

---

**ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

949 East Second Street  
Tucson, AZ 85719

Library and Archives  
(520) 617-1157

[ahsref@azhs.gov](mailto:ahsref@azhs.gov)

---

**MS 0079**  
**Nelson Charles Bledsoe**  
**1929-1934**

## **DESCRIPTION**

This collection relates to Dr. Nelson Charles Bledsoe, who was a pioneer doctor in Bisbee, Arizona and later moved to Tucson, where he continued to practice medicine and served as president of the Arizona Pioneers Historical Society. The bulk of this collection consists of his personal papers. Among them are his recollections of the Bisbee deportation and a play written about the trial called "Old Man Necessity." Other significant items in the collection are a number of Masonic records. Dr. Bledsoe attained the highest position a member can hold in Arizona, Second Grand Equerry of the Supreme Council and Sovereign Grand Inspector General in Arizona, and achieved the 33<sup>rd</sup> degree.

6 Boxes, 4 linear ft.

## **ACQUISITION**

Donated by Dr. Nelson Bledsoe, date unknown.

## **ACCESS**

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

## **COPYRIGHT**

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Archives Department.

## **PROCESSING**

The collection was processed by JoAnne Damos in August 1989 and updated by Nancy Siner in March 2009.

## **ARRANGEMENT**

The collection is arranged in three series. Series one consists of the personal and professional papers of Nelson Bledsoe from 1880-1973. Additional financial records and legal documents from 1904-1955 are also present. Series two consists of Masonic records including correspondence, literary productions, lists, and printed materials from 1936-1961. Series three contains materials collected by N.C. Bledsoe including items about Robert W. Van Riper, Anna McDuel, and other persons.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dr. Nelson Charles Bledsoe was born in Ventura, California on September 1, 1876. His father, Nelson Charles Bledsoe, Sr., was a lawyer. His mother was Ann Jeanette (Nettie) McCreery. The family moved to Los Angeles when he was 13 where he attended public schools and graduated from California State Normal School along with his future wife, Harriet B. Gage, in 1896. He taught in public schools, one year at San Bernardino and three years in Los Angeles. Bledsoe matriculated at the University of Southern California Medical School. He taught at night school to finance his medical education and also became an assistant to the police surgeon at the City of Los Angeles.

After receiving his degree in 1903, he interned at Los Angeles County Hospital. In 1904, Dr. Bledsoe moved to Bisbee, Arizona, to work as the Calumet Mining Company doctor. On August 9, 1906, Bledsoe married Harriet Gage. Dr. Bledsoe worked 16 hour days, becoming chief surgeon in 1910. The mining company built the Calumet Hospital on the crest of a little hill overlooking the town of Warren, and Dr. Bledsoe oversaw the equipping of the new hospital. When Phelps-Dodge acquired Calumet Mining, the hospital was sold and turned into apartments.

During World War I, Dr. Bledsoe was an active and influential member of the community. He was active in the Masons, the Elks, and scouting. Bledsoe became the first president when of the Bisbee Boy Scout council when it was organized in 1922. He acquired his ranch in Ramsey Canyon after camping there with the Scouts, which he later gave to the Nature Conservancy.

When the mining companies merged in 1931, Dr. and Mrs. Bledsoe moved to Tucson where he opened a new office. Dr. Bledsoe had a very active practice in Tucson. He became more involved in the Mason Society, and eventually achieved the highest office in Masonry in Arizona. At the end of 1948, Dr. Bledsoe retired from an active medical practice. His patients, however, continued to visit him, so he practiced out of his home in the El Encanto subdivision. In 1949, he was elected President of the Arizona Pioneer Historical Society and served until 1957. As president, he oversaw the fundraising for the new building, as well as its design and construction. Dr. Bledsoe gave his medical instruments, approximately fifty years old, to the Society in 1968.

Harriet Bledsoe died at the home on February 2, 1962. Dr. Bledsoe died at his home, 85 Camino Español, on February 22, 1974.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Nelson Charles Bledsoe collection consists of six boxes, two scrapbooks, and three ledgers of manuscript material arranged in three series.

