

GRACE DELONG EINSEL COLLECTION, 1923

Collection #
SC 2513

Table of Contents

[User information](#)
[Biographical sketches](#)
[Scope and Content note](#)
[Cataloguing information](#)

Processed by
Charles Latham
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USER INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 2 items

COLLECTION DATE: 1923

PROVENANCE: Grace DeLong Einsel, West Hartford, CT, 29 November 1995

RESTRICTIONS: None

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS: Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the Indiana Historical Society

ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

OTHER FINDING AIDS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: M 462, William Fortune; SC 2254, William Fortune Project Interview Transcripts; SC 2303 William Fortune Project; M 221, Meredith Nicholson Papers; M 666, Meredith Nicholson Collection

ACCESSION NUMBER: 96.0134

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

William Fortune (1863-1942) was born in Boonville, Indiana, the son of William Harrison and Mary (St. Clair)

Fortune. After rudimentary schooling, he became an apprentice on the *Boonville Standard* at the age of thirteen. In 1881 he published a history of Warrick County, and later the same year did research on the Indiana period (1816-1830) of Abraham Lincoln's life.

In 1882 Fortune moved to Indianapolis. He took a job at the *Indianapolis Journal*, and soon became city editor. Resigning because of ill health in 1888, he served as correspondent for several eastern newspapers during Benjamin Harrison's Presidential campaign, and briefly edited a weekly paper, the *Sunday Press*. He then worked for two years at the *Indianapolis News*. In 1884 Fortune married May Knubbe. They had three children, and brought them up in a house they built in Woodruff Place.

In the early 1890s Fortune became involved with civic improvement. In 1890, working with Colonel Eli Lilly, he helped found the Commercial Club, which in the next few years worked to pave the city's streets, to get the city's first big convention (the Encampment of the GAR), to get railroad tracks elevated, and to provide relief during a depression in 1894-1895.

Fortune was an early advocate of automobiles, heading an early automobile club and working for good roads. In 1904 he took a lead in hosting a visit to Indianapolis by Prince Pu Lun of China. For twenty years he operated a trade magazine for the paving industry, *Municipal Engineering*. From 1908 to 1924 he was president of a group of independent telephone companies.

Invited to buy some stock in Eli Lilly and Company in 1916, Fortune served as a director of the company for eleven years and as chairman of the finance committee for five years. Through most of his life he was a close friend of J. K. Lilly, and he went on a world cruise with him in 1923.

In 1916 Fortune organized the local chapter of the American Red Cross. He raised large amounts of money, coordinated hundreds of volunteers, and organized the local War Chest. He continued to head the Red Cross chapter until his death. In the 1920s he was active in the national Red Cross and in the national Chamber of Commerce.

After his wife's death in 1898, and the marriage of his children in the early 1900s, Fortune was essentially a public man. He enjoyed the limelight, and used his prominence to promote his chosen causes.

Meredith Nicholson (1866-1947) was born in Crawfordsville, the son of Edward Willis and Emily (Meredith) Nicholson. An author, diplomat, and lecturer, he was a self-educated man of letters. With Booth Tarkington, George Ade, and James Whitcomb Riley, he was a leader in creating, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, a Golden Age of literature in Indiana. He began his career with newspaper work, first at the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, and then for twelve years at the *Indianapolis News* (1885-1897). His first publication was a book of poems, *Short Flights*, in 1891, and his last a book of essays, *Old Familiar Faces*, in 1929. In the years between he wrote a number of novels of which the best known was *The House of a Thousand Candles* (1905).

Nicholson participated with some enthusiasm in local Democratic party politics. Late in life he was rewarded with diplomatic posts in Latin America-- Paraguay (1933-1934), Venezuela (1935-1938), and Nicaragua (1938-1941).

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection contains two items, both dated 1923: a carbon copy of a typescript article by Meredith Nicholson entitled "Woodruff Place Days;" and a photograph of a group of travelers in front of the Sphinx in Egypt, including William Fortune and J. K. Lilly.

The article is accompanied by a pencilled note, "Unpublished; just for you." In Nicholson's typical graceful style, it describes the author's associations with Fortune in their early days in Indianapolis, beginning in the 1880s. These associations included newspaper work and, especially in the days before Nicholson's first marriage in 1896, social life in Woodruff Place. There are two pages about Mrs. Fortune's beauty and other admirable qualities, and the paper ends

with praise of Fortune's sense of duty and honor. In the absence of much personal correspondence from this period, this short article provides some valuable facts and insights.

The photograph at the Sphinx was taken during the world cruise which Fortune took with J. K. Lilly during the early months of 1923. Also in the photograph is Howard DeLong, father of the donor. Another copy of the photograph appears in an album in M 462.

CATALOGUING INFORMATION

MAIN ENTRY: Einsel, Grace DeLong

SUBJECT ENTRIES: Fortune, William, 1863-1942

Journalists--Indiana--Indianapolis

Woodruff Place (Indianapolis, Ind.)

Indianapolis (Ind.)--Social life and customs

ADDED ENTRIES: Nicholson, Meredith, 1866-1947

END