

**A. Fern Souther (1907-2004)**  
**Papers, 1860-1982**  
**Doc 536-542, MSB 48, XMSC 91, MS Size C**

## **Introduction**

This collection consists of letters, family memorabilia, scrapbooks, teaching materials, clippings, photographs, postcards and greeting cards gathered by A. Fern Souther (1907-2004) of Lowell, Vermont, a Burlington schoolteacher and inveterate collector. Family related material includes miscellaneous documents from the Fisk and Kimball families as well as Francis Souther's World War II letters. The collection also includes miscellaneous papers and letters of Hubert C. and Laura Tupper Brown of Lowell from 1864-1907 who are unrelated to the Souther family.

This collection was a gift of Fern Souther's niece, Carol Cherin in 2004 (ms. acc. no. 2004.17). It is shelved in seven document boxes, one flat archival box, six oversized volumes, and 1 oversized folder and occupies 9 linear feet of shelf space.

## **Biographical notes**

### Souther, Kimball and Fisk families

Fern Souther's mother, Betty (Bettie) Mabel Kimball, was born August 23, 1890 in Barton and died March 21, 1947 in Lowell, Vermont. Fern's father, Wilman Adelbert Souther (Mar. 1, 1885 – Jan. 13, 1947) a farmer in Lowell He and Betty were married September 10, 1907 in Barton. The five surviving children of that union were: Fern, Ernest, Florence, Francis (June 4, 1913-May 19, 1992), and Sterling (April 22, 1917-December 14, 2003). Betty and Wilman Souther divorced in the late 1920s and their farm was sold. Betty, Fern, and Francis moved to the Lowell House.

Betty Kimball Souther was the daughter of Ella N. Fisk (d. 1910) and William H. Kimball who was born in Barton and died in Burlington in 1936. Ella Fisk Kimball's father, Seymour N. Fisk, was proprietor of the Farmer's Hotel in Montpelier in the 1860s (see "Related Collections" below).

Wilman Souther was the son of Nelli (Nellie?) C. Cox (d. May 3, 1885) and Wilbur Souther (June 21, 1849 – 1920) of Lowell. Wilbur's parents were Harriet Cole (b. May 6, 1823) and Nathan Souther (July 25, 1816 – Jan. 18, 1877) of Lowell.

### Fern and Francis Willard Souther

Fern was born in Orleans, Vermont, December 1, 1907, the oldest child of Betty and Wilman Souther. Although her birth certificate says Adele Nellie Fern Souther, she dropped Nellie and used the initial "A -" of Adele. She graduated from Lowell High School in 1924, and then took a teacher training course in Barton. She taught in Troy from 1925 to 1928 and in Newport from 1928 to 1930.

In June 1931, she earned a Teacher Training Course diploma, a two year course, at the University of Vermont, and in 1944 she received a Bachelor of Education degree from the University. She began teaching in the Burlington public school system in September 1931 where she continued to teach in several elementary schools until her retirement from the Ira Allen School in 1973.

During summer vacations in the 1930s and 40s, Fern and her brother, Sterling (nicknamed Mickey) worked at the Lake Willoughby where their mother was the cook. Fern later worked summers as a chambermaid at the Summit House on Mt. Mansfield.

According to Fern's niece, she kept house for her brother Francis for many years, and commuted from Lowell to Burlington where she had an apartment. After she retired, Fern traveled extensively. She made scrapbooks for her trips abroad as well for the trips to the Western United States and Canada.

A recollection of Fern's life by her niece is included in folder 0, as is the transcript of a video taped interview with Fern about the family and Lowell done in 1999.

Francis Souther, nicknamed Buster, Fern's younger brother, was born June 4, 1913, in Lowell. In 1942 he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served during World War II as a truck driver in North Africa and Italy. He was discharged in November 1945. He died May 19, 1992.

