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Finding Aid for the Dorothy Keister collection Collection 101

**Including historical photographs, Civil War correspondence and
family memorabilia**

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on May 26, 2018.
Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections
Department

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Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Title:	Dorothy Keister collection
ID:	Collection 101
Date [inclusive]:	1855-1962
Physical Description:	1.75 Linear Feet Four boxes
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Keister family lived in Sparta and Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dorothy Keister (1901-1996) donated historical photographs, autograph albums, a few historical publications and family genealogical research compiled by Cecile Keister. Images include Sparta and Kent City, Michigan, and particularly the Kent City fire on April 22, 1907. Genealogical data is available on the following families: Allen, Dudley, Highley, Keister, Noble, Symes and Williams. Also included are letters between David Noble and his wife Mary Noble. Written while David served in the Civil War, his letters detail his months of training and boredom, the food and medical services available, and his concern for matters on the farm. Mary's letters, in return, document the health and welfare of the family. A few civil war era letters from Erastus W. Noble (brother), are also found in the collection.

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Biographical / Historical

Dorothy Keister was born in Sparta, Michigan November 6, 1901 to Bruce and Cecile Keister. Dorothy was the oldest of three children, including one brother, Bruce Jr., who died at age 3, and one sister named Doris. Dorothy's father Bruce Sr. was an accomplished banker who presided over many banks throughout the state of Michigan including in the cities of Sparta, Kent City, and Bellevue. Dorothy's mother Cecile spent many years researching the genealogy of her extended family. Through more than a decade of research, most of which is included in this collection, she has traced her mothers family (Noble) back six generations to the 17th century, when they first immigrated from England. Dorothy attended Olivet College and graduated with a B.A. in 1923. Following the death of her father in 1924, Dorothy lived with her mother and sister in Kalamazoo and then on Benjamin Street in Grand Rapids until 1935. After

leaving Grand Rapids, Dorothy was a Director of the Whitman School of Interior Design in New York, Administrator for the Detroit Schools, Librarian in the St. Clair School system, and also sold real estate in Florida for a brief period. Dorothy Keister died in Tawas City, Michigan on July 25, 1996 at the age of 95.

Bio by John Gelderloos

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Scope and Contents

The collection contains historical photographs, autograph albums, historical publications, and genealogical research compiled by Cecile Keister. Included are the letters between David Noble and his wife Mary (Knapp) Noble (later Taylor), a carpenter from Sparta, MI., volunteered for Civil War service in Co. C, 1st Michigan Mechanics and Engineers. He died 22 June 1862 of disease at Tuscumbrri, AL. The letters detail his months of training and boredom, food and medical services available as well as his concern for matters on the farm, particularly the payment of the property taxes. Mary's letters, in return, document the health and welfare of the family. A few civil war era letters from Erastus W. Noble (brother), are also found in the collection. He enlisted in Co. K, N.Y. Lincoln Cavalry, at Grand Rapids and was mustered out June 27, 1865.

The collection also contains photographs of the extended family members, Sparta and Kent City, MI, particularly the Kent City fire, 22 April 1907. Genealogical data is available on the following families: Allen, Dudley, Highley, Keister, Noble, Symes, and Williams. The material is divided into four sections: personal papers, genealogical research, photographs and volumes.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

Dorothy Keister, 1980, accession number 1980.043.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

See Coll. 242, the GRPL Civil War Documents Collection for more information on holdings from this era in various GRPL archival collections.

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Controlled Access Headings

- United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Personal narratives
- family papers
- Keister

Photo Index

Banks: Box 1, Folder 17

Baseball players: Box 1, Folder 18

Camp Lake store: Box 1, Folder 12

Churches: Box 1, Folder 17

Dogs: Box 2, Folder 8

Farm houses: Box 1, Folder 13

House interiors: Box 1, Folder 17

Keister house: Box 1, Folder 13

Kent City High School: Box 1, Folder 14

Kent City, MI: Box 1, Folder 14

Kent City, MI fire: Box 1, Folder 14

Michigan Banker's Association: Box 1, Folder 15

Peach shipping: Box 1, Folder 17

People. Anderson, Billie: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Ballard, Claude: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Bowhall, Mable: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Burr, Redmond: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Calkins, L.W.: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Cass, Majorie: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Chamberlain, George: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Cheney, Mary: Box 2, Folder 2

People. Condra, Beatrice: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Duley, Frank: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Empey, Fanny: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Fairman, Frankie: Box 2, Folder 2

People. Galloway, William: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Gilbert, Miss: Box 2, Folder 9

