

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION RECORD

RG2511.AM: Sawyer, Andrew J., 1844-1924

Scrapbooks, etc.: 1887-1925
Lincoln, Lancaster County, Neb.: Attorney
Size: 0.5 cu.ft.; 1 box

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A.J. Sawyer was born near Ottawa, Illinois, in October 1844. He was orphaned not long after the family moved to Fillmore County, Minnesota, in 1856. He was taken in by friends and was able to work his way through Chatfield Academy, Minnesota, where he graduated in 1863. He had injured a leg as a child and did not serve in the Civil War. Sawyer was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1867, but taught and was a school administrator until he moved to Nebraska in 1875. He brought with him his bride, Winona S. Branch, who, in 1887, became the third woman to be admitted to the Nebraska bar.

Sawyer was an active civic figure during the next ten years. He was one of the organizers of the Lincoln Humane Society, and helped incorporate it with the Lancaster County Humane Society. From 1885-1887 he was president of the Law and Order League, and was appointed U.S. District Attorney, serving from 1887-1892. Also in 1887, Sawyer was elected Mayor of Lincoln, running on the reform ticket. He was opposed by a corrupt city government, and was beaten and with his city council, jailed. David J Brewer, then Judge of the U.S. Circuit Court, at the culmination of a running dispute with Sawyer, found him in contempt of court, and the Lincoln City Council sat in jail until freed by the Supreme Court.

Sawyer was master in chancery of the U.S. Circuit Court for over ten years after his appointment to that post in 1908. He was elected to the State Senate, but was forced to retire when his leg had to be amputated in 1916. Sawyer was a leading figure in Nebraska Democratic Party activities for many years, and was a close friend of William Jennings Bryan until Bryan endorsed "free silver." He remained active after his retirement, and was Vice-president of the First National Bank at the time of his death in Lincoln on March 5, 1924.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of one manuscript box of material arranged in three series: 1) Scrapbooks, 1887-1925; 2) Biographical material; and 3) Miscellany. The collection relates to the life and professional activities of A.J. Sawyer. Of most interest is the scrapbook of newspaper clippings relating to the 1887 controversy in Lincoln city government and the jailing of Mayor Sawyer and the city council.

INVENTORY

Series 1 - Scrapbooks, 1887-1925

Box 1

Folder

1. No. 1, 1887, Lincoln city government controversy
2. No. 2, 1887-1925, Obituaries of A.J. Sawyer and clippings relating to the philanthropic activities of Mrs. A.J. Sawyer

Series 2 - Biographical Material

3. 15 pp typescript autobiographical ms. covering the life of A.J. Sawyer until c.1865
4. Three handwritten sheets of notes on life of A.J. Sawyer
5. Memorials

Series 3 - Miscellany

6. Miscellany

Subject headings:

Brewer, Daniel Josiah, 1837-1910

Lawyers -- Nebraska

Lincoln (Neb.) -- City council

Lincoln (Neb.) -- Parks

Sawyer, Andrew J., 1844-1924

Sawyer, Winona (Branch), 1847-1939