

Governor James E. Boyd records

Identifier: RG001, SG015
Creator: Boyd, James E., 1834-1906
Nebraska. Governor (1891-1893 : Boyd)
Date: 1891-1893
Extent: 2 archival boxes; 1 cubic foot

Biographical Note

James E. Boyd was born in Tryone County, Ireland on September 9, 1834. He emigrated with his parents, Joseph and Margaret Boyd, to a farm in Belmont County, Ohio and later to Zanesville, Ohio. Learning the carpentry trade in his youth, he migrated with his brother to Omaha, Nebraska in 1856 where he became involved with a carpentry firm. Two years later, Boyd moved to Buffalo County and began farming and ranching operations near Gibbon. He amassed a large personal fortune through these operations together with general merchandise stores in Gibbon and Kearney, government contracts for hay and grain with Fort Kearney, and freighting operations on the plains. In 1868, he returned to Omaha and entered into various financial and business activities.

Boyd served in various political positions prior to becoming governor. Soon after his arrival in Nebraska, he served as the county clerk of Douglas County in 1857. He represented Buffalo County in the first state legislature in 1866, was a delegate from Douglas County in both of the constitution conventions in 1871 and 1875, served as a member of the Omaha city council in 1889, was the mayor of Omaha from 1881-1883 and 1885-1887, was a delegate to the Democratic national convention for several years, and served as a Democratic national committeeman from Nebraska.

Boyd was nominated for governor by the Democratic party in 1890 and narrowly defeated his nearest opponent, John H. Powers: 71,331 to 70,187. After Boyd had taken his oath of office and filed his bond on January 8, 1891, Governor John M. Thayer refused to vacate the office to Boyd on the grounds that he was not a citizen and therefore unqualified to be governor. He asserted that Boyd's father had never completed the naturalization process to legally become a U.S. citizen, and therefore Boyd was not a citizen and could not be governor. Boyd, on the other hand, believed his father had become a citizen when Boyd was in his teens, therefore making Boyd a citizen as well. Boyd had been acting accordingly since then, doing things only citizens can do, such as voting in elections, serving in the military, working in various governmental positions such as county clerk and mayor, and running for governor.

On the advice of the Nebraska Supreme Court, Thayer turned the office over to Boyd pending the judicial determination of the case. Boyd finally gave his inaugural message on February 6, 1891. However, the Nebraska Supreme Court rendered a decision in May 1891 sustaining

Thayer whereupon he was reinstated in the office. Boyd appealed the decision to the United States Supreme Court and on February 1, 1892 the Nebraska Supreme Court's decision was reversed. The US Supreme Court declared that both Boyd and his father were citizens – even if the paperwork could not be located, their naturalization could be inferred based on the fact they had each been exercising the rights of citizens for some time. Boyd then resumed his position as governor for the remainder of his term.

Upon leaving office, Boyd returned to his business activities in Omaha, St. Louis, and Chicago. Fourteen years after retiring, Boyd died at his home in Omaha on April 30, 1906 after a lingering illness. His wife, Anna Henry who he had married on August 22, 1858, along with three children survived him.

Scope and Content

This subgroup consists of two boxes of records of Governor James E. Boyd, arranged in three series based on record type.

1. Correspondence, 1891-1893
2. Applications, 1892
3. Miscellaneous, 1892

These records relate to the affairs of the Governor's Office during the administration of James E. Boyd, 1891-1893. The bulk of the collection consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence regarding Thayer's suit against Boyd in the Supreme Court, diseases among horses within the state, pardons, appointments and applications. Additional material of note includes a bill passed by Congress to increase the number of state representatives.

Description

Series One Correspondence, 1891-1893

Box 1

Folder 1	January 13, 1891-October 26, 1891
Folder 2	February 18, 1892-March 31, 1892
Folder 3	April 1, 1892-April 15, 1892
Folder 4	April 16, 1892-April 30, 1892
Folder 5	May 1, 1892-May 31, 1892
Folder 6	June 1, 1892-June 15, 1892
Folder 7	June 16, 1892-June 30, 1892
Folder 8	July 1, 1892-July 15, 1892
Folder 9	July 16, 1892-July 30, 1892
Folder 10	August 1, 1892-August 29, 1892
Folder 11	September 1, 1892-September 30, 1892

Box 2

Folder 12	October 1, 1892-October 15, 1892
Folder 13	October 16, 1892-October 31, 1892
Folder 14	November 1, 1892-November 30, 1892
Folder 15	December 1, 1892-December 15, 1892
Folder 16	December 16, 1892-December 31, 1892
Folder 17	General Correspondence, undated
Folder 18	Letterpress Book: Feb. 1892-Jan. 1893

Series Two Applications, 1892

Box 2

Folder 1	Position Applications at the Hospital for the Insane, 1892
Folder 2	Applications for Commissioner of Deeds, 1892

Series Three Miscellaneous, 1892

Box 2

Folder 1	Resolutions and Petitions, 1892
Folder 2	Reports and Proclamations, 1892

Finding aid updated by ABH on 3/30/2022