began officer's training, but the camp closed shortly thereafter and he returned to Weld County, where he ran drills and chaired the Board of Induction.

William Kelly worked closely with Tom Nixon, especially while writing the Water Conservancy Act of 1937. In his practice he partnered with E. Tyndall Snyder from 1941-1948, and then with J. Clayton from 1949-1956. Kelly resumed solo practice in 1956, until he retired in 1971.

Kelly was the attorney for the New Cache La Poudre Irrigation Company and the Reservoir Company. He also provided legal counsel for the Colorado-Big Thompson Project (originally Grand Lake Project) for 5 years without pay. When Tom Nixon became Attorney General, he then served as an advisor until 1941. He helped establish the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District and served as its attorney until 1956.

In addition to his prominent career, Kelly made significant contributions to the legal profession serving in leadership positions, publishing commentary, and earning recognition amongst his peers. He employed these same skills and talents for the benefit of numerous community and faith-based organizations.

In November 1971, William and Tella Kelly moved to the Bonnell Retirement Home. Tella passed away in 1972. In March 1980, William Kelly suffered a stroke and remained at Bonnell. He passed away on January 20, 1981.

Professional Distinctions

American Bar Foundation – President

Charter Member: Grand Lake Committee and its successor, Northern Colorado Water User's Association

Colorado Bar Foundation – President
U.S. Circuit Court
U.S. Supreme Court
Weld County Bar – President
William Lee Knous Award

Memberships, Community, and Faith-Based Organizations

Alpha Tau Omega
Court of Honor Board of Review – Boy Scouts of America
Greeley Public Library Board
Heart and Dagger
Masonic Lodge
Odd Fellows Lodge
Order of Coif
Phi Delta Phi
Rotary Club
Trinity Episcopal Church, 29 years, vestry-man
Weld County Hospital Board

Timeline of William R. Kelly

1883

- Born, February 22 in Mound City, Missouri

1886

- Went to live with Ellen (mother's sister) and Will Tyson until age 7, was then reunited with his family upon the move to Greeley

1890

- February, family arrived in Union Colony (Greeley), Colorado

1890s

- Attended Buell School, completed grade school 1897

1901

- Graduated Greeley High

1905

- Awarded BA, University of Colorado

1907

- Awarded BA and LL.B degrees, University of Colorado
- Worked for Richard Whitely in New Mexico

1908

- February 6, admitted to practice law
- Opened a law office in Fort Collins (closed it the same year)

1909

- April 1, opened a law office in Greeley with early clients in irrigation

1911

- Married, June 29 in Los Angeles, California to Caroline Ettella Smith

1911-1925

- Water referee, Water District 1 and 2

1912-1938

- Greeley Public Library Board
- 1916
 - Greeley Chamber of Commerce – President (formerly the Greeley Commercial Club)
- 1916-1921
 - City Attorney
- 1918
 - Son (adopted), David
 - August 1, left for second officer's training camp at Eugene, Oregon (volunteer enlistment)
 - Camp disbanded. Kelly returned after Labor Day to establish local military drills and chair the board of induction for Weld County
- 1920-1937
 - Supreme Court Board of Law Examiners – Member, Chairman
- 1921-1928
 - County Attorney
- 1928
 - December, father passes away
- 1930-1938
 - Special Counsel for Colorado
- 1933
 - Initiator – Colorado-Big Thompson project
- 1937
 - Water Conservancy Act of 1937, with Tom Nixon
- 1939-1940
 - Colorado Bar Association – President
- 1941
 - June, appointed attorney for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (served until July 1956)
 - November, partnered with E. Tyndall Snyder (until Snyder's death in 1948)
- 1944-1954
 - Weld County Hospital Board
- 1949
 - Late in the year, partnered with John R. Clayton
- 1956
 - Returned to solo practice
- 1971
 - Retired
 - November, moved with Tella to Bonell Retirement Home
- 1972
 - April 4, Tella dies
- 1980
 - March 8, stroke
- 1981
 - January 20, William R. Kelly dies

Scope and Content

This collection consists of a variety of historical materials related to the development of significant water irrigation projects in Northern Colorado. It includes considerable information related to the Cache La Poudre Irrigation Company and the Big Thompson Irrigation Project in particular. Also included are numerous writings and speeches produced by William Kelly over the course of his life. These typically pertain to aspects of water law and the development of the above-mentioned irrigation projects.

System of arrangement

No original order. Order imposed by material type and subject.

Conditions governing access

There are no restrictions on the access of this collection.

Conditions governing reproduction and use

There are no restrictions on the use or reproduction of this collection.

Languages and scripts of the materials

English

Immediate source of acquisition

This source of this collection is unknown

Notes

Names

William R. Kelly
Fred Norcross
Charles Lory
Ella Watson (“Cattle Kate”)

Places

Greeley (Colo.)
LaSalle (Colo.)
Fort Collins (Colo.)
Loveland (Colo.)
Berthoud (Colo.)
Boulder (Colo.)
Estes Park (Colo.)
Eaton (Colo.)

