

Holcomb, Silas Alexander, 1858-1920

Nebraska. GovernorSG017
Papers: 1894-1899
Broken Bow, Custer Co., NE:
Governor, 1895-1899
Cubic ft. 2.5
Approx. # of Items: 5,000

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Silas Alexander Holcomb was born in Gibson Co., Indiana, August 25, 1858. His parents, John C. and Lucinda R. (Skelton) Holcomb, managed to set aside enough money for Silas to be educated in the common schools, and to have one year in the Normal School. At the age of 17, he quit school to take a teaching job in order to save enough money to go to college.

The year after his father died in 1879, Silas took his mother, his younger brother, and his sisters west to Hamilton County, Nebraska. He first worked on a farm, and in 1880, began to read law in the office of Thummel and Pratt in Grand Island, Nebraska. In 1882, Silas was admitted to the bar of Nebraska. In that same year he was married to Alice Brinson in Mills County, Iowa. Shortly after he moved to Broken Bow, Custer County, where he set up practice and began farming a homestead.

Broken Bow was at the time a stronghold of the Populist party, and before long Silas became a major leader of that movement in the state. In partnership with J. S. Kirkpatrick (firm of Kirkpatrick & Holcomb) he became known among the people of Custer County as an astute lawyer, a knowledgeable politician, and a friend of the people.

Holcomb's political career began in 1891 when he defeated the Republican candidate for the office of 12th District Judge. He retained this office until 1894 when he stood as the Populist candidate for governor. With the support of William Jennings Bryan and a large number of Silver Democrats on a fused ticket, he was elected in spite of heavy Republican pluralities in other offices. He was re-elected in 1896, winning by a large majority and bringing with him a new Populist state legislature. Populist victories, such as Holcomb's, forced the Republican party in Nebraska to change its policies and realign its leadership, producing a large block of independent voters.

Silas Holcomb's administration came during the drought and depression following 1893. He headed a creditable, if not always entirely successful, effort to meet the desperate needs of the people of the state. Also during this period, he fought the graft and corruption in the state's treasury system and introduced changes in the state land and fiscal policy, as well as in the management and administration of state institutions.

Silas did not run for re-election in 1898 but retired. This proved to be only temporary as in 1899 he was elected to the State Supreme Court. He served on the bench until 1906 and for the last two years was chief justice. This was an extremely tiring time and Holcomb's health was irreparably damaged. Leaving the court, he moved to Seattle, Washington, where he lived from 1906-1909. He returned to Broken Bow where he built a house on his homestead and resumed the practice of law.

In 1913 he was appointed to serve on the newly created Board of Commissioners of State Institutions. In 1919 he resigned because of ill health and took up residence with his daughters in Bellingham, Washington. He died there on April 25, 1920, and his body was returned to Broken Bow for burial.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of the records of Governor Silas Holcomb arranged into five series: 1) Incoming Correspondence, 1894-1899; 2) Outgoing Correspondence, 1895-1898; 3) Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, 1896-1898; 4) Topical Files, 1895-1899; and 5) Miscellaneous, 1895-1899.

Collection has references to the drought relief program, the Spanish-American War, investigations of state funds, quarantine of cattle, 1895-1898, freight rates, legislation, irrigation, fairs and expositions, the sugar beet industry, American Protective Association, mortgage foreclosure laws, taxation, county bonds, Nebraska-South Dakota boundary dispute, railroads, and the Cuban Relief Commission, 1898.

Series One and Two contain the incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Governor, 1894-1899.

Series Three includes official records of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition. Benton Maret, addressee, was Governor Holcomb's personal secretary. A partial list of correspondents Luther J. Abbott; William Allen; J. T. Armstrong; W. N. Babcock; W. H. Barber; Samuel C. Bassett; J. V. Beghtol; George E. Bertrand; S. J. Bills; James E. Boyd; John P. Bratt; Jefferson H. Broady; Charles W. Bryan; William Jennings Bryan; A. S. Churchill; William F. Cody; Erasmus Correll; P. J. Cosgrove; Lorenzo Crouse ; Robert J. Damerall; Clem Deaver; Edgar S. Dudley; Frank D. Eager; J. H. Edmiston; Carl J. Ernst; Henry D. Estabrook; Edmund G. Fechet; Marshall Field; Charles Q. DeFrance; Robert W. Furnas; J. A. Gillespie; William Randolph Hearst; Gilbert M. Hitchcock; Edgar Howard; C. W. Hoxie; D. N. Johnson; William A. Jones; G. F. Keiper; Omer M. Kem; S. J. Kent; C. B. Little; Luther P. Ludden; George E. MacLean; J. H. Mackey; Charles F. Manderson; John T. Mallalieu; Samuel Maxwell; George D. Meikeljohn; Robert E. Moore; K. C. Morehouse; J. Sterling Morton; Albinus Nance; W. N. Nason; H. H. Nicholson; Algernon S. Paddock; William A. Poynter; Edward Rosewater; H. C. Russell; Alvin Saunders; D. A. Scovill; J. W. Seabrook; A. C. Shallenberger; Charles H. Sheldon; O. V. P. Stout; Victor Vifquain; William Henry Woods; Charles Wooster, and John Wilson.

