

Jim Bridger Collection

This collection contains a variety of material associated with Jim Bridger or his family. Most of the items are reprints and photocopies of originals.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Missouri Valley Room staff
Title: Jim Bridger collection
Dates: 1801-1881
Size: 1 box, 16 folders
Location: SC42

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Additional physical form available: Photographs and some other items have been digitized.

Acquisition information: Gift, 1968, Mary Louise Lightle Davis, great granddaughter of Jim Bridger. Some items in collection donated by Adrienne Christopher, 1968.

Custodial history: Collection was initially classed as MV Q 92 B851 and kept in the book collection.

Citation note: Jim Bridger collection (SC42), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

Jim Bridger was an early 19th-century mountain man who was born in Virginia in 1804. While in his late teens he joined up with the Missouri River expedition of General William Ashley. This led to his life as a fur trapper and guide which he pursued until the end of the prosperous fur trade business in the 1840s.

Bridger later used his knowledge of the West to help guide wagon trains and immigrants on treks along the trails to the West. Fort Bridger in Wyoming was opened by Bridger and became a major stopping spot along the Oregon Trail.

Jim Bridger had Westport connections, owning property in the area. He died in 1881 at his farm located near the Watts Mill area of south Kansas City.

Scope and content note

This collection includes 24 photographs, primarily of Bridger relatives including Bridger's daughter, Virginia. There are also photographs taken in 1923 of Ezra Meeker and the ruins of Fort Bridger in Wyoming and portions of the remaining ruts of the Oregon Trail. The collection also includes Bridger genealogy charts, correspondence between relatives, newspaper clippings, pictures, and an affidavit.

The bulk of this collection is photocopies and photographic reprints. Where the originals are housed is not revealed with the collection.

Collection Inventory

- **Folder 1** – Miscellaneous items including donation record, listing of photograph negatives, barcodes, etc.
- **Folder 2** – Six photographs of Virginia Bridger Wachsmann taken from 1875-1930s and in various locations. Some are portraits.
- **Folder 3** – Will of Leopold Wachsmann in German (photocopy), four Wachsmann related photographs including a portrait of Albert Wachsmann, correspondence and envelopes (photocopies).
- **Folder 4** – Newspaper clipping concerning Virginia Bridger Hahn from Thermopolis, Hot Springs County, Wyoming, January 29, 1932 (Photocopy).
- **Folder 5** – Two photograph snapshots taken at Union Cemetery in 1968 with Louis Lightle Davis standing by Wachsmann marker. One view includes Adrienne Christopher also.
- **Folder 6** – Correspondence, 1961, between Clara Carroll Stinnett (Jim Bridger granddaughter) and Westport Historical Society. Includes a family group sheet for Alva Everett Stinnett and Clara Eunice Carroll. (4 photocopied letters)
- **Folder 7** - Correspondence, 1967, between Mrs. A.U. Cooksley and Jean Bowen via Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. Folder also contains other miscellaneous items.
- **Folder 8** – Newspaper clippings from department's mounted newspaper clipping collection (photocopies), *Kansas City Star Magazine* article on Bridger family, January 18, 1925 (photocopy), obituary for Virginia Bridger Hahn from *Kansas City Star*, March 8, 1933 (photocopy), undated clipping and magazine article from *Nebraska History*, Vol. 7, p.102-105 (photocopy), picture of Grenville Dodge and letter, 1904 (photocopy) and other miscellaneous items.
- **Folder 9** – Bridger genealogy chart, folded, perhaps done by Peggy Smith.
- **Folder 10** – Correspondence, 1931-1933, letters written by Virginia Wachsmann Hahn to granddaughter Dodie Mead and to Mrs. J. F. Regan. Also letter to Mrs. Mead from Mrs. Minnie Brown dated April 22, 1933, after death of Virginia Hahn, newspaper clipping of death notice of Virginia Hahn, March 7, 1933. (All photocopies)
- **Folder 11** – 8 photographs including views of Ft. Bridger, Ezra Meeker, wagon ruts, etc., taken in 1923. Also an affidavit concerning Jim Bridger land claims in Wyoming (typewritten).
- **Folder 12** – 2 photographs, Louise C. Wachsmann as a child.
- **Folder 13** – 2 photographs, Louise Lightle and Helen Lightle as children.
- **Folder 14** - Bridger family genealogy charts and notes made by Peggy Smith?
- **Folder 15** – 2 photographs, Edward Lightle and one of his parents, Perry and Mary Jane Lightle.

- **Folder 16** – Correspondence between Peggy Smith and Billie Duncan, 1961, includes genealogy information given by Billie Duncan.

Processed by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, May 1993.