## Organization

The collection is arranged in six series and twelve sub-series:

- I. Fern Souther, 1907 - 2004
  - A. Correspondence
  - B. Education
  - C. Teaching career
  - D. Retirement
  - E. Summer employment
  - F. Personal papers
  - G. Photographs
  - H. Postcards
  - I. Clippings
  - J. Greeting cards
  - K. Scrapbooks
  - L. Miscellaneous
- II. Francis W. Souther, 1913 - 1992
- III. Other Souther family members, 1860 - 1945
- IV. Fisk and Kimball families, 1884 - 1909
- V. Hubert C. and Laura Tupper Brown, 1864 - 1892
- VI. Miscellaneous

## Related Collections

### VHS Museum

- A brass or copper stencil with the lettering: “Farmer’s Hotel, S.N. Fisk, proprietor, Main Street, Montpelier, Vt.” is located in the VHS Museum collection. The stencil belonged to Fern Souther’s great grandfather, Seymour N. Fisk. Fisk is listed in the 1860 Census as a Montpelier innkeeper but by the 1870 census he and his family moved to Bakersfield where he was a farmer. According to John C. Wriston’s *Vermont Inns and Taverns*, a hotel (ca. 1800) under various names (Hutchins Tavern, Shepard Tavern, and the Farmer’s Hotel) was located on the west side of Montpelier’s Main Street, opposite the Barre Street intersection. It burned in 1875.
- Numerous artifacts collected by Fern Souther have been moved to the museum collection, including two school desk bells, teaching tools, many types of souvenir items, paper dolls, political pins, and a few pieces of clothing (museum accession number 2004.72). See the museum catalog for detailed descriptions.

### VHS Library

- A register for the hotel known as Lowell House (Hotel), Register for the years, 1873 – 1879; 1892 – 1892, has been cataloged separately and is located at MSB-49.
- A GAR membership certificate issued to Herbert C. Brown in 1889 is located in B’side B Civil War – Soldier’s Papers. According to the *Revised Roster*, Herbert C. Brown of Fairfield served as private in Co. E of the 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment from September 1862 to January 1863. This is probably the same as Hubert Brown who is represented in this collection.
- Town reports collected by Fern Souther have been placed in the VHS Library’s collection of Vermont town reports. A list is in Folder 0.
- Many printed items about the Burlington schools have been integrated into the VHS Library’s book collection including *Directories of Public Schools of Burlington* (373.743 B925pd) and *Manuals of Public Schools of Burlington* (373.743 B925pm), materials from the Vermont Education Association, and a set of teacher’s guides produced by WCAX-TV in the 1960s.

### UVM Library

The Department of Special Collections at Bailey-Howe Library, University of Vermont, has a collection of Fern Souther’s scrapbooks about Vermont towns.

## Scope and Content

The collection consists of letters, family memorabilia, scrapbooks, teaching materials, clippings, photographs, postcards and greeting cards gathered by Fern Souther,

a Burlington, Vermont elementary school teacher and inveterate collector. Family related materials include miscellaneous documents from the Fisk and Kimball families and a series of Francis Souther's World War II letters.

The collection documents Fern Souther's life and interests. She collected Lowell, Vermont, history as well as material about the places she lived or worked such as Lake Willoughby, Mt. Mansfield, and Burlington. Her interest in Vermont geography and history is documented in her 251 scrapbooks in this collection and her town scrapbooks at the University of Vermont. As a teacher, her students were important; she saved instructional materials as well as pupil lists and photographs.

The earliest family materials span the period 1860 to the 1920s; they include Fisk and Kimball family autograph books and receipts and Nelli (Nellie?) Souther's 1860 recipe book.

### Francis Souther letters and World War II

In a series of letters to his sister from the time he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942 until his discharge in 1945, Souther describes his experiences as a truck driver in North Africa and Italy. During basic training and the four months he remained in Italy after the War in Europe was over, Souther wrote very frank, usually brief letters. During the time he saw active service, his letters were censored and his style is self-conscious and less spontaneous.

During 1943, Fern Souther clipped articles about Vermont men and women serving in World War II from the *Burlington Free Press* and the *Newport Daily Express*. The chronologically arranged articles include obituaries, inductions, promotions, awards, leaves, as well as many photographs.

### Lowell, Vermont

The papers include not only photographs of Fern Souther's Lowell school classes and her 1924 graduation memorabilia but also clippings and postcards of the history of the town. Clippings from many sources include: the 1939 Vermont Electric Cooperative; the Lowell asbestos plant and the Lowell-Eden asbestos mine from the 1940s to 1970s; and, two notebooks of obituaries, births, weddings, accidents, retirements etc. for Lowell and other area residents from the 1940s to the 1980s. Postcards include early views of Lowell, the schools, and the asbestos mine.

### Other Vermont Places

In addition to Lowell, Souther collected post-cards, photographs and memorabilia from her other favorite Vermont places. Her interest in Mount Mansfield, Westmore and Lake Willoughby stems from her summer employment at those resorts during the 1920s and 30s.

