

Inventory of the

**Raymond Rolfe**  
DeKalb, Illinois

Diaries

In the

Regional History Center

**RC 280**

## INTRODUCTION

Jim Johnson of the Blackwell History of Education Museum at Northern Illinois University donated the Raymond Rolfe Diaries to the Regional History Center on November 1, 2006. Supplementary materials in both paper and electronic forms were added by Richard York in 2011 and 2012.

Property rights in the collection belong to the Regional History Center; literary rights are dedicated to the public. There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

Linear feet of shelf space: 0.75  
Number of containers: 1; 20 digital files (10.5 MB)  
Northern Illinois Regional History Center  
Collection 280

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The eleven diaries written by Raymond Rolfe date from 1884 to 1909. The diaries are not a complete set but consist of volumes dating 1884-1886, 1889, 1891-1897, 1899, and 1905-1909. The diaries include information on the weather, deaths in the area, church services and prohibition conferences attended, the cost of food and supplies, bills paid, the jobs Rolfe worked, the length of time he worked them, and the money he earned. Also mentioned in the diaries are events that happened in the area such as a train robbery near Cortland, the Haish Opera House burning, and church services canceled due to a scarlet fever scare. The diaries should be of interest to historic preservationists due to the fact that Rolfe lists the names of clients and the type of work he did for them as a mason contractor. A family history and copies of images supplement the collection.

The collection also contains digitized photographs and business advertisements, which are available in electronic form in the Center's reading room. Also available is email correspondence between the donor and curator regarding the significance of these items.

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

Raymond Rolfe was born on February 28, 1835 in Ickford, England. He trained as a stonemason and moved to the United States in 1855. He lived in DeKalb for ten years then moved to Malta in 1865 where he lived for fourteen years. In 1879 he moved back to DeKalb. Rolfe was active in the Baptist denomination serving as a deacon. He was a prohibitionist and believed in the temperance cause. As a mason contractor, he built such notable structures as the Wells Shoe Factory, the Chronicle Building, the Ronan Building, and the first factory for the DeKalb Fence Company. According to Rolfe's diaries he worked on the Glidden and Ellwood houses, the Gurler farm, and the DeKalb County Poor Farm.

Rolfe married Delpha E. Munger in Earlville on December 22, 1864. She was born in

Blaine, Boone County, Illinois on December 8, 1843. Raymond died on April 27, 1918 of an enlarged prostate gland and Delpha died March 17, 1915 of anemia. Both are buried in Fairview Cemetery in DeKalb.

Raymond and Delpha had six children: Henry Edwin, Frances, Salena, Frank Albert, Ellen Irene, and George Raymond. All were born in Malta except George Raymond who was born in DeKalb. Henry was born October 16, 1865, married Nellie G. Thompson on December 23, 1891 in Sterling, and had one son named Burton Thompson on July 21, 1896. Burton died of tuberculosis on June 21, 1915, Henry died on December 6, 1949, and Nellie in 1966. Frances was born on September 11, 1869 and Salena was born on September 1, 1870. Both died in infancy. Frank was born May 7, 1873 and died in 1956. He married Jennie who was born in August 1877. According to the 1910 Federal Census, the couple had five children: Dorothy F., Hazel E., Charles A., Perry E., and John H. Ellen, also referred to as Nellie, was born on November 14, 1875 and married John Cook on July 15, 1896. George Raymond was born on March 25, 1881.

[The Historical Sketch is by no means complete. Biographical information came from an article found in the county history entitled, Past and Present of DeKalb County, Illinois by Lewis M. Gross, census, and cemetery records.]

#### SUBJECT TRACINGS

DeKalb (Ill.)  
Diaries, 1870-1909  
Rolfe, Raymond

COLLECTION INVENTORY

<u>BOX</u>	<u>FOLDER</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
1	1-8	Diaries, 1884-1886, 1889, 1891-1897, 1899, 1905-1909
		<u>ADDENDUM</u>
	9	Genealogical documentation from a Rolfe-Munger descendant
		<u>ADDENDUM</u>
	10	<u>Going West</u> , manuscript, by Richard York, 2012
	11	<u>Going West</u> , .pdf on CD-ROM, by Richard York, 2012