

# Richardson, William Alexander

RG1 Nebraska. Governor  
SG5 Richardson, William Alexander, 1811-1875  
Papers: 1858  
Quincy, Illinois; Governor, Nebraska Territory, 1858  
Linear ft.: fr.  
Approx. no. of items: 6

## Biographical Note

William A. Richardson was born January 11, 1811, the son of James L. and Mary (Edmondson) Richardson of Fayette County, Kentucky. He attended the common schools in the area and took three years of preparatory courses at Walnut Hill Academy. Richardson attended college at Center College in Danville, Kentucky, and Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky. In his junior year he left to teach school for a year, after which he studied law. He was admitted to the bar in March, 1831, and practiced briefly at Shelbyville, Illinois. In 1832 he served for four months as a volunteer in the Black Hawk War. From 1832 to 1849 he lived and practiced law at Rushville, Illinois, where he began his political career. In 1834-1835 he was state's attorney for his district, resigning to assume his seat in the Illinois legislature in 1836. In 1838 he was elected to the Illinois Senate and in 1844 was returned to the legislature as speaker of the House. From the outbreak of the Mexican War until expiration of his enlistment, he served as a Captain in the 1<sup>st</sup> Illinois Volunteers. After 1847 he was repeatedly returned to Congress with large majorities, resigning in 1856 to run for Governor of Illinois, on the Democratic ticket. He was narrowly defeated, but in 1857 President Buchanan offered him the appointment to serve as governor of the Territory of Nebraska. Richardson first refused, but when, in December, the offer was again extended, he accepted. Immediately following his inauguration on January 12, 1858, he was called upon to recognize the action of the majority of the Territorial legislature which had moved unofficially to Florence, where they convened. A violent session had taken place on January 7<sup>th</sup>, typically between the Omaha delegation and the rest of the Legislature, which had resulted in a final split as the culmination of a sectional controversy which had persisted since the convening of the first Territorial Assembly in 1855. Richardson refused to recognize the action of this rump assembly, and the remaining minority adjourned the legislature at Omaha. In view of the fact that there was much work to be done, especially the job of adopting a legal code to replace the ones repealed in the preceding session. Governor Richardson called for a special session to convene in September. In the same proclamation in which he called the special session he announced his resignation, to be effective in September, 1858. It was not, however, until December that he was relieved of his post by J. Sterling Morton. Richardson returned to private life at his home at Quincy, Illinois, but in 1860 was called again to serve in Congress. He resigned his seat in the House to fill the unexpired term of Senator Stephen A. Douglas. After 1865 he held no major public office. He died at his home in December, 1875, leaving his wife Cornelia H. (Sullivan) Richardson, and their four surviving children.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This subgroup consists of one folder of six items relating to official acts of Nebraska Territory during the administration of Gov. William A. Richardson, 1858. These items consist of one receipt for a treasury draft, 1858, and five letters also dated 1858, several of which were written by T.B. Cuming after Richardson had taken office.

This material was transferred to the Historical Society from the Governor's vaults in July, 1845.

## DESCRIPTION

Folder 1. Receipt and letters relating to the Florence assembly and two official resignation's.

## ADDED ENTRIES:

Richardson, William Alexander, 1811-1875  
FLORENCE, NEBRASKA-HISTORY  
NEBRASKA. (Territory). LEGISLATURE-ASSEMBLY, 1858