Souther was also a member of the Vermont 251 Club and her scrapbooks include photographs, often of public buildings in the cities and towns that she visited. The collection includes the Club's publication, *The Wayfarer* from 1965 to 1998.

### Travel Scrapbooks

During her later years, 1955 – 1980, and after her retirement, Fern became a serious traveler. She made a scrapbook for each trip and her destinations included the U.S. and Canada, Africa, Mexico, several trips to Europe and the South Pacific. The scrapbooks are filled with photographs and memorabilia.

### Burlington public schools

Fern Souther spent her professional career as a teacher and a major part of that time she taught elementary grades in the Burlington public schools. The collection includes pupil lists as well as class and faculty photographs from the 1950s to the 1970s. In a notebook of clippings, many from *The Burlington Free Press* about Burlington schools, there are occasional columns, "The School Beat," by Madeleine May (later Kunin) who was a reporter for the paper in 1957 and 1958.

### Hubert C. and Laura Tupper Brown papers, 1864 – 1900

It is unclear how and why the Brown papers came to be in Fern Souther's papers. Although the two families were unrelated, it seems probable that Fern rescued the Browns' papers from the Lowell House when she was a resident there.

Hubert C. Brown of Fairfield, Vermont, the son of Joseph and Lois Brown, and Laura Tupper of Bakersfield, daughter of Solon and Nancy A. Tupper, were married in Enosburg on November 24, 1863. By 1864, Laura was living in Lockport, Illinois and Hubert wrote in September of that year to a cousin that his wife was living in another state, and "I have heard that she will live with me if I'll come to Illinois." By 1865 however, they both were living in East Fairfield, Vermont and by 1873, he was proprietor of the Lowell House. Laura studied piano in Montreal and during the 1860s and 1870s, she received licenses to teach in the public schools of Hyde Park, Fairfield, and Lowell.

Letters to the Browns include several from Hubert's brother, Joseph, who served in the army during the Civil War. In March 1865, Nellie Brown wrote from Angelo, Wisconsin that her father, Joseph, had enlisted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Independent Battery, Iowa Light Artillery to avoid the draft and because he could not afford "to hire a man." Joseph wrote from New Orleans in May and June 1865 at the end of the Civil War. See "Related Collections" for Hubert Brown's possible service in the Civil War.

In a series of letters between 1865 and 1869 to Laura Brown, a school friend, Mary E. Girard, described her employment in the Lowell, Massachusetts, textile mills. Mary planned to work two years and wrote that "I can not content myself in any place

unless I am making money.” Mary eventually married (Joseph?) Kelley and they bought a farm in Brownington, Vermont.

## Inventory

### I. Fern Souther

#### A. Correspondence

- Doc 536:1 Letters from miscellaneous, 1924 – 1987  
 2 \_\_\_\_\_, from students, 1968 – 1978

#### B. Education

- 3 Lowell (Vt.) High School, 1924  
 4 University of Vermont, Teacher Training Course, 1926 – 1931  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_, Bachelor of Education, 1934 – 1944  
 6 Other courses, 1948 – 1968

#### C. Teaching career

- 7 Contracts, 1926 – 1973  
 8 Certificates, etc., 1917- 1973  
 Size C \_\_\_\_\_, and diplomas, 1924-1958  
 9 Pupil Lists, E.B. Taft School (Burlington), 1953 – 1955  
 10 \_\_\_\_\_, Ira Allen School (Burlington), 1957/58 – 1966/67  
 11 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 1967/68 – 1973/74  
 12 Parents’ handbook, Ira Allen School (Burlington), 1969/70 and 1972/73  
 13 School programs, 1939 – 1961  
 14 Daily plan books, 1967/68 and 1968/69  
 15 Instructional materials, 1940s  
 15A *School Bells Among the Green Hills*, Association of Retired Teachers of Vermont, 1975  
 16 Bread baking project, April 1973  
 17 Teaching left handed children, articles, 1955 – 1982  
 18 Miscellaneous memos, etc., 1935 – 1973

#### D. Retirement

- 19 Retirement, 1973  
 20 Vt. State Teachers’ Retirement System, membership, 1947 – 1971  
 21 \_\_\_\_\_, misc., 1939 – 1980  
 22 Vt. Retired Teachers’ Association, 1976 – 1983  
 23 Burlington public schools, programs, meetings, etc.  
 24 \_\_\_\_\_, misc., 1904 – 1978

