

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION RECORD

RG5682.AM: James, William Hartford, 1831-1920

Letter copybook: 1869-1875

Dakota City, Lincoln, and West Point, Neb.: Sec. of State; Governor

Size: 1 volume

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William H. James, the son of Isaac E. and Betsy Bates, was born at Marion, Ohio on October 15, 1831. He was educated in the common schools and later engaged in farming, clerking and reading law. In 1853 James moved to Des Moines, Iowa where he joined the firm of Bates and Finch. In 1855 he was admitted to the Iowa bar and moved to Sergeants Bluffs, Iowa where he established a legal practice.

William H. James was married to Louisa Epler of Marion, Ohio on February 12, 1857 and moved to Dakota County, Nebraska where he had filed on a claim. The couple had three daughters and one son. James became active in political and civic affairs and was among the first trustees and aldermen of Dakota City. In 1860 he served as Justice of the Peace for Dakota Precinct and was elected county attorney in 1861 and 1863. The following year he was an appointed register of the Dakota County Land Office by President Lincoln, a position he held for five years.

In 1870 William H. James was elected Secretary of State on the Republican ticket in Nebraska's first state election. The following year, Governor David Butler was impeached and removed from office and James assumed the duties of acting Governor, a post which he held until January 13, 1873. During James' administration, controversy was often prevalent between the governor and the legislature. The years 1871-1873 saw the organization of several counties by the legislature, including Webster, Franklin, Adams, Dawson, Greeley, Harlan and others. Governor James was often called upon to arbitrate disputed elections and appoint officers to the various established governmental organizations of counties.

Upon leaving the governor's office, James moved to West Point, Nebraska and remained there until October of 1877. Upon his appointment as register of the Land Office in Colfax, Washington, James left Nebraska and took up a homestead in Washington. He remained there until his death on Feb. 1, 1920.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of one item, a letter copybook of William H. James. Letters in the book date from ca. 1869-1875 and mainly consist of personal letters from James to family and friends. Also included are personal business letters regarding the settling of accounts, etc. The letters to family and friends often contain personal news and news of local happenings and events. In one letter to his niece, James mentions his office was robbed. In some letters, James also discusses his opinions on various political events.

DESCRIPTION

Letter copybook, 1869-1875

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RG001, SG009: Official records of William James as Governor

See the *Nebraska History* Index for various citations relating to Governor James.

TMM 02-05-2010

Added entries:

Cuming County (Neb.) -- History
Dakota City (Neb.) -- History
Dakota County (Neb.) -- History
James, William Harford, 1831-1920
Politicians -- Nebraska
Politics and government -- Nebraska
West Point (Neb.) -- History