

# Guide to the Abraham Lincoln Fellows Papers

WA MSS S-1296



by Diane J. Ducharme

November 1986

P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

---

## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	3
Requesting Instructions .....	3
Administrative Information .....	3
Immediate Source of Acquisition .....	3
Conditions Governing Access .....	3
Conditions Governing Use .....	4
Preferred Citation .....	4
ABRAHAM LINCOLN FELLOWS (1864-1942) .....	4
Scope and Contents .....	4
Collection Contents .....	6
Selected Search Terms .....	7

---

## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
(203) 432-2977  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

**CALL NUMBER:** WA MSS S-1296

**CREATOR:** Fellows, Abraham Lincoln, 1864-1942

**TITLE:** Abraham Lincoln Fellows papers

**DATES:** 1873-1974

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 5.25 linear feet (8 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The papers contain correspondence, family papers, photographs, and subject files documenting the personal life and professional career of civil engineer Abraham Lincoln Fellows. Material related to William Torrence includes two albums labeled "Torrence's Views", holding pictures of the Gunnison River and presumably taken during the 1901 expedition.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.fellows>

---

## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.fellows>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to [beinecke.images@yale.edu](mailto:beinecke.images@yale.edu).

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

---

## Administrative Information

---

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

The Abraham Lincoln Fellows Papers are the gift of Fellows's, daughter Dorothy Fellows Haines.

---

### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 8: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

---

## Conditions Governing Use

The Abraham Lincoln Fellows Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

---

## Preferred Citation

Abraham Lincoln Fellows Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

---

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN FELLOWS (1864-1942)

Abraham Lincoln Fellows was born in 1864 in Kennebunk, Maine, the son of the Reverend Franklin Ebenezer Fellows. He attended the Norwich Free Academy and then Yale University, from which he received his B.A. in 1886. After one year as a teacher of mathematics and German in Newburgh, New York, he joined the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company in Colorado, becoming first chief engineer and then manager. In 1897 he was appointed deputy state engineer for Colorado.

From 1898 to 1902 he was resident hydrographer for the U.S. Geological Survey, and it was during this time that he explored the canyon of the Gunnison River and mapped the route for the Gunnison Tunnel, which connected the river with the Uncompahgre Valley. In 1902, he was appointed engineer for the U.S. Reclamation Service.

In 1905, he left Colorado to become state engineer for North Dakota, but he returned to Denver permanently two years later, as secretary and general manager of the Fields, Fellows, and Hutchinson Engineering Company. He served on the Public Utilities Commission of Denver from 1910 until 1916. He returned to public employment in 1918 as senior irrigation engineer for the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, a position he held until his retirement in 1935.

Fellows married Blanche Irene McCoy in December, 1905. The couple had three children: Ella Jane Fellows Settles, John Lincoln Fellows, and Dorothy Fellows Haines. Abraham Lincoln Fellows died in Denver on December 23, 1942.

---

## Scope and Contents

The Abraham Lincoln Fellows Papers contain correspondence, family papers, subject files, and photographs documenting aspects of the life and career of Abraham Lincoln Fellows. The papers span the dates 1873-1974, but the bulk of the material dates from between 1900 and 1910.

The family correspondence fills nine folders and consists almost entirely of round robin letters addressed to Fellows's sisters by him and his wife, Blanche McCoy Fellows. Many of these are lengthy and illustrated with family photographs. They contain few references to the Gunnison Tunnel project, but there is much information on other aspects of Fellows's career. The 1905-1907 letters, for instance, detail his journeys in rural North Dakota, where he was State Engineer, while later letters outline the politics and policies of the Denver Public Utilities Commission. Fellows traveled extensively throughout his career, and his letters contain many observations on social and cultural life, particularly in North Dakota and Colorado. He commented, for example, on the reluctance of farmers to rely on irrigation; the prevalence of drinking in North Dakota, a supposedly "dry" state; the popularity of church social activities; and the unreliability of traveling lecturers. The letters also provide family and personal news. A March 1906 letter describes Fellows's wedding to Blanche McCoy and gives the history of their courtship, which began when he boarded at her parents' hotel in Colorado. Blanche's own letters include details of domestic life, comments

on their three children, and descriptions of outings with various women's clubs. Both mentioned their participation in church-sponsored work and social gatherings, and A. L. Fellows discussed his "Roosevelt Republican" political views.