DESCRIPTION

SERIES ONE: INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE, 1894-1899

B.01

f.01 December 1894

f.02-05 January 1895

f.06-10 February 1895

B.02

f.11-13 March 1895

f.14-16 April 1895

f.17-18 May 1895

f.19-20 June 1895
f.21 July, 01-15 1895

B.03

f.22 July 16-31 1895
f.23-24 August 1895
f.25-26 September 1895
f.27-28 October 1895
f.29-30 November 1895
f.31-32 December 1895
f.33 January 1896

B.04

f.34-35 February 1896
f.36-37 March 1896
f.38-39 April 1896
f.40 May 1896
f.41-42 June 1896
f.43 July 1896
f.44 August 1896
f.45 September 1896

B.05

f.46 October 1896
f.47-48 November 1896
f.49-50 December 1896
f.51-52 January 1897
f.53-54 February 1897
f.55 March 01-15 1897

B.06

f.56 March 16-31 1897
f.57-58 April 1897
f.59-60 May 1897
f.61 June 1897
f.62-63 July 1897
f.64 Aug. 01-15 1897

B.07

f.65 Aug. 16-31 1897

SERIES ONE: CORRESPONDENCE (cont)

B.07

f.66-67 September 1897
f.68 October 1897
f.69 November 1897
f.70-71 December 1897
f.72-74 January 1898
f.75-76 February 1898
f.77-79 March 1898

B.08

f.80-82 April 1898
f.83-85 May 1898

B.09

f.86-88 June 1898

f.89-90 July 1898

f.91 August 1898

f.92 September 1898

f.93 October 1898

B.10

f.94 November 1898

f.95 December 1898

f.96 Jan-Apr. 1899

SERIES TWO :OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, 1895-1898

B.10

f.01 1895

f.02 1896

f.03 1897

f.04 1898v. Vouchers & Criminal Letters, 1895

B.11

v.02 Executive Letters Feb. – July 1895

v.03 Drought Letters Feb. – Oct. 1895v. Public Letters Nov. 14, 1895 – Feb. 05, 1896

B.12

v.05 Public Letters Feb. 06, 1896 – May 07, 1896

v.06 Public Letters May 07, 1896 – Sept 12, 1896v. Public Letters Sept 14, 1896 – Jan. 14, 1897

B.13

v.08 Public Letters Jan. 05, 1897 – May 06, 1897

v.09 Public Letters May 06, 1897 – Sept 22, 1897v. Public Letters Sept 22, 1897 – Mar. 04, 1898

B.14

v.11 Public Letters Mar. 04, 1898 – Apr. 30, 1898

v.12 Public Letters May 01, 1898 – June 02, 1898

v.13 Public Letters June 02, 1898 – Sept 03, 1898

SERIES TWO: OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE, cont.

B.15

v.14 Public Letters Sept 06, 1898 – Dec. 27, 1898

SERIES THREE: TRANS-MISSISSIPPI AND INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION,
1897-1898

B.15

v.01 Directors Letterpress July 29, 1897 – Dec. 09, 1897

v.02 Directors Letterpress Dec. 09, 1897 – Mar. 16, 1898

NOTE: See also Topical Files, Series Four

SERIES FOUR: TOPICAL FILES, 1895-1899

B.16

f.01 Educational Lands & Funds, 1896-1897

Report on investment of school land funds, 1896

Agreement – Otoe Co. w/ Board for sale of
Refunding bonds, March 1896
f.02 Proclamations, 1895-1896
Arbor Day, 1895-1898
Election 1895
OVB#1
f.03 Arbor Day Proclamations (oversize)
Thanksgiving Proclamation, 1895
f.04 Messages, Vetoes & Legislation
Veto – H.R.139, April 1, 1895
Omaha Fire & Police Dept.
Vote on H.R. 522, April 1895
Executive Actions on Bills, 1895
H.R.246 – Mutual Insurance Companies, 1895
Approval S.F.78, March 5, 1895
Imitation Dairy Products
Veto – H.R.339, April 11, 1895
Legalizing interracial marriages
Recommendations to Legislature by County
Commissioners Association, 1896
Call for meeting to appoint member of Omaha Fire
And Police Commission, Jan. 2, 1897

SERIES FOUR: TOPICAL FILES (cont)

B.16

f.04 Messages, Vetoes & Legislation
Kansas resolution for cheaper freight rates to
Seaboard, Feb. 23, 1897, with report of
Commission To Secure More Equitable
Rates, Apr. 2, 1897

f.05 Nebraska National Guard – Petitions
mostly 1898 to volunteer for Spanish-American War
included are biographical information on George B.
Grinch, Lewis M. Koehler, and Capt. Edgar S. Dudley.
Also included is message of appreciation to
Volunteers from Gov. Holcomb.

