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#53 Fowler Family, Collection, 1829-2009
1548 images

INTRODUCTION

A collection of digital images of personal correspondence, photographs, documents and collected materials pertaining to members of the Fowler family of Arcadia, Kansas, and related families. The collection contains primarily family genealogy, family history, and photographs. Also included are World War II letters, newspaper clippings, and other materials about local history in southeast Kansas.

DONOR INFORMATION

The digital images in the Fowler Family Collection were donated to Pittsburg State University in May 2010 by Mary Ceselski, great granddaughter of Robert and Minerva Bilyeau Fowler.

FAMILY HISTORY

The bulk of the information in this collection concerns the Fowler family and closely related families in southeast Kansas. The collection begins with Robert Fowler, born December 24, 1829, in Lincolnshire, England, to Thomas and Millicent Bowis Fowler. Robert's family came to the United States in 1835 and settled in Loami Township, Sangamon County, New York. Robert had eight brothers and sisters. He married Minerva Bilyeau who was born February 9, 1828, and died March 17, 1903. Robert died several weeks later on April 28, 1903, in Crawford County, Kansas. Robert and Minerva had traveled from Texas to Kansas in a covered wagon in 1857. They settled on a homestead near Drywood Creek in what would later become Crawford County. Robert established a trading business and later served during the Civil War. Robert and Minerva had 12 children. Eleven survived to adulthood, including Elizabeth, Lois, George, Tom, Pete, Millie, Jennie, Fannie, Robert, Victoria and William.

Much of this collection concerns the descendants of Robert Fowler's son, George. Several of the Fowlers in this line worked in the banking business, including James Thomas "J. T." Fowler, the son of George Fowler, who helped found the Home State Bank in Arcadia, Kansas, in 1908. James Thomas Fowler began his banking career as cashier and managing officer. He later helped organize the First State Bank of Arma, Kansas, and served as chairman of the board of directors for both these banks, as well as the Citizens Bank of Weir, Kansas. James Thomas Fowler had 14 children. One of his sons, R. W. "Bill" Fowler, managed the Citizens Bank in Weir, Kansas. His brother, John N. Fowler, was assistant cashier in the Home State Bank in Arcadia.

John Wesley Fowler, a son of John N. and Henrietta Fowler, died October 25, 1944, when his plane crashed shortly after takeoff in China. He was a member of the 20th Army Air Force, 20th Bomber Command, 58th Wing, 468th Bombardment Group, 792nd Bomb Squadron, serving overseas in the China-Burma Theater. He was a right waist gunner flying on the B-29 Superfortress, "Gunga Din." Prior to entering the Army Air Force, John Wesley Fowler worked for Boeing-Wichita as an aircraft mechanic from June 1941 to August 1942.

R. L. "Bob" Fowler, the youngest son of John N. and Henrietta Fowler, was also a veteran of World War II. He was a member of the 1306 Army Air Force Base Unit, Air Transport Command, India-China Division, and maintained P-38s and other aircraft. He served overseas in Malair, Karachi, India (now Pakistan) from August to December 1943. To let his parents know

where he was overseas, in his July 1, 1943, letter written prior to going overseas, Bob told them he would let them know where he was by using the last letter of every sentence he would write in his first V-mail letter to them. In his first V-mail letter, written on August 18, 1943, he spelled out the name "Karachi." His squadron later moved to another base in Northern Burma (Myitkyina, close to the Irrawaddy River) in December 1943. The unit stayed in Northern Burma until returning to Malair, Karachi in September 1945. In a letter dated October 30, 1945, he told his parents he was being shipped home on the Cullen the end of October 1945 and would arrive in New York in late November.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Fowler Family Collection contains family correspondence consisting mostly of letters written by John Wesley Fowler and Bob Fowler to their family during World War II. Also included are family photographs, genealogy records and documents, newspaper clippings, and military records. The collection's images were placed into the following series and subseries: **Correspondence, General; Correspondence, John Wesley Fowler; Correspondence, Bob Fowler; Documents; Genealogy, Fowler Family; Genealogy, "First 100 Years"; Photographs; Military, John Wesley Fowler; Military, Trainee's Handbook; Newspaper Clippings.**

The **Correspondence Series** consists of three parts; general family correspondence; letters written by John Wesley Fowler to his family from October 13, 1942 to October 19, 1944; and letters written by Bob Fowler to his family from January 1, 1942 to November 30, 1952.

The **Documents Series** includes memorial records, mortgage papers, birth certificates, legal documents, school awards, various registration certificates, death certificates, and information on various cemeteries and burials in Crawford County, Kansas.

The **Genealogy Series** consists of two parts; Fowler family genealogical records and selected pages from "The First 100 Years," a book of ancestry research on the Fowler and Bowis families. The Fowler family records include handwritten and typewritten information about various members of the Fowler family dating back to the early 1800s.

The **Photograph Series** includes black and white and color photographs, and a few color slides. The images range from the late 1800s to present day. They include various family members, beginning with Robert and Minerva Bilyeu Fowler and their children.

The **Military Series** consists of two parts: the John Wesley Fowler records and a "Trainee's Handbook." The first part is comprised of images of John Wesley Fowler's 20th Army Air Force patches, medals, and Citation of Honor as well as correspondence and telegrams from military officers and government officials relating to his death. This includes letters from Senator Arthur Capper, the Veterans Administration and the War Department. Also included are Individual Flight Records, military training certificates and printed materials including Disposition of World War II Armed Forces Dead, and American Cemeteries. A Trainee's Handbook C.M.T.C. (Citizens Military Training Camp), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1939, comprises the second part of the military series.

The **Clippings Series** consists mostly of undated newspaper clippings focusing on members of the Fowler family dating from the early 1900s through 2009. There are also several newspaper clippings about the history of Arcadia, Kansas, and a transcription of the September 20, 1918, edition of The Arcadia Journal telling about the robbers who were killed while trying to rob the

Home State Bank where James T. Fowler and John N. Fowler were cashiers. Other newspapers represented in this series include The (Pittsburg) Morning Sun, The Kansas City Star, The Fort Scott Daily Tribune, The Kansas City Times, and The Platte County (Missouri) Gazette.

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