Family papers are located in folders 10-20 and include biographical sketches of Fellows, newspaper clippings, a work log kept by Fellows in 1918, and a typescript of his poetry. Folders 14-15 hold "Blanche's Story," by Dorothy Fellows Haines, which provides much background information on the McCoy and Fellows families. There are also two folders of family photographs and three photograph albums, including one of irrigation project sites toured by Fellows between 1907 and 1914.

Folders 21-33 contain Fellows's Gunnison Tunnel files, consisting of correspondence, manuscripts, printed material, and photograph albums. There is one folder of correspondence, all of which dates from the 1920s and 1930s. The letters discuss Fellows's exploration of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River and comment on the inaccuracy of many reports of this journey. Manuscripts include a 1904 lecture by Fellows, "The Gunnison Tunnel;" notes marked "Torrence's lecture;" and "The Black Canyon of the Gunnison," by Dorothy Fellows Haines. Among the newspaper clippings are stored contemporary accounts of the building of the tunnel and an obituary of William Torrence, Fellows's 1901 surveying partner. Printed material includes an illustrated 1917 magazine article, "The Incredible Journey: How They Took the River through Solid Rock."

Perhaps the most significant sources of information on the Gunnison Project are the six photograph albums located in Boxes 3-5. These contain hundreds of views of the Gunnison River, the Black Canyon, the Vernal Mesa, and the Uncompahgre Valley, as well as many pictures of the actual construction work on the Gunnison Tunnel and Canal. Most of these photographs were taken between 1900 and 1915, and many of them have detailed captions. The two albums labeled "Torrence's Views" hold additional pictures of the Gunnison, presumably taken by William Torrence in 1901.

Boxes 6 and 7 contain glass lantern slides, many hand-colored and labeled, of views of Colorado and of the Gunnison.

## Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1-9	Family correspondence	1903-1939
	Family papers	
b. 1, f. 10	Biographical sketches	1917, n.d.
b. 1, f. 11	Newspaper clippings	1907-45, n.d.
b. 1, f. 12	Notebook	1918
b. 1, f. 13	Poetry by Abraham Lincoln Fellows	n.d.
b. 1, f. 14-15	Reminiscences: "Blanche's Story", by Dorothy Fellows Haines	n.d.
b. 1, f. 16	Family photographs	1873-90, n.d.
b. 2, f. 17	Family photographs	n.d.
b. 2, f. 18	Photograph album: views of Colorado	[1880-90?]
b. 2, f. 19	Photograph album: views of the West	[ca. 1895?]
b. 2, f. 20	Photograph album: engineering sites	1907-14, n.d.
	Gunnison Tunnel Files	
b. 2, f. 21	Correspondence	1925-39
b. 3, f. 22-23	Lectures and articles	1904, 1926, n.d.
b. 3, f. 24	Newspaper clippings	1906-74, n.d.
b. 3, f. 25-26	Printed material	1909-34, n.d.
b. 3, f. 27	Photograph album: Gunnison expedition	1900-1901
b. 3, f. 28	<a href="#">Photograph album: Gunnison Tunnel</a>	1901-1904, n.d.
b. 4, f. 29-30	Photograph album: "Torrence's views"	1901
b. 5, f. 31	Photograph album: "Gunnison transit points"	1912, n.d.
b. 5, f. 32	Photograph album: "Gunnison engineering sites"	1901-1903
b. 5, f. 33	Photograph album: unidentified	n.d.
b. 6	Glass lantern slides	1899-1901, n.d.
b. 7	Glass lantern slides	n.d.
b. 8	Restricted fragile papers The materials are open for research. Box 8: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.	

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Civil engineering -- Colorado  
Civil engineering -- North Dakota  
Families  
Irrigation -- Colorado  
Irrigation engineering -- Colorado

### **Geographic Names**

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park  
(Colo.)  
Colorado -- Social life and customs  
Denver (Colo.)  
Gunnison River (Colo.)  
Gunnison Tunnel (Colo.)  
North Dakota -- Social life and customs

### **Genres / Formats**

Lantern slides -- United States  
Memoirs -- United States  
Photoprints -- United States

### **Occupations**

Civil engineers -- Colorado  
Civil engineers -- North Dakota

### **Names**

Fellows, Abraham Lincoln, 1864-1942  
Fellows, Blanche Irene McCoy, 1881-1968  
Haines, Dorothy Fellows, 1915-  
Torrence, William W., 1873-

### **Families**

Fellows family

### **Corporate Body**

Public Utilities Commission of City and County  
of Denver