Subjects

Irrigation
Water Law

Document forms Correspondence
 Newspaper Articles
 Speeches
 Legal Documents
 Journals
 Books

Contents

Series I: Irrigation History

Subseries A: Books

Consists of one book: The Law: Water for Irrigation, 1886, S.W. Carpenter

Subseries B: Monographs

Consists of 2 copies of one monograph: A Hundred Years of Irrigation in Colorado, 1952, The Colorado Water Conservancy Board and Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College

Subseries C: Papers – Various

Consists of various papers about the history of irrigation in Colorado, arranged in 2 folders: 1955-1957; 1964-1978

Series II: Irrigation Projects

Subseries A: Big Thompson Water Project

Consists of various papers and monographs related to the development and implementation of the Big Thompson Water Project, arranged in 6 folders

Subseries B: Cache La Poudre

Consists of various writings and monographs pertaining to several projects involving the Cache La Poudre River. These include the Laramie-Poudre Irrigation District, the Poudre Valley Canal, The Greeley-Poudre Irrigation District, The New Cache La Poudre Irrigating Company, and the Cache La Poudre Reservoir. Includes a monograph entitled “North Platte Water”

Series III: Greeley Area History

Consists of various papers relating to different aspects of Greeley area history

Series IV: Legal Articles/Papers

Subseries A: Date UNK-1941

Consists of various water-law related legal articles, either undated or those written through 1941.

Subseries B: 1945-1971

Consists of water-law related legal articles dated from 1945 through 1971.

Series V: Memorials/Obituaries

Consists of various obituaries and other memorials to the life of William R. Kelly

Series VI: Museum Donations

Consists of various lists describing aspects of the William R. Kelly collection

Series VII: Speeches

Subseries A: 1901-1925

Consists of notes and transcripts of speeches given by William R. Kelly from 1901 through 1925.

Subseries B: 1931-1939

Consists of notes and transcripts of speeches given by William R. Kelly from 1931 through 1939.

Subseries C: 1940-1957

Consists of notes and transcripts of speeches given by William R. Kelly from 1940 through 1957.

Subseries D: 1965-1966

Consists of notes and transcripts of speeches given by William R. Kelly from 1965 through 1966.

Series VIII: Professional/Community Service

Subseries A: 1938-1940

Consists of papers and records related to work with professional and community organizations from 1938 through 1940.

Subseries B: 1942-1978

Consists of papers and records related to work with professional and community organization from 1942 through 1978.

Series IX: Writings – Various

Subseries A: Date UNK – 1961

Consists of various writings either undated or through 1961, primarily in the area of water law and irrigation.

Subseries B: 1962-1964

Consists of various writings from 1962 through 1964, primarily in the areas of water law and irrigation.

Subseries C: 1965-1969

Consists of various writings from 1965 through 1969, primarily in the areas of water law and irrigation

Subseries D: Research notes for “Cattle Kate”

Consists of research notes used to create an article about Ella Watson, a person who achieved some regional notoriety as “Cattle Kate.”

Subseries E: Travel

Consists of writing about travels and vacations taken by William R. Kelly throughout his life

Subseries F: University Years

Consists of various writing about his time spent in University, arranged in two periods, dated UNK-1905 and 1959-1968.

Container List

Series I: Irrigation History

Subseries A: Books

Box	Folder
1	1

Subseries B: Monographs

Box	Folder
1	7

Subseries C: Papers - Various

Box	Folder
1	8
1	9
4	8

Series II: Irrigation Projects

Subseries A: Big Thompson Water Project

Box	Folder
1	2
1	3
1	4
2	7

2	8
2	9

Subseries B: Cache La Poudre

Box	Folder
1	5
2	1
2	6
3	1

Series III: Greeley Area History

Box	Folder
1	6

Series IV: Legal Articles/Papers

Subseries A: Date UNK - 1941

Box	Folder
2	2

Subseries B: 1945 – 1971

Box	Folder
2	3

Series V: Memorials/Obituaries

Box	Folder
2	4

Series VI: Museum Donations

Box	Folder
2	5

Series VII: Speeches

Subseries A: 1901 - 1925

Box	Folder
3	4

Subseries B: 1931 - 1939

Box	Folder
3	5

Subseries C: 1940 - 1957

Box	Folder
3	6

Subseries D: 1965 - 1966

Box	Folder
3	7

Series VIII: Professional/Community Service

Subseries A: 1938 - 1940

Box	Folder
3	2

Subseries B: 1942 - 1978

Box	Folder
3	3

Series IX: Writings – Various

Subseries A: Date UNK – 1961

Box	Folder
4	1

Subseries B: 1962 – 1964

Box	Folder
4	2

Subseries C: 1965 – 1969

Box	Folder
4	3

Subseries D: Research Notes for “Cattle Kate”

Box	Folder
4	4

Subseries E: Travel

Box	Folder
4	5

Subseries F: University Years

Box	Folder
4	6
4	7