#### E. Summer employment

- 25 Lake Willoughby resorts, 1920s and 30s  
 26 Mt. Mansfield, Summit House and Toll Road, 1901 – 1953  
 27 \_\_\_\_\_, hiking maps and trails, ca 1940  
 28 \_\_\_\_\_, skiing, 1940s and 50s  
 29 \_\_\_\_\_, Summit House, centennial 1958  
 30 \_\_\_\_\_, misc., undated  
 31 \_\_\_\_\_, Stowe, misc. 1950s

- Size C \_\_\_\_\_, "Mr. Starr and His Pampered Mountain" by Hal Burton, *Saturday Evening Post*, March 6, 1954  
 \_\_\_\_\_, "Ski Doctor" (Dr. Geroge Harold Shedd) by Hal Burton, *Collier's*, January 27, 1951

#### F. Personal papers

- 32 Legal papers, 1907 – 1960  
 33 Memberships, 1936 – 2002  
 34 Passports, 1965 – 1987  
 35 Misc. tax receipts, 1930s and 40s

#### G. Photographs

- 36 Fern Souther, 1907 – 1972  
 37 \_\_\_\_\_, Fern in school groups, 1912 – 1925  
 FB-1 F-SCH-UVM – Summer school, UVM, 1926, McAllister panoramic photograph  
 Doc 537:1 Souther and Kimball family members ca 1910 – 1950  
 FB-23 Daguerreotype, Joe and Hannah Souther  
 2 Fern's students, identified, ca 1950s – 1960s  
 3 \_\_\_\_\_, unidentified, ca 1950s – 1960s  
 4 Fern's classes, most unidentified and undated, ca 1940s – 60s  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_, Clark Hinsdale School (Burlington), 1942 – 1943  
 6 \_\_\_\_\_, Ira Allen School (Burlington), 1961 – 1973  
 7 Other school classes, most unidentified and undated, 1938 – ca 1960  
 8 Faculty groups (include Fern), 1940s – 1960s  
 9 Individuals (non-family), ca 1900 – 1950s  
 10 \_\_\_\_\_, unidentified, ca 1900 – 1970  
 FB-25 Ambrotype, Civil War musician, undated and unidentified  
 11 Miscellaneous Vt. towns, 1952 and undated  
 12 Mt. Mansfield, 1940s  
 13 School buildings, Burlington, Vt., 1940s  
 14 Miscellaneous notes, undated

#### H. Postcards

- 15 Mt. Mansfield, 1940s  
 16 \_\_\_\_\_, in winter, 1940s  
 17 \_\_\_\_\_, buildings  
 18 Stowe, Vt., 1907 – 1940s  
 19 Lake Willoughby, Vt., 1930s – 1940s  
 20 Lowell, Vt., 1907 – 1920  
 21 Covered bridges (Vt.), 1907 – 1960  
 22 \_\_\_\_\_, New England, 1940s  
 23 Miscellaneous Vt. scenes, ca 1900 – 1950  
 24 Miscellaneous scenes, 1920s – 1950s

#### I. Clippings

- 24A Asbestos mining, Eden and Lowell, Vt., 1939 – 1975  
 25 Burlington, Fern's students, 1959 - 1969  
 26 \_\_\_\_\_, public schools, 1930 – 1957  
 27 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 1958 – 1998

- 28 \_\_\_\_\_, University of Vt., 1970 – 1971
- 29 \_\_\_\_\_, colleges, 1965 – 1970
- 30 \_\_\_\_\_, miscellaneous, 1955 – 1999
- 31 Mt. Mansfield, scrapbook, 1920s – 1970s
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_, and Stowe, 1938 – 1959
- 34 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 1963 – 1988
- 35 Vermont, ski areas, 1947 – 1979
- 35A Vermont Electric Cooperative, Inc. 1938 – 1976
- 36 \_\_\_\_\_, miscellaneous, 1946 – 1978
- 37 Obituaries, etc., 1949 – 1999
- 38 Miscellaneous, not Vt., 1942 – 1989
- J. Greeting cards
- 39 Birthday, undated
- 40 Christmas, \_\_\_\_\_
- 41 Easter and Valentines, \_\_\_\_\_
- 42 Miscellaneous, \_\_\_\_\_
- 43 Postcards, 1920s – 1930s
- K. Scrapbooks
- Doc 539:1 Clippings, (Vermont related), World War II, 1943
- 2 Vt. 251 club, *Wayfarer*, 1965 - 1986
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, 1987-1998
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, Towns A-J, 1965-1980s
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, L-W, \_\_\_\_\_
- Doc 540:1 Lowell, Vt. residents, A-M, clippings, 1940s – 1990s
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, N-Z, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Burlington, Vt. schools, clippings, 1946 – 57
- 4 Photographs, miscellaneous, 1939 – 1944
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_, Ira Allen School (Burlington), 1970s
- 6 Reading resources, 1940s
- 7 Teaching science, 1950s
- Doc 541:1 Travel, Maritime Provinces, 1955
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, Africa, 1973
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, Mexico, 1975
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, Greece, 1979
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_, Ireland, 1980
- Doc 542:1 Travel, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, Part I, 1980
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, Canadian Rockies, 1982
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, California and the West, 1983
- XMSC.91:1 Travel, Florida, 1951
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, Alaska, 1963
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, South Pacific, 1974
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, England, Scotland, 1977
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Part II, 1980
- 6 Coronation of King George IV of England, 1937-38