f.06 Nebraska National Guard
Orders and correspondence, 1895-1899

f.07 Drought relief petitions and information, 1895-1896
Broadside, Relief Announcement, 1895
Charity Affair at Wallace, NE
Investigation of Wm. H. Cruse for invalid request, 1895
Randall Military Reservation appeal, 1896
In defense of Mrs. Nettie Strohm, 1896
For Christian Relief Association, 1895
To accept aide from other states, 1895
Letter of Recommendation, Rev. T. H. McLintock, 1895
Valley County for provisions, 1895
Banner County for relief, 1895
Box Butte County for relief, 1895

Beaver Pct, Buffalo County, n.d.
Bills of lading & shipping information

f.08 Drought and drought relief clippings

f.09 Petitions – miscellaneous
Judge – 8th District, June 1895
Medical Certification of Philip Lieber
Including hearing transcript
Customs Office on Canadian border, 1896
Nat'l Guard encampment at Hastings
John Wentz for Bee inspector at McCook
Resolution of Omaha Commercial Club on setting
Aside NW U.S. reserves, Feb. 2, 1897

f.10-11 Legislative Investigation of State Funds, 1898
f.12 Nebraska-South Dakota Boundary Dispute, 1895-1897
f.13 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, 1895-1898
f.14 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition
Directors Proceedings, July-Dec. 1898

SERIES FIVE: MISCELLANEOUS, 1895-1898

B.17

f.1 Criminal Letters & Information
f.2 Cuban Relief Commission, 1898
f.3 Elections
f.4 Fairs & Expositions
Cotton States & Intern'l Expo, 1895
Tennessee Centennial & Intern'l Expo, 1897
Invite – Paris Exposition, 1898
f.5 Livestock Inspections, 1898
f.6 Livestock Quarantines (Texas Fever), 1895-1899
OVB.#1 (RG001), K St.
f.7 Quarantine Proclamations
OVDrawer #1 (KSt.)
f.8 Maps of Quarantine Area
f.9 Special Commissions & Conferences, 1895-1900, including:
Dedication, Chickamauga & Chattanooga Nat'l
Military Park, 1895
National Irrigation Conference, 1895-1898
Western States Conference, Oct. 1895
Pan-American Medical Conference, 1896
Nebraska Beet Sugar Association, 1896
World's Anglo-Saxon Congress, 1897
Nat'l Personal Liberty League, 1898
International Mining Congress, 1898-1899
f.10 American Prison Review, May 1896
f.11 Misc. Appointments & Expenses
f.12 Misc. Broad sides
f.13 Castle Rock Irrigation Canal & Water Co. vs. Jurisch, 1897
f.14 The Conservative, July-Aug. 1898
f.15 Indexes to Letterpress books
f.16 Forest Memorial to Congress, 1897
f.17 Miscellany

ADDED ENTRIES:

Abbott, Luther J. (Luther Jewitt), 1831-1900
Allen, William (William Vincent), 1847-1924
Bassett, Samuel C. (Samuel Clay), 1844-1926
Boyd, James E., 1834-1906
Bratt, John P., 1856-1930
Broady, Jefferson H. (Jefferson Hunsaker), 1844-1908
Bryan, Charles W. (Charles Wayland), 1867-1945
Bryan, William Jennings, 1860-1925
Cody, William F. (William Frederick), 1846-1917
Correll, Erasmus (Erasmus Michael), 1846-1895
Cosgrove, P. James, 1871-1960
Cotton States and International Exposition, 1895
Crouse, Lorenzo, 1834-1909
Cuban Relief Commission, 1898
DeFrance, Charles Q., 1865-1950
Eager, Frank D (Frank Dewitt), 1872-1960
Ernst, Carl J. (Carl Julius), 1853-1932
FAIRS AND EXPOSITIONS-NEBRASKA
Furnas, Robert W. (Robert Wilkinson), 1824-1905
Hearst, William Randolph
Hitchcock, Gilbert M. (Gilbert Monell), 1859-1934
Howard, Edgar, 1858-1951
LIVESTOCK-QUARANTINES
Ludden, Luther P.
Mallalieu, John T. (John Thomas), 1852-
Manderson, Charles F. (Charles Frederick), 1837-1911
Maxwell, Samuel, 1825-1901
Meiklejohn, George D. (George Derue), 1857-1929
Moore, Robert E. (Robert Emmett), 1849-1921
Morton, J. Sterling (Julius Sterling), 1832-1902
Nance, Albinus, 1848-1911
NEBRASKA. BOARD OF CONTROL OF STATE INSTITUTIONS
Nebraska. Board of Educational Lands and Funds
Nebraska National Guard
Nebraska-South Dakota Boundary Commission
Paddock, Algernon S. (Algernon Sidney), 1830-1897
POLITICAL PARTIES-NEBRASKA
QUARTINE--VETERINARY
RELIEF WORK-NEBRASKA
Rosewater, Edward, 1841-1906
Saunders, Alvin, 1817-1899
Shallenberger, A. C. (Ashton Cokayne), 1862-1938
Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition, 1895
TEXAS FEVER-QUARANTINES-NEBRASKA

ADDED ENTRIES (CONT)

Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, 1898
UNITED STATES-HISTORY-WAR OF 1898
Vifquain, Victor, 1834-1906
WEATHER-DROUGHTS-NEBRASKA
Woods, William Henry, 1839-1927
Wooster, Charles, 1843-1922

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