

**Guide to the  
Mielke Family Papers,  
ca. 1890s-1970 [bulk dates 1907-1920s]**

Carrie M. McLain Memorial Museum,  
Nome, Alaska

<b>Accession Number</b>	1979.1
<b>Acquisition Information</b>	Gift of Clara Mielke Richards, 1979.
<b>Extent</b>	approx. 1.4 linear feet (2 legal size document boxes, 1 postcard box, 1 map cabinet folder)
<b>Restrictions</b>	None.
<b>Processed by</b>	Amanda Demeter, April 2016. Latest revision April 25, 2016.

## **Biographical Note**

Frank J. Mielke married Elizabeth “Lizzie” Larson in the late 1890s. Both were originally from Wisconsin and lived in Seattle, Washington before relocating to Nome, Alaska around 1900. Their daughter Clara was born on July 21, 1903. Frank wore several hats over his life including jeweler/watchmaker, barber, and property manager. He served as a Nome city councilman in the early 1910s and was chairman of the Finance Committee, a role for which he was known as “Watchdog” Mielke. The Mielkes appear also to have managed several properties for rental in Seattle, Washington, with Frank taking regular winter journeys south during Clara’s childhood to maintain both those properties and a family home. Based on the photographs in this collection, the Mielkes appear to have been prosperous, with views of a well-decorated home and fine clothes for Clara and Lizzie. Frank died in 1918 during the influenza epidemic. Lizzie remained in Nome until approximately 1919, when she and Clara relocated to Seattle. Lizzie died in 1926, and was buried at Belmont Point in Nome.

Clara married Waldren Ward Richards of Yakima, Washington in 1926 and lived most of her adult life in Seattle, but maintained connections with family friends in Nome and other parts of Alaska, including the Polets. Waldren worked as an electrical inspector for City Light. He died August 17, 1956 in Seattle at age 52. Clara Mielke Richards died November 30, 1977, bequeathing a large endowment to the McLain Museum, along with a collection of artifacts.

## Scope and Content of Collection

The collection contains correspondence, financial and business records, ephemera, school and childhood items, and photographs related to the Mielke family of Nome. Documents are primarily those of Frank and Lizzie Mielke, including bank account books, check books, legal business correspondence, and some personal correspondence between Frank, Lizzie, and young Clara. Other materials span Clara's life, from school and childhood items such as drawings and a handwritten essay, to personal correspondence from later years when she lived in Seattle, Washington with her husband. Of the papers portion of the collection, the correspondence is particularly strong, and is illustrative of life in Nome from its early days to the mid-century. A majority is from 1912-1914 when Frank traveled to Seattle, Washington for the winter to work on the family home and other houses they leased. These letters demonstrate the common pattern of many Nome residents leaving for the winter to conduct various business activities in cities such as Seattle and San Francisco, with Frank mentioning other Nome men who would be returning home with the first ship of spring. Other highlights include discussing the coming and going of vessels such as the *Corwin* and *Victoria*, the arrival of mail by the first ship, the advantages and limitations of air mail. Additional materials include clippings on society activities, council meetings, and other Nome news; publications on Alaska; ephemera such as handwritten and illustrated name tags, an unused wedding scrapbook; miscellaneous magazine stories.

The bulk of the collection is photographs, and is a mix of family photos and souvenir views of Nome and greater Alaska. Images include a sequence of travel snapshots interspersed with accompanying commercial and souvenir views, likely documenting a family trip around Alaska; studio portraits of Mielke, Larson, and Klopp family members, with a number from Minnesota photographers; large format commercial photos, souvenir printed color postcards, real photo postcards of Nome and other Alaskan towns, Alaska native peoples, events such as Fourth of July celebrations and sled dog races. Commercial photos are from significant photography studios such as the Lomen Brothers, H. G. Kaiser, Goetze, and Dobbs. A large number of the photos are views of Nome, but other locations include Teller, Ketchikan, King Island, Sitka, and Unalaska.

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged in the following series:

### Series 1: Personal & family papers

Correspondence, financial records, ephemera, publications and clippings, and childhood materials from the lives of Frank, Lizzie, and Clara Mielke. Letters are arranged by correspondents and chronologically within folders. Other materials are arranged by document type as described above.

## Series 2: Photographs

Photographs are arranged in three subseries:

Family photos and snapshots – Studio portraits have been arranged together, with identifiable subjects grouped together; followed by more candid and amateur views.