People. Haines, Claude: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Hall, Asa: Box 2, Folder 1

People. Hall, Clara: Box 2, Folder 1

People. Johnson, Eddie: Box 2, Folder 3

People. Johnson, Ella: Box 2, Folder 3

People. Johnson, Sherman: Box 2, Folder 3

People. Loop, Ina: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Maynard, John: Box 2, Folder 10

People. McDonald, Dena: Box 2, Folder 4

People. McDonald, Robert: Box 2, Folder 4

People. Miller, Elisha: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Miller, Levi: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Murray, Carlton: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Murray, Charles: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Noble, Bert: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Charles: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, David: Box 3, Folder

People. Noble, Eucile: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Levi: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Mae: Box 2, Folder 4

People. Noble, Mary Ann: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Minet: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Nancy: Box 2, Folder 6

People. Noble, Ned: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Orpha: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Sarah: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Wilbur: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Noble, Willie: Box 2, Folder 5

People. Sweeney, Patrick: Box 2, Folder 6

People. Symes, Elinor Maria: Box 2, Folder 7

People. Symes, J. Ballard: Box 2, Folder 7

People. Symes, James: Box 2, Folder 7

People. Symes, Lula: Box 2, Folder 7

People. Symes, Mary: Box 2, Folder 7

People. Symes, Mildred: Box 2, Folder 7

People. Taylor, Mary: Box 2, Folder 4

People. Willey, Vernon J.: Box 2, Folder 10

People. Williams, Albert: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Angelina: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Carolyn: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Cecile: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Edward: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Evelyn: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Florence: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Fred: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Grace: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Henry: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Josiah: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Mamie: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Mary: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Maude: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Nancy: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Williams, Sarah E.: Box 2, Folder 8

People. Zimmer, Arthur: Box 2, Folder 10

Prohibition Campaign: Box 1, Folder 16

- School interiors: Box 1, Folder 14
- Sparta, MI: Box 1, Folder 17
- Sparta, MI Methodist Church: Box 1, Folder 17
- Sparta, MI State Bank: Box 1, Folder 17
- Sparta, MI railroad depot: Box 1, Folder 17
- Stores: Box 1, Folder 12
- Symes house: Box 1, Folder 13
- Symes house: Box 1, Folder 17
- Wedding dinner: Box 1, Folder 18
- Williams house: Box 1, Folder 16

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Collection Inventory

Series I. Personal Papers, 1885-1870's, 1914-1922

Scope and Contents

This series includes the original Civil War letters between David Noble and his wife, Mary Knapp Noble. Also included are other family Civil War era correspondence, and later family correspondence. Mary Knapp [Noble's] Account book for the 1870's is also found here.

Attached to the series is the later ledger book of Bruce Keister from the post-WWI era.

David Noble Civil War letters, 1861-1862.

Title/Description	Instances	
1. Letter. Oct. 4(?), 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
2. Letter. Oct. 6, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
3. Letter. Oct. 10, 1861. Marshel.	Box 1	Folder 1
4. Letter. Oct. 12, 1861. Marshel	Box 1	Folder 1
5. Letter. Oct. 17, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
6. Letter. Oct. 21, 1861	Box 1	Folder 1

7. Letter. 24th, 1861. Marshel. [Faded red ink]	Box 1	Folder 1
8. Letter. Oct. 28, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
9. Letter. Nov. 16, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
10. Letter. Dec. 2, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
11. Letter. Dec. 7, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
12. Letter. Dec. 15, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
13. Letter. ? 19, 1861. Kentucky	Box 1	Folder 1
14. Letter. Dec. 29, 1861.	Box 1	Folder 1
15. Letter. Jan. 3, 1862.	Box 1	Folder 1
16. Letter. Jan. 11, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
17. Letter. Jan. 19, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
18. Letter. Feb. 21, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
19. Letter. Feb. 27, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
20. Letter. Mar 8 / Mar. 26, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
21. Letter. March 14, (or 18), 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
22. Letter. Apr. 1, 1862.	Box 1	Folder 1
23. Letter. Apr. 12, [1862?]	Box 1	Folder 1
24. Letter. Apr. 17(?), 1862.	Box 1	Folder 1
25. Letter. Apr. 19, 1862.	Box 1	Folder 1
26. Letter. Apr. 25, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
27. Letter. May 14, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
28. Letter. May 30, 1862	Box 1	Folder 1
29. Letter. n.d.	Box 1	Folder 1
30. Letter. n.d. [fragment] "... in Kentucky I wish it may be the end of the war in the United States, for I want to get home to my family ..."	Box 1	Folder 1