L. Miscellaneous

- MSB 48 "Busywork Manual," created as a student, containing examples of a small silk rug, raffia handiwork, embroidery stitches, picture frame, napkin ring, etc.
- Doc 537:44 Miscellaneous, 1919 – 1974
- Size C Certificate, crossing Arctic Circle, 1963  
 \_\_\_\_\_, crossing the equator, 1972

II. Francis Willard Souther (June 4, 1913 – May 19, 1992)

- Doc 538:1 Letters to Bettie and Fern Souther, April 1941 – August 1942
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, Sept. – Oct. 1942
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, Nov. – Dec. 1942
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, Jan. – Feb. 1943
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_, March – April 1943
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_, May – June 1943
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_, July – August 1943
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_, Sept. – Oct. 1943
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_, Nov. - Dec. 1943
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_, Jan. – June 1944
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_, July – Dec. 1944
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_, Jan. – June 1945
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_, July – Oct. 1945
- 14 Italy, World War II, photographs
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, postcards
- 16 Envelopes, 1942 – 1943
- 17 Miscellaneous, 1914 – 1945
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_, World War II, 1940s

III. Other Souther family members

- 19 Nelli Souther, recipe book, ca. 1860
- 20 Wilbur Souther, miscellaneous, 1911-1918
- 21 Wilman A. Souther, miscellaneous, 1920s
- 22 Bettie Kimball Souther, greeting cards, 1900 – 1950
- 23 \_\_\_\_\_, miscellaneous, 1923 – 1945
- 24 Florence Souther, postcards and greeting cards, 1904 – 1924
- 25 Joyce Eileen Souther (b. 1938?), World War II ration books, 1945

IV. Fisk and Kimball families

- 26 William H. Kimball and Ella N. Fisk (d. 1910) autograph books, 1884 – 1889 and 1882 – 1888  
*Note: Ella N. Fisk (d. 1910) autograph book missing (ca. February 2024)*
- 27 William H. Kimball, receipts, 1908 – 1909

V. Hubert C. and Laura Tupper Brown, m. November 24, 1863

- 28 Hubert C. Brown, letters to Laura, etc., 1864
- 29 \_\_\_\_\_, and Laura Tupper Brown, letters to, 1863 – 1865
- 30 \_\_\_\_\_, 1866 – 1867
- 31 \_\_\_\_\_, 1868 – 1869
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_, 1871 – 1907
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_, undated

- 34 \_\_\_\_\_, fragments, undated and envelopes 1860s – 1892
- 35 Laura T. Brown, Vermont teaching licenses, 1866, 1867 and 1875
- 36 Hubert C. Brown, miscellaneous, 1863 – 1886
- 37 Laura T. Brown, misc. envelopes, undated
- Size C Marriage certificate, Hubert C. Brown and Laura Tupper, 1863
- VI. Miscellaneous
- 38 Letters, etc., non-family, 1864 – 1896
- 39 Advertisements, business cards, etc., 1870 – 1965
- 40 Lowell, Vt., history, misc, 1868 and 1976
- Size C William Maxfield, membership certificate, Independent Order of Good Templars, 1869
- Doc 538:41 Commencement invitations, etc. 1881 – 1949
- 42 Memorial services, non-family, 1936 and 1996
- 43 Miscellaneous papers, non-family, 1885 – 1925
- 44 Miscellaneous printed matter 1880s – 1982

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