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George S. Gandy Title Abstract : A Collection Guide

Nelson Poynter Memorial Library. Special Collections and University Archives.

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The George S. Gandy Title Abstract

A Collection Guide by
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Introduction to the Collection

On 15 November 2004, Guy Greene donated an abstract of title prepared by St. Petersburg's West Coast Title Company. This instrument documents the land holdings of George S. Gandy, a local developer, along the Pinellas Peninsula. Greene, a retired educator, owned this abstract of title, a document originally prepared for George N. Bickner.

Preservation Note

This bound abstract of title occupies one file folder. While preservation measures may slow the physical deterioration of such items, these steps cannot prevent damage from occurring. To prevent further damage to the fragile papers and photographs, avoid exposing them to light for an extended period of time. Please report any tears or other damage so that library staff may take appropriate preservation or conservation measures. Protective gloves should be worn when handling all photographs. While no restrictions limit access to this collection, library staff will evaluate photocopying or digitization requests on an individual basis to ensure the long-term preservation of this unique collection.

Provenance of the George S. Gandy Title Abstract

This collection falls under the Local and Regional History provenance of the Special Collections and Archives department, Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg.

Scope and Contents

The bound contents occupy one archival envelope (approximately 0.1 linear foot). They include typewritten copies of deeds, contracts, mortgages, liens, judgments, and other such items compiled from the public records of the Clerk of the Circuit Court in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties through 12 July 1957. (Prior to 1912, Pinellas was part of Hillsborough County.) Early records include real estate agreements transferring land from the State of Florida to Hamilton Disston, a Philadelphia capitalist who acquired four million acres of Florida land in the early 1880s for \$1,000,000. A substantial portion of the Pinellas Peninsula was included in this transaction. Many of the documents pertain to a lawsuit involving Jacob S. Disston—Hamilton's brother—and the St. Petersburg Investment Company.

George S. Gandy (1851-1946), once an "office boy" for Hamilton Disston and later a building contractor in Philadelphia, arrived in St. Petersburg in 1903. He came at the urging of F. A. Davis, a Philadelphia publisher who came to St. Petersburg to establish a streetcar railway and electric plant. Davis had also served as president of the St. Petersburg Investment Company. Gandy quickly diversified his interests in the small but growing city of St. Petersburg. His La Plaza theatre, once located at Fifth Street and Central Avenue, opened as a public venue in 1913. In November 1924, "Dad" Gandy's namesake bridge connected St. Petersburg and Tampa at the height of the Florida land boom.

Other Information Resources

Researchers interested in the business activities of Gandy in Florida should also consult the George Gandy Papers located in Special Collections, Tampa Library, University of South Florida. For information about the USF Tampa library's Special Collections Department, call 813-974-2731.