Series One begins with personal correspondence, 1896-1968, which consists of letters to Nettie Bledsoe, Dr. Bledsoe's mother, and other family members; letters from attorney Martin Gentry; correspondence describing early surgery techniques; Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society correspondence; and correspondence with the Nature Conservancy. Financial documents, 1944-1973, entail income tax returns; stock inventories; bank statements and cancelled checks; income tax returns from the Frank Bledsoe trust, Vinita Bledsoe (his sister-in-law); Calumet and Arizona Hospital records; and miscellaneous financial records. Legal documents, 1906-1955, in the series include contracts to build his house; and contracts of employment with the Calumet and Arizona Mining Company. Literary productions, 1920-1951, include a play, "Old Man Necessity," about the Bisbee Deportation trials; a medical article, speeches, and reminiscences by Bledsoe; a manuscript of the Sociological Interpretation of the Bisbee Deportation, with Bledsoe's comments; and his work copy of the Quebbeman manuscript, "Medicine in Territorial Arizona." Printed materials, 1880-1974, entails the school report cards of Dr. Bledsoe and his brothers; diplomas; marriage certificate; Phelps Dodge reports; the IWW constitution; and pamphlets, clippings and stickers on the Bisbee Deportation. Scrapbooks consist of articles and letters from Morris Goldwater, George Roskruge and others; clippings and photographs of Bisbee; and some correspondence.

Series Two has Masonic Records, which include Correspondence, 1938-1961, including incoming and outgoing from Luther A. Smith, Sovereign Grand Commander, Harry A. Drachman, and John W. Cowles, Grand Commander; and a letter containing a description of the removal of Dr. C.H. Marvin, president of the University of Arizona. A handbook on education and goals of Masonry; and various Bledsoe articles and speeches are also present. This series includes a Christmas card list and addresses, along with cards, articles and reports, a Masonry handbook, and forms for degree petitions.

Series three consists of papers collected by Dr. Bledsoe and are associated with Robert Van Riper's papers, 1870-1929 (includes military records and incoming correspondence); Anna McDuel's will, 1938; and miscellaneous papers of other persons, 1864-1950.

## Box and Folder Listing

### Series 1: Nelson C. Bledsoe, Personal Correspondence, 1896-1968

#### Box 1

- f.1 Incoming, 1896
- f.2 To Nettie Bledsoe, 1925
- f.3 From James Gentry, 1932-1933
- f.4 From Ben and Jim Bledsoe, 1940-1943
- f.5 Nettie Bledsoe Estate, 1945
- f.6 Frank Bledsoe Estate, 1940-1957
- f.7 Description of early surgery in Bisbee, 1948-1968
- f.8a Incoming, Arizona Historical Society, 1949-1961
- f.8b Outgoing, Arizona Historical Society, 1949-1960
- f.9 Nature Conservancy, 1960-1966
- f.10 From Leighton M. Bledsoe, 1975
- f.11 Bledsoe Professional Correspondence, general, 1903-ca. 1928
- f.12 Correspondence on Bledsoe's retirement, 1947-1948
- f.13 IRS document accepting 1929 returns
- f.14-20 Income tax returns, Nelson and Harriet Bledsoe, 1944-1953

#### Box 2

- f.21-35 Income tax returns, Nelson and Harriet Bledsoe, 1954-1968
- f.36 Stock inventories, 1944-1967
- f.37 Notice of Deficiency and Notice of Adjustment, 1958
- f.38 Employers Quarterlies, 1954-1959
- f.39 Revocation of Power of Attorney, 1968
- f.40 Employers Quarterlies, 1968-1970
- f.41 1099's, bills, receipts, 1970

#### Box 3

- f.42 Bank statements and cancelled checks, 1971-1973
- f.43 Statements from Max Barrios, 1973-1974
- f.44 Ann Jeannette Bledsoe inheritance tax receipt, 1946
- f.45 Frank Bledsoe Trust fiduciary tax return, 1947
- f.47 Frank Bledsoe Trust, bank statements and checks, 1945-1946
- f.48 Vinita Bledsoe income tax return, 1946
- f.49 Vinita Bledsoe income tax return, 1947
- f.50-52 (See oversize items, end of list)
- f.53 Bill for dissecting material, 1901
- f.54 Miners and Merchants Bank Statement of Condition, 1955
- f.55 Tucson business license receipts, 1973
- f.56 Contract to build house, 1906
- f.57 Delegates credential to Citizen's Protection League and Memorandum of Understanding, 1917-1919
- f.58 Arizona Secretary of State Certificate, 1939
- f.59 Merger agreement: Miners and Merchants Bank and First National Bank, 1955
- f.60 Contracts with Calumet Mining, n.d.
- f.61 Old Man Necessity, a play, 1920
- f.62 Burns and Their Treatment, Bledsoe, 1932
- f.63 Reminiscences, Dr. N.C. Bledsoe; speeches, notes and resolution by Arizona Historical Society, 1947-1957

