Records of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition

Identifier: RG0042
Creator: Nebraska. Commission for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition
Date: 1896-1902
Extent: 8 archival boxes, 4 volumes (approx. 4 cubic feet)

Historical Note
The Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition was held in Omaha, Nebraska from June-November 1898. It was originally conceived of by the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress, an organization with the purpose of promoting the commercial interests of the states and territories west of the Mississippi river. It was intended to be an event not unlike the World’s Fair except with a smaller scope, highlighting the products, resources, and industries of states west of the Mississippi. Omaha was selected as the site for the Expo and dates were set. As the Board of Directors began planning, the scope of the Expo quickly grew.

The United States government appropriated $200,000 for the Expo and recognized the event as a National and International Exhibition, which came with special privileges such as duty-free importation of exhibits, a commemorative postage stamp design, and the federal government inviting foreign countries to participate, several of which accepted. Thirty-six states and territories also participated, appropriating funds and creating commissions to oversee their contributions to the Expo. As hosts to the event, Nebraska played a large role in the organization of the Expo. The State, Douglas County, and City of Omaha all appropriated funds for the event and a state commission with a board of directors was created to oversee its administration.

Overall, the Expo was considered a success, boasting beautiful (albeit temporary) buildings, lush grounds, top of the line exhibits displaying the progress of the nation (and world), and a midway full of amusements and attractions. For a more in-depth summary of the Expo and its exhibits, events, and architecture, see the programs found in Series 6 (Ephemera and Miscellaneous Records, 1898-1899) of this record group.

Scope and Content
This collection relates to the Nebraska Commission, in particular the State Board of Directors, as they organized the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition and Nebraska’s contribution to the Expo. Records include general correspondence among the organizers and outside contributors, personnel records, financial documents,
reports outlining the Expo’s progress and success, contracts with vendors, plans for building the Expo spaces, and ephemera from the Expo itself, such as guest registers, catalogues, photo books, and more.

Records are arranged into 6 series by record type:
1. Correspondence, 1896-1898
2. Administrative Records, 1897-1898
3. Directors’ Reports, 1897-1898
4. Guest Registers, 1898
5. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, 1896, 1902
6. Ephemera and Miscellaneous Records, 1898-1899

A folder of reference material (one research report, dated 1960) can be found in box 8.

**Related Records**
See also RG001, SG17, records of Governor Silas Holcomb.

**Inventory**

**Series One Correspondence, 1896-1898**
Scope and content: This series consists of the Commission’s incoming and outgoing correspondence. It is arranged chronologically by year and alphabetically by surname of the correspondent. Job application correspondence has been separated out and is arranged chronologically.

**Box 1**

- f.01 Correspondence, A-B, 1897
- f.02 Correspondence, C-D, 1897
- f.03 Correspondence, E-F, 1897
- f.04 Correspondence, G-H, 1897
- f.05 Correspondence, J, 1897
- f.06 Correspondence, K-L, 1897
- f.07 Correspondence, M-N, 1897
- f.08 Correspondence, O-P, 1897
- f.09 Correspondence, R-S, 1897
- f.10 Correspondence, T-W-Y, 1897

**Vol. 1** Letterpress Book, J. N. Campbell, Assistant Secretary, March 18, 1898 - November 14, 1898

**Box 2**

- f.11 Correspondence, A-B, 1898
- f.12 Correspondence, C-D, 1898
- f.13 Correspondence, E-F, 1898
- f.14 Correspondence, G-H, 1898
- f.15 Correspondence, I-J, 1898
Series Two  Administrative Records, 1897-1898
Scope and content: This series consists of financial and administrative records of the Commission, including registers of warrants and vouchers for services/supplies rendered, property books, diaries of work, receipts, contracts, and ledgers. Registers of warrants are loosely organized by voucher number.

Access note: Volumes 1 and 2 contain Commission records, but part of each volume appears to have been used by the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) for other purposes in the 1940s. Volume 1 contains a museum register and Volume 2 contains a NSHS-sponsored WPA project guest register. Volumes are shelved with RG42.

