

# Governor Samuel W. Black records

Identifier: RG001, SG006  
Creator: Nebraska Territory. Governor (1859-1861 : Black)  
Black, Samuel W., 1818-1862  
Date: 1858-1861  
Extent: 2 folders, approx. 25 items

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Samuel W. Black was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, about 1818. He was the son of a Presbyterian Minister, the Rev. John Black, and received his early education in the common schools. While in his early 20's he embarked on what promised to be a highly successful career in law and in politics, in which he was a popular and strongly partisan Democrat.

He served from 1846 through the Mexican War as a Lt. Colonel in the 2nd Pennsylvania Volunteers, campaigning all the way to Mexico City and serving with distinction. At the end of the fighting he gave up what might have been another brilliant career and returned to politics and the practice of law. His war record and his reputation as a speaker and lawyer nearly won him a seat in Congress, but, when he was defeated, he was rewarded for this service to the party with the appointment to serve as Associate Justice of the Territory of Nebraska. He took with him strong sentiments, pro-Buchanan and pro-slavery as well as his young wife, the former Eliza A. Irwin, also of Pittsburgh. Judge Black was soon extremely popular and widely respected in most quarters, but his friends and enemies alike said that he was inclined to drink excessively.

He established residence in Nebraska City, Nebraska, and from there rode his rounds, holding court in the entire 2nd Judicial District south of the Platte River. When Governor Richardson resigned in 1858, Black was chosen by acclamation to receive the appointment to replace him, and thereby become the first governor who at the time of his appointment was actually in residence of the Territory. This fact won him strong support among the advocates of home rule.

Black was at the time visiting in the East, recovering from wounds received in a hunting accident, and in the interim the Governor's chair was temporarily filled by the Territorial Secretary, J. Sterling Morton. Morton had strong ambitions of his own, and his being passed over was probably a contributing element in the antagonism that existed between him and Black. Black resigned his judgeship and returned to the Territory in May 1859, to be sworn in as the fourth Governor of Nebraska.

Among his early acts was one which incurred suspicion and enmity of many. He vetoed a bill, which was passed over his veto, to outlaw slavery in the state. He did so on the grounds that the territorial enabling act gave the legislature no power to enact such a law, but his motives were not widely accepted in that time of increasing tension.

Black also figured prominently in the dispute between Samuel G. Daily and J. Sterling Morton over the Congressional seat which both claimed. Morton received an actual majority at the polls, but in April, 1860, Black declared the votes cast in L'Eau Qui Court precinct to be invalid, and issued a certificate declaring Daily the winner with a majority of the legal votes.

With the outbreak of the War in 1861, Black resigned from office and shortly thereafter returned to Pennsylvania. There he helped to muster a body of men designated as the 62nd Pennsylvania Volunteers, of which he was made Colonel. Samuel W. Black died leading his troops in a charge against rebel positions at Gaines Mills, Virginia on June 27, 1862.

See Nebraska History Publications v.1, p. 94

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This subgroup consists of two folders of material arranged in two series:

1. General Correspondence, 1858-1861
2. Miscellaneous

This subgroup relates to the affairs of the territorial governor's office during the administration of Governor Samuel W. Black, 1858-1861. The bulk of the material consists of correspondence relating to appointments and resignations. Included are vouchers and financial records regarding the Pawnee War of 1859 and transcripts of Nebraska v. Megeath, 1859 as well as biographical information on Samuel W. Black.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **SERIES ONE GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE, 1858 – 1861**

Box 1

Folder 1

1858 – 1861

### **SERIES TWO MISCELLANEOUS**

Box 1

Folder 1

1859; includes vouchers for supplies in the Pawnee War of 1859; Transcript of Nebraska v. Megeath; Arrest Warrants

Folder 2

Biographical information on Samuel W. Black compiled by Nebraska State Historical Society staff

Related information Nebraska History Publication v.2 Slavery p. 106-107 and p.184

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