- f.64 Sociological Interpretation of the Bisbee Deportation by Lundquist and Fraser, with comments by Bledsoe, n.d.
- f.65 Medicine in Territorial Arizona by Quebbeman, Dr. Bledsoe's work copy, n.d.
- f.66 Bledsoe's speech on deportation, n.d.
- f.67 Report cards: Nelson Charles, Harry and Frank Bledsoe, ca.1880
- f.68 Daily Citizen Article "The Pioneers," 1884
- f.69-70 (See oversize items, end of list)
- f.71 Matriculation cards and receipts, S.C. Medical School, 1899-1902
- f.72 Certificate of Registration of Physician, 1903
- f.73 Camp Physician Certificate, 1904
- f.74 Medical pamphlets, 1912-1941

**Box 4**

- f.75 IWW Constitution, IWW pamphlets, and IWW stickers, 1916-1917
- f.76 News clippings re: Bisbee Deportation, 1917
- f.77 Bisbee Mining District, ca. 1921
- f.78 Boy Scout membership certificates, 1927; 1934
- f.79 Phelps Dodge report, ca. 1930
- f.80 Boulder Dam decision, 1931
- f.81 State Medical Society meeting programs, 1933-1934
- f.82 YMCA fund raising, 1949
- f.83 Medical articles, 1968-1970
- f.84 News clipping re: Bisbee Deportation, 1972
- f.85 AMA membership card, 1974
- f.86-88 (See oversize items, end of list)

**Series 2: Masonic Records**

- f.89-90 Correspondence, 1939-1972
- f.91 "To form a new consistory," 1966
- f.92 Correspondence from Sovereign Grand Commander Luther A. Smith, 1953; 1955-1956
- f.93-96 Correspondence from Smith and others, 1957-1960

**Box 5**

- f.97-98 Correspondence from Smith and others, 1953-1961
- f.99 Correspondence with Harry A. Drachman, John H. Cowles, and others: description of removal of Dr. C.H. Marvin, former U.A. President, 1921-1928
- f.100 Correspondence with Drachman and Cowles, 1931; 1939; 1950-1951
- f.101 Handbook on education, goals of Masonry, Demolay pin symbol, fifty year cap, n.d.
- f.102 Bledsoe's articles and speeches on Masonry and two quotations, 1961; n.d.
- f.103 Bledsoe's speeches on Masonry
- f.104-106 Christmas card lists, 1956-1967
- f.107 Addresses, n.d.
- f.108 Cards, articles and reports, n.d.
- f.109 Masonry handbooks, n.d.
- f.110 Forms for petitions for degrees, rental agreements, n.d.

**Series 3: Papers collected by N.C. Bledsoe, 1864-1950**

**Box 6**

- f.111-112 Military records and correspondence, 1870-1880; 1908-1929
- f.113 Anna McDuel will, 1938
- f.114 William H. Knight enlistment, 1864

- f.115 Correspondence from Charles, 1935
- f.116 "Un-named" child birth certificate, 1937
- f.117 Statement to Mrs. Erskine Caldwell, 1950

**Oversize items**

- ITEM 50 Calumet and Arizona Hospital cash disbursements journal, 1918-1924
- ITEM 51 Calumet and Arizona Hospital cash disbursements journal, 1928-1931
- ITEM 52 Calumet and Arizona Hospital profit and loss statements, 1929-1931
- ITEM 69-70 Diplomas: Nelson Charles Bledsoe and Harriet Gage, 1896  
Certificate of marriage and duplicate copy, 1906
- SCRAPBOOKS Articles and letters, Morris Goldwater, George Roskrige and others, 1922-1930  
News articles and photos of Bisbee, 1932-1948  
Correspondence, incoming congratulatory, 1952