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## Nahm, Max Brunswick, 1864-1958 (MSS 329)

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*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 329 NAHM, Max Brunswick, 1864-1958**

3½ boxes. 41 folders. 1,437 items. 1883-1940. Originals, photocopies, photographs.

1959.2.3

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Max Brunswick Nahm was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky on 8 June 1864, the son of Emanuel and Rosa (Brunswick) Nahm. He earned A.B. degrees from Ogden College in 1883 and Princeton University in 1885. On 21 January 1892, Nahm married Sunshine Friedman (1874-1937) and they had one daughter, [Emanie Louise Nahm](#) (1893-1981).

In 1887, Nahm became a member of the family firm of E. Nahm & Company, retailers of men's clothing. He remained with the firm until 1924. His career in banking began when he helped to found the Citizens National Bank, becoming its vice president in 1901. He also became a director of the Bowling Green Bank and Trust Company upon its founding in 1911. Nahm became a leader in the banking industry through numerous professional appointments and affiliations, including service as president of the Kentucky Bankers Association (1916), Kentucky vice president of the American Bankers Association (1917), director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Louisville (1926-1927), and director of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (1927-1946). During the Depression, he served as a director of the Kentucky State Recovery Board of the National Recovery Administration (1933) and as a director of the Federal Housing Administration for Kentucky (1934-1935). Nahm was also a member of many corporate boards and civic organizations.

On 19 May 1924, Max Nahm attended a meeting in Bowling Green of citizens interested in the creation of a national park in the Mammoth Cave region of Edmonson County. On 7 October 1924, a second meeting resulted in the formation of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association. The Association immediately began soliciting subscriptions and negotiating for purchase options on land to comprise the park. On 16 July 1925, the Mammoth Cave National Park Association was formally incorporated for the purpose of encouraging the U.S. Congress to pass legislation authorizing the park. Nahm became the Association's president.

On 25 May 1926, President Calvin Coolidge signed legislation enabling the creation of a national park at Mammoth Cave. The law required the acquisition of a minimum acreage, including the major caves, before the federal government would assume responsibility for the park, and it designated the Association as the fundraising agency for land purchases.

The refusal of some landowners to sell to the Association led the Kentucky General Assembly in 1928 to create the Kentucky National Park Commission with the power of eminent domain to acquire lands for the park. Although it received an appropriation from the state, the

Commission had no authority to expend funds for any purpose other than land, caves and condemnation expenses; as a result, the Mammoth Cave National Park Association continued to carry other expenses of the park project. Appointments to the Commission were originally made from candidates recommended by the Association, but legislation in 1930 reconstituted the Commission and gave the Governor unqualified power to appoint its members. At the new Commission's first meeting on 5 April 1930, Max Nahm was elected Vice Chairman.

Nahm became Chairman of the Commission on 14 May 1932. This appointment prompted him to relinquish the presidency of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association in July 1932, but he continued to serve on the Association's operating and executive committees. Nahm remained chairman of the Commission until 1941.

Max Brunswick Nahm died on 20 March 1958.

### **COLLECTION NOTE**

The bulk of this collection relates to Max Brunswick Nahm's involvement from 1925-1938 with the Mammoth Cave National Park Association (the "Association") and the Kentucky National Park Commission (the "Commission") in the creation of Mammoth Cave National Park. Both the Association and the Commission acquired lands for the park and managed them through operating committees until, in 1933, a joint operating committee was formed. The National Park Service assumed full responsibility for the park on 1 July 1941.

As a principal figure in both the Association and the Commission, Max Nahm was involved in all aspects of the park project, including strategies for acquiring land; the struggle to secure private and public funding, particularly after the onset of the Depression; the hostility of the local paper, the *Edmonson County News*, its editor, Perry Meloan, and some area residents toward the project; various lawsuits arising from disputes over property rights and condemnation proceedings; the improvement of the park lands and surrounding roads; the development of the cave and hotel properties as tourist destinations; competition from private owners of surrounding cave properties; the passage of legislation in 1934 amending the original terms under which the federal government would assume responsibility for the park; and the preparation of deeds for conveyance of park lands to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Correspondence to and from Nahm and copies of third party correspondence are contained in Box 1, Folders 6-11, Box 2, and Box 3, Folders 1-5. Chief among the correspondents are Arno B. Cammerer, associate director and (from 1933) director of the National Park Service; William W. Thompson, secretary of the Association and Commission, and manager of the cave properties; and Association board members Robert J. Ball and William C. Montgomery. Nahm also corresponded with politicians at the state and national level whose support was necessary to advance the park project, including U. S. Senator Marvel Mills Logan and Congressman Maurice H. Thatcher (who introduced the 1926 enabling bill for the establishment of Mammoth Cave National Park).

