

Governor Thomas B. Cuming

Identifier: RG001, SG003
Creator: Nebraska Territory. Governor (1854-1855 : Cuming)
Nebraska Territory. Governor (1857-1858 : Cuming)
Cuming, Thomas B. (Thomas Barney), 1827-1858
Date: 1854-1858
Extent: 6 folders

Biographical Note

Thomas B. Cuming was born in Genesee County, N.Y., on December 25, 1827. His father was a Protestant Episcopal minister of Grand Rapids, Michigan. After his mother died, he was raised by Rev. Penny, his uncle, at Rochester, New York. He graduated from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor at the age of sixteen. In 1848 he became a Lieutenant in Company A, 1st Regiment, Michigan Volunteers in the Mexican War. After discharge he settled in Keokuk, Iowa where he worked as a telegraph operator and later as editor of the Dispatch, a Democrat weekly paper. He married Margaretta C. Murphy, the daughter of John C. and Maria (Tiernan) Murphy of Keokuk, Iowa, not long before he was appointed to serve as the first Secretary of the newly created Territory of Nebraska in August 1854.

Within ten days of his arrival in Omaha on October 8th, the first Territorial Governor, Francis Burt had died and the duties of the office of Governor were given to Cuming. His first official act was a proclamation on the death of Francis Burt. He was thrust into the controversy of the choice for the capitol of the new territory of Nebraska. The choices for location were Omaha or Bellevue. Bellevue had the support of the region south of the Platte and Omaha was the choice of the Iowa politicians whose influence had been a major factor in winning territorial status. The Iowa side wanted the capitol located at Omaha to provide a boost for Council Bluffs and the western border of Iowa generally. Cuming ordered a census and, on the results, designated counties and legislative districts, and apportioned legislators accordingly. This created another controversy as the northern section received more representation and the southern section was for more heavily populated. Tempers rose high when the first session of the legislative council was ordered to meet at Omaha in January 1855. There was even a move to withdraw the South Platte region from the territory and annex it to Kansas. This move was not met with great enthusiasm in Kansas. The capitol controversy was not settled until 1867 when with statehood the capitol was located in Lincoln.

Thomas Cuming was relieved of the duties of acting governor on the arrival in February 1855 of March Izard who had been appointed to succeed Governor Burt. Izard resigned the office in October of 1857, again making Cuming Acting Governor. Cuming remained in office

until his death on March 23, 1858. His wife, Margaretta survived him and lived the remaining years of her life in Omaha with family members. She died in Omaha on February 12, 1915.

Scope and Content

Records are arranged by record type and organized chronologically.

Processing Note

This collection has been reprocessed several times, with records moving from this record group, to the Thomas B. Cuming manuscript collection, back to this record group. Additionally, some records were transferred from the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, from their Cuming-Hamilton Collection.

Related Records

The personal papers of Thomas B. Cuming and the Cuming family papers can be found in the manuscripts collections under the record group number **RG3654.AM**.

Description

Box 1

1. Correspondence, 1854
2. Correspondence, 1855
3. Correspondence, 1856-1858, n.d.
4. Receipts, bills and warrants, 1854-1858
5. Annual messages, 1855, 1857
6. Proclamations, resolutions and certificates (see also oversize)