Oversized David Noble letters

Physical Location: Housed in Collection 98, Box 21

Title/Description	Instances	
1. Nov. 1, 1861	Collection 98	Box 21
2. Nov. 6, 1861	Collection 98	Box 21
3. Nov. 8, 1861	Collection 98	Box 21
4. Jan. 15, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21

5. Jan. 25, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
6. February(?) 2, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
7. Mar. 9, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21

Mary A. (Knapp) Noble letters, 1861-1862, Sparta. (22)

Physical Location: Housed in Collection 98, Box 21

Custodial History:

Custodial History

Sleeved by volunteer Jill Straub and moved from 101-1-2 to oversized box 098-21, 6/2008.

Title/Description	Instances	
1. Dec. 15, 1861 (fading)	Collection 98	Box 21
2. Dec. 31, 1861	Collection 98	Box 21
3. Jan. 9, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
4. Jan. 10, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
5. Jan. 27, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
6. Feb. 3, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
7. Feb. 11, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
8. Feb. 22, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
9. March 10, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
10. March 16, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
11. March 25, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
12. March 26, [no year, 1862?]	Collection 98	Box 21
13. Apr. 1, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
14. Apr. 11, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
15. Apr. 24, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
16. Apr. 26, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
17. May 6, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
18. May 10, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
19. May 19, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
20. May 20, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
21. May 29, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21
22. June 20, 1862	Collection 98	Box 21

Allan Lindsay letters

Title/Description	Instances	
1.Sept. 11, 1861, to David & Mary	Box 1	Folder 2.5
2.Sept. 24, 1861, to David & Mary	Box 1	Folder 2.5

GAR & General Services Administration

Title/Description	Instances	
Reference photocopies & transcriptions from GAR & General Services Administration, etc.	Box 1	Folder 2.6

E.W. Noble Civil War letters to Sister [Mary Noble?]

Physical Location: Housed in Collection 98, Box 21

Title/Description	Instances	
1. Dec. 15, 1861. (1 sheet, 4 pages)	Collection 98	Box 21
2. Oct. 16, 1863.	Collection 98	Box 21

Noble Family letters, 1855-72.

Title/Description	Instances	
1. Jan 7, 1855. William Perry to David Noble.	Box 1	Folder 3
2. Oct. 13th, 1859. David Noble to Mary	Box 1	Folder 3
3. Oct. 4, 1860. Permelia L. Burns to Uncle. / Aaron & Laura Carr to Brother & Sister (on reserve side of paper) Lock of hair attached.	Box 1	Folder 3
4. Dec. 3, 1861. Mary to Brother & Sister.	Box 1	Folder 3
5. Dec. 15, 1861. B.T? Knapp to Uncle.	Box 1	Folder 3
6. n.d. Permelia to Aunt Mary	Box 1	Folder 3
7. Feb. 20, 1871. Core to Auntie (Sarah Noble at head of first page)	Box 1	Folder 3
8. ?, ? 1871. Mary to Sarah.	Box 1	Folder 3
9.Apr. 4, 1882. Mary to Brother	Box 1	Folder 3
10. June 24, 1882. Mary to Brother	Box 1	Folder 3

Account Books

Title/Description	Instances	
Mary A. Knapp account book, 1870s.	Box 1	Folder 4

Ledgers

Title/Description	Instances	
[vol. 1] Bruce Keister ledger, 1914-1922.		

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The dozen folders in this series contain select documents scattered within the large date range from the late 1880s' to the early 1960's. The bulk of the documents appear to be from the later end of this range. Several different family names are represented among these files.

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence & one clipping 1945-1962.	Box 1	Folder 5
Allen family, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 6
Dudley family, 1950, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 7
General		
Incl. Detroit Society for Genealogical Research Magazine, Apr, 1950		
Highley family, 1959, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 8
General		
Incl. Certificate for John Sweeney		
Keister family, 1923, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 9
General		
Incl. Photographic neg. copy print		
Noble family, 1945, 1963, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 10
Symes family, 1897, 1912, n.d.	Box 1	Folder 11
General		
Incl. Young & Chaffee Furniture Co. letterhead receipts, 1911-1912.		
Williams family, 1888, 1891, 1944-62, n.d. Incl. 2 remembrance cards for Angeline Williams & Henry Williams [ephemera]	Box 1	Folder 12

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General

A 1911 Grandville pickup baseball game, referenced in Grand River Valley History, v. 11, 1993, for this collection, is actually located in Coll. 77-1-11

Scope and Contents

The photographs include one historical ambrotype of David Noble ca. 1860; an album of Williams Family photos ca. 1870's including tintypes; portrait photos both identified and unidentified, and various views of Kent County area places & events, including Sparta and Kent City. Several images are undated.

