Guide to the James Carson Needham Papers M0069

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Guide to the James Carson
Needham Papers M0069
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Department of Special Collections and University Archives
Title: James Carson Needham papers
Identifier/Call Number: M0069
Physical Description: 5 Linear Feet (11 boxes)
Date (inclusive): 1893-1936
Abstract: Correspondence, papers, speeches, and photographs relating to Needham's congressional career, his connections with the Newman Oil Company in the 1920's, and the Covered Wagon Babies Club (of which Needham was a founder).

Scope and Contents
The James Carson Needham papers cover a span of years from 1893 to 1936, the bulk of the material being between 1898 and 1908, in the 1920s and early 1930s. The subject matter contains very little of any personal nature.

The Congressional correspondence reflects his committee work and his interest in conservation, forestry and irrigation. There also seems to be quite a number of letters regarding California Indians and reservations. Campaign lists, election returns, political advice and requests for patronage are frequent. The correspondence also reveals the groups that opposed him, particularly the Catholics, the "Whiskey vote" and the veterans.

There are some papers relating to his law practice and judgeship, but these are very sparse. The Newman Oil Company seems to figure quite prominently, and legal papers as well as business correspondence are contained in this material.

The Covered Wagon Babies and their Club are probably the second most important group in the Needham papers. There are clippings and photographs as well as correspondence, and the letters describe experiences and quote from diaries. Needham is probably best known as a founder of this organization.

General note
Many of the folders contain handwritten lists of correspondents and descriptive notes on the contents of the letters. Folders have been numbered consecutively regardless of box number.

Biographical / Historical
James Carson Needham was born on September 17, 1864, in an emigrant wagon along the Carson River in Nevada. His parents were on their way to California. He spent his early life on a farm and in Santa Clara where he attended the public schools. In 1886, Needham graduated from the University of the Pacific, and in 1889, from the Law Department of the University of Michigan. He took a year away from law school, from September 1887 to September 1888, to work as a clerk in the Adjutant General's office of the War Department in Washington, D. C.

Needham was admitted to the bar in 1889 and practiced in Modesto, California. The following year he was an unsuccessful candidate for the California Senate. In 1894, he married Dora Dietta Parsons. In 1899, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and remained in that body until he was defeated for re-election in 1913. His Congressional career was not particularly outstanding; he was one of a majority whose names were known to colleagues and local constituents, but not nationally. Needham served on the Public Lands Committee and, in his campaign, was given credit for securing National Irrigation legislation. He also served on the Committee for Insular Possessions. One correspondent writes that Needham obtained the new Federal Building for Fresno "almost as easily as the people buy postage stamps in the building after it is finished."

After being defeated for the Congress in 1913, he resumed the practice of law in San Diego until 1916. In 1919 he was appointed judge of the Superior Court in Modesto and held this position until 1935. From 1922-1928, he also served as president of the Newman Oil Company.

For the Diamond Jubilee of September 9, 1925, Judge Needham and Justice Elijah Carson Hart organized a search for Californians who had been born in covered wagons. (Hart was born in a covered wagon somewhere along the Carson River in Nevada just two days after Needham). They found 75 names (not all Californians) and formed the Covered Wagon Babies Club which met each year in a different California town on September 9. Needham died in Modesto in 1942.

Preferred Citation

Provenance:
Gift of Mrs. J. C. Needham

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Subjects and Indexing Terms
Needham, James Carson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box, Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| box 1, folder 1-4 | Correspondence - Out 1893 Sept. 29-1900 Feb. 17  
Physical Description: 4 bound volumes |
| box 2, folder 5-8 | Correspondence - Out 1900 Feb. 16-1901 Jan. 25  
Physical Description: 4 bound volumes |
| box 3, folder 9-12 | Correspondence - Out 1901 Jan. 25-1902 Feb. 1  
Physical Description: 4 bound volumes |
| box 4, folder 13-16 | Correspondence - Out 1902 Feb. 3-1904 Jan. 12  
Physical Description: 4 bound volumes |
| box 5, folder 17-20 | Correspondence - Out 1904 Jan. 12-1905 Jan. 5  
Physical Description: 4 bound volumes |
| box 6, folder 21-24 | Correspondence - Out 1905 Jan. 5-1908 Dec. 22  
Physical Description: 4 bound volumes |
| box 7, folder 25 | Correspondence - Out 1893 Aug. 28-1928 Apr. 12  
Correspondence - In, A - Mil  
Correspondence - In, Mit - Z  
Correspondence - In, Unidentified  
Correspondence - General (not to Needham), A - W  
Congressional business - reports and speeches  
Newman Oil Company - correspondence and general business, legal, financial  
Patronage - petitions and appointments  
Election returns and political lists  
Invitations  
Legal papers  
Miscellaneous  
Minutes, speeches, notes  
Financial  
Clippings  
Printed matter - Congressional business, political  
Covered Wagon Babies - correspondence - in, A-Z  
Covered Wagon Babies - correspondence - out 1925-1931  
Covered Wagon Babies - correspondence - general, A - Z  
Covered Wagon Babies - photographs and clippings  
Covered Wagon Babies Club, 1925-1936 |
box 10, folder 85
Clipping scrapbook 1898 Nov. 30 -1900 Oct. 6
Clipping scrapbook 1898 Aug. 15 -1898 Nov. 4
Clipping scrapbook 1899 Nov. 22 -1900 Feb. 1
Clipping scrapbook 1900 Oct. 4 -1902 Aug. 2

box unboxed, folder 86

box unboxed, folder 87

box unboxed, folder 88