

Title: Wells/Norris Family Papers

Call Number: Mss-0782

Inclusive Dates: 1798 – 1966

Bulk: 24.0 cu. ft.

Location: WHS B105-B108 (17.0 cu. ft., Box Ten Missing) (10/18/18)
GV, Sh. 055-056 (7.0 cu. ft.)
OS SM “W” (4 items)

Historical Note: Daniel Wells, Jr. was one of Milwaukee’s most prominent early settlers. He was born in West Waterville, Maine, in July 1808. He taught school in the east for several years and also engaged in various mercantile pursuits. In 1836, he settled in Milwaukee and began building a vast fortune speculating in land, grain, and lumber. He was also politically active. A Democrat, Wells held several local offices, was a member of the upper house of the territorial legislature, and served in the U.S. Congress from 1852 to 1856. After his congressional term expired, Wells devoted the rest of his life to expanding his varied business interests. In addition to his lumber, grain, and land ventures, Wells was heavily involved with railroads, banking, and other financial institutions. At the time of his death in March 1902, Wells was reportedly the wealthiest man in Wisconsin.

Scope and Content: The collection consists of correspondence (primarily letters received by Wells), ledgers, receipts, reports, deeds, and other records that help detail Wells’ extensive business interests and political activities. In addition, there is material pertaining to several of Wells’ relatives and some members of his immediate family, such as his daughter Fannie Wells Norris, his brothers Charles and John, his son-in-law Charles W. Norris, and his grandson Niel Norris.

Administrative Note: The collection was reprocessed on August 9, 2004 by Kevin Abing.

SEE ALSO: PHOTOS: MV, SH70

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