Title/Description	Instances	
Camp Lake store (1 photo postcard)	Box 1	Folder 13
Farm houses (6)	Box 1	Folder 14
Kent City, MI (3 negative prints, 3 photo postcards, 3 prints & 1 seating chart)	Box 1	Folder 15
Michigan Banker's Association, ca. 1895. Incl. Bruce N. Keister.	Box 1	Folder 16
Politicizing for Prohibition. Colorized view of two women and five children in front of Sarah Williams House. Neg. #2431. (1)	Box 1	Folder 17

Sparta, MI (8 total)

Title/Description	Instances	
Baseball players (1 photo postcard)	Box 1	Folder 18
House, exterior (1)	Box 1	Folder 18
House, interior (2)	Box 1	Folder 18
Methodist Church (1 photo postcard)	Box 1	Folder 18
Sparta State Bank, ca. 1900 (2)	Box 1	Folder 18
Peaches being loaded by Fishey, Darling, Meekey, Sparta, Mich. Oct. 3, 1902. (1)	Box 1	Folder 18
Wedding dinner, ca. 1900, with some identifications (1)	Box 1	Folder 19

People

Title/Description	Instances	
People. Hall (6)	Box 2	Folder 1
People. Cheney (2)	Box 2	Folder 2
People. Johnson (3)	Box 2	Folder 3
People. McDonald (4)	Box 2	Folder 4
People. Noble (13 prints, 2 tintypes, 1 negative)	Box 2	Folder 5
People. Sweeney (1 print, 1 tintype)	Box 2	Folder 6
People. Symes (13 prints, 1 tintype)	Box 2	Folder 7

People. Williams (16 prints, 1 photo postcard, 4 tintypes)	Box 2	Folder 8
People. Identified:A#G (17)	Box 2	Folder 9
People. Identified:H#Z (11)	Box 2	Folder 10
People. Unidentified (11 prints & 15 tintypes)	Box 2	Folder 11

Albums

Title/Description	Instances
[vol. 11] Williams family album, ca.1870.	Box 3.5

General

Includes numerous tintypes. Many photos identified.

Historical Photographic Images

Title/Description	Instances
David Noble ambrotype, ca. 1860.	Box 3.5

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Series IV. Publications.

Scope and Contents

The four items listed are diverse in nature. One is a genealogy article by Cecile Keister in the Detroit publication. The other three are items which document area history. An 1893 portfolio of 200 plates documents the early history of Lowell, Michigan. A Sparta Methodist Church history documents one hundred years of that organization from 1852 to 1952. Finally, Loraine Pratt Imman's 1914 publication of tributes to Abraham Lincoln, from the Grand Rapids Federation of Women's Clubs, is included here.

Title/Description	Instances
[vol. 2] Lowell : a portfolio of over Two-hundred original photographs / photographed & prepared under the supervision of Milan D. Wilson. Lowell, Mich. : Journal Print, 1893. Usage photocopy with LH Book Coll. M977.455.W695L	Box 3
[vol. 5] "The Detroit Society for Genealogical Research Magazine," Jan-Feb 1948, 'Elias Pattee' by Cecile M. Keister. [serial]	Box 3
[vol. 13] Sparta Methodist Church, Sparta, Michigan : history of the church since it was founded in 1852 through 1952.	Box 3
[vol. 12] Tributes to Abraham Lincoln / selected by Mrs. Loraine Pratt Immen, Feb. 12, 1914. GR Federation of Women's Clubs.	Box 3

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Series V. Autograph Books and Diaries.

Scope and Contents

The earliest item included here is W.S. Dudley diary, 1877. The remaining 6 volumes are autograph books gathered by various family members, from 1880 to 1891.

Title/Description	Instances
[vol. 3] Bruce Keister autograph book, 1882-91.	Box 3.5
[vol. 4] Bruce Keister autograph book, 1889.	Box 3.5
[vol. 6] Cecile Keister autograph book, 1889.	Box 3.5
[vol. 7] Cecile Keister autograph book, 1889-91.	Box 3.5
[vol. 8] W.S. Dudley diary, 1877.	Box 3.5
[vol. 9] Frankie Fairman autograph book, 1880.	Box 3.5
[vol. 10] Mary Symes autograph book, 1885-89.	Box 3.5

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