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C. Perry Snell Papers : A Collection Guide

Nelson Poynter Memorial Library. Special Collections and University Archives.

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The C. Perry Snell Papers



Kathleen Arsenault, Dean of the Poynter Library, with Perry G. Snell, Janann Snell, and Laura Snell, descendants of C. Perry Snell, during a summer 2004 visit to USF St. Petersburg's Snell House.

A Collection Guide by

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Introduction to the Collection

This collection consists of letters and documents related to the Snell/Barnard land transaction in 1913. Snell became a prominent developer of St. Petersburg's North Shore, the Old Northeast, and Snell Isle communities. Snell acquired tracts of land between 26th Avenue North and 30th Avenue North, east of First Street North to Coffee Pot Bayou from the Erastus A. Barnard family of Chicago. Although documents in this collection have inclusive dates from 1898 through 1951, most of the materials relate to the 1913 land sale. These materials were acquired by purchase from Lighthouse Books through the Society for Advancement of Poynter Library.

Notable materials in this collection include correspondence between George T. Turner and Barnard from 1912. Barnard asked for a \$40,000 deposit, which represented one-quarter of the price. The full \$160,000 was expected to be paid in ten years, at six percent interest, before the deed would be granted. Turner, who later developed Sunken Gardens in St. Petersburg, acted as an intermediary and was to receive a commission of 2.5 percent. Turner protested requiring the amount to be paid in full, since apparently it would deter buyers. Barnard however insisted on the full amount, fearing that he would be left holding undesirable portions of land.

In November 1912, Turner found someone, presumably Snell, willing to agree to a binder of \$20,000, and apparently Turner decided to front the rest until the full amount was paid. On December 6, 1912, Erastus Barnard transmitted the deed for "the Northeast one-quarter, (1/4,) of Section Seven (7), and the West one-half, (1/2,) of the Northwest one-quarter, (1/4,) of Section Eight, (8,) Township Thirty-One (31,) South, Range Seventeen, (17,) East in Pinellas County Florida and another lot from the deceased Alice Barnard for \$160,000 to the Central National Bank of St. Petersburg, Florida.

A Central National Bank representative described Snell as an eastern syndicate who "now seems more interested in Tampa property who was willing to bargain if Barnard would accept \$25,000 now and another \$25,000 in thirty days."

Correspondence from Snell to Barnard in December 1912 suggested they were well-acquainted. "I trust that your health will improve enough for you to come down for your usual winters stay," Snell mentioned in a letter. Barnard's responses had a more businesslike tone. A January 8, 1913 letter from Barnard to J.J. Berry tells Berry to stop working on his orange grove on the land, presumably since Snell would soon take control of the parcel.

Most of the correspondence is in "land-deal-legalese," but some of the letters are more personal. In one, Snell asked E.A. Barnard for financial assistance and apparently tried to win his trust over Turner, who Snell claimed was acting dishonorably and selfishly. Snell ran into some trouble with Turner in 1913 when showing some of Barnard's land to a Mr. Johnson of Washington. Turner and Snell agreed to split any commissions on this sale, but then Snell accused Turner of trying to claim it all. On a related deal, Snell said that Turner asked him to claim a commission and split it with Turner so that Turner would not have to split his share with his own business partner. In the same letter to Barnard, Snell asked for an extension for \$4,000 from his \$25,000 bill. Barnard later granted the request but clearly was not pleased.

In the fall of 1913, Snell wrote that progress was being made on the land, but that it was expensive and therefore asked for an extension. "I have before me 24 contracts all past due upon which the parties have asked an extension and there is nothing to do but grant it. [...] We have 24

teams and 40 men going now. We have hard surfaced streets, curbs, and cement walks and every block graded on all streets East of Locust Street. Lot of property ready for the market this winter. Mr. Hamlett and myself will both build nice homes on the Bayou this winter.”

All of Snell’s correspondence after 1913 is typed on letterhead, and more formal. The years of World War I were apparently bad for Snell. “Our losses in the depression of the past 4 years caused by the war will run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, but we have taken our losses; and believe that a new era of prosperity in St. Petersburg is just arriving [...]” On March 13, 1919, Snell wrote that he has “recently purchased Mr. Hamlett’s interest in the firm.” In correspondence between Snell and Alice Howe, Snell is sometimes late on his payments. Each time Howe reminds him he will have to pay interest on the accumulating interest.

Preservation Note

The materials in this collection occupy one acid-free container. 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 materials in this collection, 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. 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. Patrons using this collection must adhere to copyright and fair-use guidelines and provide proper citation of sources appearing in their research.

Provenance of the C. Perry Snell Papers

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 contents occupy one archival container (approximately 0.25 linear foot).

Container Listing

Box 1

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- Folder 1: **Snell Papers, 1898, 1912**
- Folder 2: **Snell Papers, 1913-1914**
- Folder 3: **Snell Papers, 1917**
- Folder 4: **Snell Papers, 1920-1951**