

William Billeter fonds

Fonds No. PF6

Physical Description: 9 cm of textual records, 4 negatives

Date Range: [1915-1985]

Administrative History/Biographical Sketch

William 'Bill' Billeter was born in Portland, Oregon, on March 16, 1895, leaving home in 1910 at the age of 15. During the depression before the First World War, William worked on a salmon-fishing boat in the Bering Sea. Billeter met his wife Flo in Butte, Montana, where he worked in a copper mine. Shortly after, they decided to travel to Canada in search of cheap land. In Stettler, Alberta, they met Frank Gilbert and his family, who were considering settling in the Bulkley Valley. Thus, in the spring of 1920, the Billeter family travelled to the Bulkley Valley, buying land in the Driftwood area. The couple cleared farmland and constructed a log cabin, barn, and hayshed on their new homestead.

Billeter worked as a dairy farmer, in trying conditions, shipping milk to Prince Rupert by rail. After four years of little income, the Billeter family moved down to San Diego where Bill found work as a steamfitter, but kept their ownership over the farm. They nearly sold it at one point, but the potential buyer backed out, and the couple returned to Bulkley Valley after three years to continue dairy farming. Bill logged and hauled ties for additional income. In the winters he cut ice from nearby 'Billeter Lake' to keep the milk cool in transit. Beginning in 1928, he worked under his company 'Alpine Dairies,' which lasted for over 20 years. During most of his years in the dairy industry, he acted as a secretary-treasurer and buyer for his fellow milk shippers and farmers.

Billeter left the dairy business in 1951 to raise beef, having sold his company to the Schibli family. During this time, he acted as secretary for the Smithers Farmer's Institute. In 1953, Billeter and his wife sold the farm to Joe Schwegler and moved in to Smithers. There, Billeter maintained the federal post office and police station building until he turned 70 years old.

Billeter built two homes while living in the Bulkley Valley: one on Second Avenue and a log cabin on the hillside overlooking the Valley and farm. In the community, Billeter played an important role in building Pioneer Place and Glenwood Community Hall and helping to found the Bulkley Valley Credit Union. In the 1980s he appeared in TV's *Skeena Journal* as one of the first dairy farmers in the Valley. Flo was a life member of the Women's Institute and served as its official hospital visitor for many years.

Flo Billeter passed away on November 1974 at the age of 82. William Billeter died on December 5, 1984, aged 89.

Custodial History

Records were donated by William Billeter in 1984 to the Archives. Records from accession no. **1990.93** are donate from an unknown source, while records from **1990.9** were donated by Pat McCammon on July 7, 1992. Item from **2000.40** was donated by an unknown person.

Scope and Content

The fonds reflects the activities of William Billeter during his lifetime and is arranged into five series:

1. Secretary, Smithers Farmer's Institute
2. Dairy Farmer
3. Postmaster
4. Correspondence
5. Finances.

Records include correspondence, invoices, cheques, newspaper clippings, dental x-rays, technical drawings and a photocopy of Joe L'Orsa's memorial tribute to Billeter.

Notes

November 2016: Interior News, Vol. 31 No. 31, August 3, 1938 (1984.6), has been transferred to the Bulkley Valley Museum Education Collection.

Arrangement

Records are artificially arranged since original order no longer exists. Records were rearranged physically and intellectually by Manda Haligowski in October 2016 reflect to better reflect archival standards and to improve accessibility.

Secretary, Smithers Farmer's Institute

Series no.: **S1**

Part of: William Billeter fonds

Related accessions: 1984.6

Physical description: 2.5 cm of textual records.

Date range: 1952-1953

Scope and content

Series depicts records created by Billeter while acting as Secretary for the Smithers Farmer's Institute. Records solely consist of correspondence.

Dairy Farmer

Series no.: **S2**

Part of: William Billeter fonds

Related accessions: 1984.6

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records.

Date range: [1929-1948]

Scope and content

Series consists of records collected by Billeter during his time as a dairy farmer. Records include correspondence and invoices.

Postmaster

Series no.: **S3**

Part of: William Billeter fonds

Related accessions: 1984.6

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records.

Date range: 1965-1968; 1977

Scope and content

Series contains records collected by Billeter while maintaining the Federal Post Office. Records solely consist of correspondence.

Correspondence

Series no.: **S4**

Part of: William Billeter fonds

Related accessions: 1984.6; 1990.9

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records.

Date range: 1933; 1939; 1955; 1981; 1984

Scope and content

Series consists of personal correspondence written by and to William Billeter.

Finances

Series no.: **S5**

Part of: William Billeter fonds

Related accessions: 1984.6; 1990.93

Physical description: 2.5 cm of textual records.

Date range: [1938-1977]

Scope and content

Series contains financial records collected by William Billeter. Records include invoices, receipts, and various accounts.