Commercial, souvenir, and historical views – These images have been loosely sorted by subject. Some of these photos may be shots by the Mielke family but have been categorized as historical views of Nome and environs.

Alaska travel – a grouping of mixed snapshots and souvenir images that appear to document a family trip around the state. These photographs have been kept together because of the evident narrative between both photo types and retained in the sequence in which they were received.

Some used photo postcards have been moved to the correspondence section of the collection due to the value of their written content.

## Collection Contents

### Series 1: Personal & family papers

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents</u>
		Correspondence
1	1	Frank Mielke to Lizzie Mielke (8 letters), 1912-1914
1	2	Lizzie Mielke to Frank Mielke (2 letters), 1913-1914
1	3	Frank Mielke to Clara Mielke (8 letters), 1913-1914
1	4	Frances MacDonald to Lizzie Mielke (1 letter), 1924 December 15
1	5	Misc. incoming to Frank & Lizzie Mielke (10 letters), ca. 1907-1912
1	6	Emily Polet Boucher to Clara Mielke (10 letters), 1938-1940
1	7	Misc. incoming to Clara Mielke (11 letters), ca. 1911-1928
1	8	Misc. outgoing from Clara Mielke (2 letters), 1912, 1914
1	9	Christmas greetings, undated
1	10	Misc. correspondence, 1908, undated
1	11	Financial papers, ca. late 1890s-1928 Scope and content: Bank account books, checks and check books, Assay Office memos for gold bullion, correspondence re Seattle properties.
1	12	Clara Mielke school and childhood papers, 1919, undated Scope and content: Pencil drawings and watercolors of flora and fauna, an English class paper on reindeer dated 1919 February 25.
1	13	Ephemera, ca. 1903-1943 Scope and content: Miscellaneous art and souvenir images, name cards, 1903 Hood's Sarsaparilla Calendar, Alaska Steamship Co. menus and other printed matter, Chinese gambling tickets.
1	14	Travel notes, 1928, undated
1	15	Recipes, 1937, undated
		Publications
1	16	"The Reasons Why Nome, Alaska is Entitled to a Harbor and Breakwater," ca. 1915
1	16	<i>Alaska, "Our Frontier Wonderland,"</i> Alaska Bureau, Seattle Chamber of Commerce and Commercial Club, 1920
1	17	Clippings, ca. 1903-1939
Map cabinet		Oversize ephemera and clippings, ca. 1916, 1970 Scope and content: Hand-painted and lettered ribbon commemorating group outing including Clara Mielke and the Polets; newspaper clippings on Alaska news; miscellaneous paper ephemera.

## Series 2: Photographs

Bx/Fldr Items No.

Contents

### Family photos and snapshots

Scope and content: Includes card-mounted and other studio portraits of the Mielke, Larson, and Klopp families; group and individual candid shots; family homes, farms, and gardens in Nome, Seattle, and Wisconsin; pet and working sled dogs; activities such as flower-picking, playing on the beach, meals at home and picnics on the tundra. Some of these personal photos nonetheless include photographers' stamps from studios such as the Lomen Brothers.

#### Portraits

2/1-4	1979.1.99-130	Mielke family, ca. 1900s-1910s
2/5	1979.1.131-144	Larson and Klopp families, ca. 1900s
2/6-7	1979.1.145-156	Large format unidentified, ca. 1900s-1920s
2/8	1979.1.157-191	Small format unidentified, ca. late 1900s-1940s
2/9	1979.1.192-197	Large format family photos, ca. 1900s-1910s
3	1979.1.198-354, 1979.1.762-764	Small format family photos, ca. 1900s-1940s

### Commercial, souvenir, and historic views

Scope and content: Includes images from notable Nome photographers such as the Lomen Bros., Dobbs, and H. G. Kaiser, with formats including real photo postcards, color printed postcards, large format prints. Images feature sled dog teams (primarily from the All Alaska Sweepstakes); Nome views including notable buildings, winter and street scenes, waterfront; group photos of school children, fraternal organizations such as the Eagles, and attendees at various events such as theater performances and movies, Fourth of July, and a welcome parade for Governor Hoggatt's 1906 visit; scenic views of other Alaska locations such as Ketchikan, Teller, Sitka.

#### Large format

2/10	1979.1.198-210	Sled dog teams, ca. 1908-1912
2/11	1979.1.211-224	Group and event photos, 1906-1917
2/12	1979.1.225-239	Misc. Nome views, ca. 1905-1910
3	1979.1.355-558	Small format

