



University Libraries Special Collections & University Archives

Alonzo Thomas Collection

Collection Summary

Title:	Alonzo Thomas Collection
Call Number:	MS 2006-12
Size:	3.0 linear feet (3 boxes)
Acquisition:	Purchased from Dennis Coffey, 11-2008
Processed by:	JZ, 4-2016
Restrictions:	None

Literary Rights

Literary rights were not granted to Wichita State University. When permission is granted to examine manuscripts, it is not an authorization to publish them. Manuscripts cannot be used for publication without regard for common law literary rights, copyright laws and the laws of libel. It is the responsibility of the researcher and his/her publisher to obtain permission to publish. Scholars and students who eventually plan to have their work published are urged to make inquiry regarding overall restrictions on publication before initial research.

Content Note

The Alonzo Thomas collection consists of images, press clippings, scrapbooks, correspondence, and ephemera which document the personal life and professional career of Alonzo Thomas, a Topeka-based watch manufacturer and jeweler.

Biography

Alonzo Thomas was born on January 28, 1877, in Topeka, Kansas, to Chester and Mary Elizabeth Thomas. He studied horology – or watchmaking – at what would become the Bradley Polytechnic Institute in Peoria, Illinois, before opening his first store in Topeka near the Santa Fe railroad depot. In 1902 Thomas married British-born Annie B. Porter, who eventually became secretary-treasurer of his business, the Santa Fe Watch Company. Since railroad employees needed highly accurate timepieces on the job, Thomas's Santa Fe Special watch became popular within the profession, as well as with military service members. During the 1910s and 1920s the company dealt in watches and jewelry and was innovative in conducting mail-order business and allowing for payment through the installment plan. In 1942 the couple sold the business and retired, traveling and devoting themselves

to philanthropy within the Topeka region. Alonzo Thomas died on January 1, 1969; Annie survived him until 1973.

Series Listing

Series 1	Box 1 FF 1	Correspondence. This series consists of letters written to and by Alonzo Thomas, 1916 and 1955.
Series 2	Box 1 FF 2-5, Box 2	Images. This series houses images of Thomas's family and pictures related to the Santa Fe Watch Company. Also present are dozens of pictures depicting the Mexican Revolution, c. 1870-1942.
Series 3	Box 1 FF 6-9, Box 3	Scrapbooks and Artifacts. This series contains one large scrapbook of photographs, news clippings, and handmade holiday cards by Thomas's employees, all of which provide a history of the Santa Fe Watch Company. Also included are two smaller scrapbooks, as well as the guest book for Alonzo and Annie's wedding and some loose press clippings, 1891-1971.

Box and Folder Listing

Series 1 – Correspondence

Box 1	FF 1	A letter dated April 20, 1916, from American soldier George Webb to Thomas; the body of the letter concerns photos of the Mexican Revolution sent by the former to the latter. A letter dated February 19, 1951, from Bill Hyden to Thomas requesting information on the Cherokee Strip Land Run of 1893, at which the latter was present. A typed response, dated February 26, 1951, from Thomas to Hyden on his memories of the event.
-------	------	--

Series 2 – Images

Box 1	FF 2	Thomas family photographs, c. 1870-1942
Box 1	FF 3	Employees of the Santa Fe Watch Company, c. 1920s. Display windows of the Santa Fe Watch Company, c. 1920s-1930s. Downtown Topeka street scenes, c. 1920s-1930s.
Box 1	FF 4	Eight photos of Mexican Revolution-era scenes and military leaders, including Pancho Villa (all have typed or written captions), c. 1916-1917