Related Records:
RG014 Nebraska State Historical Society, Subgroup 12 Guest Registers
RG515 WPA, Subgroup 1 Administration, Series 9 Miscellaneous

Box 4
f.01 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898
f.02 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898
f.03 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898
f.04 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898

Box 5
f.05 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898
f.06 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898
f.07 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898
f.08 Register of Warrants, 1897-1898

Box 6
f.09 Payroll vouchers, 1898
f.10 Volume, Property and supplies ledger, 1897-1898
Volume, Property Book, Plans and Specifications, 1897-1898
f.11 Volume, Drawings designed and received, 1897-1898
f.12 Volume, Diary of work and events, Howard Stillson, June 22 – December 31, 1897
Volume, Diary of work and events, Howard Stillson, January 1 – June 14, 1898

f.13 Volume, Warrant Register, Aug. 1897 – Dec. 1898

Sale of Property Receipts, p.25
Invoice of State property, p.100

Volume, Book of Plans, 1897-1898

Box 7

f.14 Contracts and Specifications, 1897-1898
f.15 General Application Forms for Space, 1897
f.16 Insurance Policies, 1898
f.17 Vouchers, 1897-1898
f.18 Vouchers, 1897-1898
f.19 Vouchers, 1897-1898

Vol. 1

Journal, 1897-1898, 1940

Pgs. 1-153: Ledger tracking Trans-Mississippi Commission expenses by day, 1897-1898
Pgs. 154-503: Museum Register, May 10 – September 1, 1940

Vol. 2

Ledger, 1897-1898, 1940

Pgs. 1-37: Ledger tracking Trans-Mississippi Commission expenses by exhibit, with index at front, 1897-1898
Pgs. 200-245: Ledger tracking Trans-Mississippi Commission payroll by person, 1897-1898

Series Three  Directors’ Reports, 1897-1898

Scope and content: This series consists of reports to and by the Nebraska State Board of Directors of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition. Included are reports to the Board about Expo preparations, monthly reports from the Board to the Governor’s office about financial transactions for the Expo, and a final report from the Board to the Governor’s office. The records are arranged by type of report.

Box 8

f.01 Reports to the Directors, 1897-1898
f.02 Monthly Reports, 1897-1898
f.03 Report of the State Board of Directors, Nov. 1, 1898
Series Four  Guest Registers, 1898
Scope and content: This series consists of two oversize registers of guests at the Expo’s Nebraska Building. Entries include date of visit, name, address, and occasionally a comment.

Access note: Part of Volume 2 has also been used as the guest register for an unknown purpose in the 1930s. Based on the use of the volumes in Series 2 as NSHS guest registers, it could be inferred that Volume 2 was used for similar purposes, although there is no exact explanation contained in the volume itself.

Related records: RG014 Nebraska State Historical Society, Subgroup 12 Guest Registers

Vol. 1  Register of Visitors to the Nebraska Building, June 1, 1898 – October 31, 1898
Vol. 2  First section: Register of Visitors to the Nebraska Building, Oct. 11, 1898 – Oct. 31, 1898
        Second section: Register of Visitors for unknown (NSHS?) purpose, Aug. 17, 1937 – Oct. 13, 1938

Series Five  Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws, 1896, 1902
Scope and content: This series consists of two small printed booklets, one containing the articles of incorporation for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition and the other the by-laws of the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress.

Box 8  
  f.01  Articles of Incorporation, 1896  
  f.02  By-Laws of the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress, 1902

Series Six  Ephemera and Miscellaneous Records, 1898-1899
Scope and content: This series consists of miscellaneous records, printed materials, and other ephemera relating to the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition and the subsequent Greater America Exposition, which was held the following year on the same site.

Box 8  
  f.01  Printed ephemera, 1898-1899  
      • Booklet, “Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition Official Catalogue of Fine Arts, 1898”  
      • Form, “Stock Subscription, Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition”
- Booklet, “Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, Omaha, 1898, Issued by the Department of Publicity” (2 copies)
- Booklet, “Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, Compliments of J. I. Fruehauf”
- Booklet, “Greater America Exposition, Omaha, U.S.A., July 1st through November 1st, 1899”

**f.02** Printed ephemera, 1898

**f.03** Miscellaneous records, 1890s
- Clippings, drafts, blank forms, miscellaneous correspondence, notebook, flyers, drawings

**f.04** Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, 1896, undated

**End of Inventory**
Orig. Inv. Missing done 1967
PMC Word 7/31/2002
PMC/Word 7/9/2003
ABH 1/13/2022

**Subject headings**
- Agricultural exhibitions
- Bassett, Samuel Clay, 1844-1926
- Barrett, Jay Amos (1865-)
- Boyd, James E. (1834-1906)
- Colonialism
- Crounse, Lorenzo (1834-1909)
- Edmiston, J. H.
- Exhibitions
- Fairs
- Furnas, Robert W. (Wilkinson), 1824-1905
- Holcomb, Silas A. (1858-1920)
- Kimball, Thomas Rogers, 1862-1934
- Loomis, George W.
- MacLean, George E.
- Neville, William
Poynter, William A.
Rosewater, Victor (1871-1940)
Sprague, C. B.
Taylor, Frederick William (1860-1944)
Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition (1898 : Omaha, Neb.)
Walker and Kimball (Omaha, Neb.)
Walker, Charles Howard, 1857-1936
Wooster, Charles (1843-1922)