
ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MS 580
NEFF, MARY LAWSON, 1862-1945
NEFF PAPERS, 1885-1935

DESCRIPTION

This collection is primarily concerned with the medical career of Mary L. Neff, covering the time between 1885-1935. There is a small amount of biographical material containing her curriculum vitae and a great deal of information on programs where she gave talks and copies of articles that she wrote. The collection includes a scrapbook which she put together, mostly of her medical concerns. The scrapbook includes several photographs glued into programs, but they are mostly unidentified. There is one photograph that includes one woman identified as Mary Neff. The scrapbook also includes some notes and writings of Neff. This small collection contains six folders.

1 Box, .50 linear feet

INVENTORY

- F. 1 Biographical information and correspondence with AHS
- F. 2 Scrapbook
- F. 3 Articles written by Mary Neff
- F. 4 Programs containing talks by Mary Neff
 - F. 5 Newspaper clippings about Mary Neff
 - F. 6 "The American Creed"

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mary Lawson Neff was the first neurologist and the first woman psychiatrist in Arizona. She was a central figure in both the eugenics and mental hygiene movements in Arizona and the first promoter of the legislation which led to the establishment of the Arizona Children's Colony. She was born in Pennsylvania in 1862 and spent part of her youth in India, China and Japan. She did not enter medical school until the age of 34 after marrying and raising two children. She went to medical school in Iowa and spent some time studying under Carl Seashore, a nationally known psychologist. After four years as a general practitioner in Iowa, she moved to Arizona for the first time in 1905 because of her daughter's tuberculosis. After two years, she moved to the east coast and became a staff member at Cornell Medical College where she practiced neurology and psychiatry. She moved to Boston in 1911 where she began work on occupational therapy for the institutionalized. She returned to Arizona in 1915. For several years she was the only practicing neurologist in Arizona and traveled to all parts of the state, frequently being employed by mining companies. She was an Arizona

physician who was actively involved in the public sector as a consultant, an educator and a lobbyist for the Arizona Medical Association in the state legislature. Her work as the Arizona State Medical Association's representative to the state legislature led to the passage of two bills pertaining to mental illness and the introduction of legislation to create what was eventually the Arizona Children's Colony. In 1925 she moved to Los Angeles where she continued her teaching and lecturing activities. She died 1 November 1945 in Los Angeles.

ACQUISITION

Donated to the Arizona Historical Society in 1934 by Mary L. Neff.

ACCESS

There are no restrictions on this collection.

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

PROCESSING

The collection was processed in April 1997 by Riva Dean, Library/Archives Co-Manager.