Box 3 also contains meeting minutes of the three major bodies involved in the creation and management of the park prior to its transfer to the federal government: the Mammoth Cave Estate, the Mammoth Cave National Park Association, and the Kentucky National Park Commission.

Minutes of two 1930 meetings of the Mammoth Cave Estate Trustees are in Box 3, Folder 10. The centerpiece of any proposed national park was the Mammoth Cave itself. After

the death of the Mammoth Cave's last private owner, Dr. John Croghan, the property was administered by trustees on behalf of his heirs, but in 1929 the Mammoth Cave National Park Association purchased a two-thirds share in the estate and appointed trustees to represent its interest. In 1931, the Kentucky National Park Commission acquired the remaining one-third share through exercise of its power of eminent domain, and the Mammoth Cave Estate was dissolved.

Minutes of meetings of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association in Box 3 include Association minutes from 1930-1932 (Folder 11); Executive Committee minutes from 1930-1936 (Folder 14); and Operating Committee minutes from 1931-1932 (Folder 15). The Operating Committee was formed to manage the Mammoth Cave property, including the Mammoth Cave Hotel and the Old Entrance, after the entire Mammoth Cave Estate was acquired from Dr. Croghan's heirs. The committee managed the property until 1933, when the joint operating committee was formed.

Minutes of meetings of the Kentucky National Park Commission in Box 3 include Commission minutes from 1930-1936 (Folder 13); and New Entrance Committee minutes from 1932-1933 (Folder 16). In 1932, the Commission purchased the New Entrance Hotel and cave property (later known as Frozen Niagara) and operated same until 1933, when the joint operating committee was formed.

Minutes of joint meetings of the Association and Commission held during 1930, 1932 and 1934 are in Box 3, Folder 12. Minutes of the Mammoth Cave Joint Operating Committee from 1933-1936 are in Box 3, Folder 17. This committee was formed in 1933 by the Association and Commission to jointly operate the properties of the two agencies. On 28 May 1934, two representatives of the National Park Service were added to the committee, which became known simply as the Mammoth Cave Operating Committee. From this time forward, the National Park Service became the purchasing authority for further lands, using revenues generated by the Operating Committee's management of the cave and hotel properties.

Prior to the federal government's full assumption of responsibility for the park, the rather complex arrangement for creating and managing the park, which involved a private organization (the Association), a state agency (the Commission) and eventually a federal agency (the National Park Service), became the subject of increasing controversy. In March 1937, an Edmonson County grand jury delivered a report (Box 3, Folder 3) that was harshly critical of the Association's management of its finances and of the apparent delay in establishing the national park. The charges generated a number of documents (Box 3, Folder 3) defending the park project which provide a useful overview of its administrative and legislative history. These include a letter of 7 May 1937 from National Park Service Director Arno B. Cammerer to Governor A. B. Chandler explaining the necessity for the Mammoth Cave Operating Committee; an explanatory memo of 19 May 1937 with extracts from Association and Commission minutes; and correspondence from attorney John B. Rodes reviewing the arrangement between the three agencies. Box 3, Folder 9 contains a lengthy memo on the status of the national park project which outlines its development and administration from 1928-1936.

Other materials useful for an overview of the establishment of the park include chronologies (1924-1926 and 1924-1930) of the Mammoth Cave National Park Association (Box 1, Folder 6; Box 3, Folder 9); a 1930 draft of the Kentucky National Park Commission's report to Governor Ruby Laffoon (Box 1, Folder 9); Max Nahm's letter of 2 June 1933 outlining the problems in management of the cave properties by committees of both the Association and the Commission (Box 2, Folder 3); a report on the progress of the park project for 1934 (Box 2,

Folder 6); and reports of the Mammoth Cave Operating Committee and the National Park Service, both for the 1937 fiscal year (Box 3, Folder 3).

Photographs, relating mainly to exterior improvements at the park, are in Box 4, Folder 1.

This collection also contains a small amount of personal material relating to Max B. Nahm and the Nahm family. Box 1 includes his speeches and writings (Folders 3 and 4), clippings (Folder 4), and early correspondence (Folder 5). Box 4 contains family photographs (Folder 2); photographs of Nahm on fishing trips (Folder 3); an autograph book and a small amount of correspondence of his wife, Sunshine Friedman Nahm (Folders 4 and 5); and two clippings relating to his daughter, Emanie Nahm (Folder 6).

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES***

The Collection.

Cecil E. Goode, *World Wonder Saved: How Mammoth Cave Became a National Park* (Mammoth Cave National Park Association, 1986).

### ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Nahm, Max Brunswick</b>	<b>1883-1932</b>	<b>482 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory and biographical data		3 items
Folder 2	Princeton University – partial catalog and greetings	1883-1884, 1954, n.d.	3 items
Folder 3	Speeches and writings on banking, commerce and journalism	1905-1935, n.d.	13 items
Folder 4	Publications, notices and clippings re: banking	1905-1935	13 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	1910-1915	3 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	1925-1926	5 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	1928, 1930	89 items
Folder 8	Correspondence	Jan.–April 1931	57 items
Folder 9	Correspondence	May–Dec. 1931	110 items
Folder 10	Correspondence	Jan.–June 1932	82 items
Folder 11	Correspondence	July–Dec. 1932	104 items

<b>BOX 2</b>	<b>Nahm, Max Brunswick</b>	<b>1933-1935</b>	<b>500 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	Jan.–May 1933	77 items
Folder 2	Letter from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Governor Ruby Laffoon re: Max Nahm	Apr. 22, 1933	1 item
Folder 3	Correspondence	June–Dec. 1933	114 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	Jan.–May 1934	101 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	June–Dec. 1934	82 items
Folder 6	Correspondence	Jan.–June 1935	63 items
Folder 7	Correspondence	July–Dec. 1935	62 items
<b>BOX 3</b>	<b>Nahm, Max Brunswick</b>	<b>1930-1940</b>	<b>326 items</b>
Folder 1	Correspondence	Jan.–June 1936	57 items
Folder 2	Correspondence	July–Dec. 1936	43 items
Folder 3	Correspondence	1937	18 items
Folder 4	Correspondence	1938	6 items
Folder 5	Correspondence	n.d.	5 items
Folder 6	Mammoth Cave – clippings	1925-1936, n.d.	18 items
Folder 7	Mammoth Cave National Park Association – Officers and employees	1931-1932, n.d.	3 items
Folder 8	Park Commission membership certificates; Kentucky Colonel certificate (Oversized items in C1-D5,#5)	1932-1940	4 items
Folder 9	Information, memos and brochures relating to Mammoth Cave National Park	1937, n.d.	19 items
Folder 10	Mammoth Cave Estate Trustees – Minutes	1930	2 items

Folder 11	Mammoth Cave National Park Association – Minutes	1930-1932	3 items
Folder 12	Mammoth Cave National Park Association and Kentucky National Park Commission – Joint meeting minutes	1930, 1932, 1934	6 items
Folder 13	Kentucky National Park Commission – Minutes	1930-1936	55 items
Folder 14	Mammoth Cave National Park Association – Executive Committee – Minutes	1930-1936	39 items
Folder 15	Mammoth Cave National Park Association – Operating Committee – Minutes	1931-1932	11 items
Folder 16	Kentucky National Park Commission – New Entrance Committee – Minutes	1932-1933	16 items
Folder 17	Mammoth Cave (Joint) Operating Committee – Minutes	1933-1936	21 items
<b>BOX 4</b>	<b>Nahm, Max Brunswick</b>	<b>1885-1924</b>	<b>129 items</b>
Folder 1	Mammoth Cave – Photographs of exterior improvements	n.d.	12 items
Folder 2	Photographs – Family	n.d.	60 items
Folder 3	Photographs – Personal (fishing trip)	n.d.	50 items
Folder 4	Nahm, Sunshine (Friedman) – Letters to	1886-1889	4 items
Folder 5	Nahm, Sunshine (Friedman) – Autograph book	1885-1887	1 item
Folder 6	Sachs, Emanie (Nahm) – Clippings	1924	2 items

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

MSS NAHM, Max Brunswick, 1883-1940  
329 1864-1958

Correspondence of Max B. Nahm relating mainly to his involvement with the Mammoth Cave National Park Association and the Kentucky National Park Commission in the establishment of Mammoth Cave National Park, Edmonson County, Kentucky. Includes some Association and Commission minutes. Also includes some of Nahm's speeches, writings, personal photographs, and material relating to the Nahm family.

3½ boxes. 41 folders. 1,437 items. Originals, photocopies, photographs.  
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### **SEE or SEE ALSO**

Arling, Emanie, 1893-1981  
 See:  
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Kentucky Rock Asphalt Company

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Nahm, Emanie, 1893-1981

See:

Sachs, Emanie (Nahm)

Philips, Emanie, 1893-1981

See:

Sachs, Emanie (Nahm)

Sachs, Jane Ellen, 1918-2009

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Hodes, Jane Ellen (Sachs)

Niedermeier/Jeffrey 09/29/2010