

# Governor John M. Thayer records

Identifier: RG001, SG014  
Creator: Thayer, John Milton, 1820-1906  
Nebraska. Governor (1887-1892 : Thayer)  
Date: 1862-1892; bulk 1886-1892  
Extent: 12 archival boxes; 6 cubic feet

## Biographical Note

John Milton Thayer was born in Bellingham, Massachusetts on January 24, 1820 to Captain Elias and Ruth (Staples) Thayer. Thayer graduated from Brown University in 1847 with a law degree. He was soon admitted to the bar and practiced law in Worcester, Massachusetts until 1854.

Shortly after the creation of Nebraska Territory, Thayer and his family moved to Omaha. Here his interest in military affairs and previous experience as a lieutenant in the Worcester light infantry resulted in his appointment as head of the territorial militia. He led the territorial forces in two expeditions against the Pawnee. With the outbreak of the Civil War and President Lincoln's call for volunteers in 1861, he raised a thousand men in the territory and was commissioned Colonel of the First Nebraska Infantry Regiment. The First Regiment took an active part in the battles at Fort Donelson and Shiloh, and Thayer was promoted to Brigadier General, serving under Grant at Vicksburg.

Following the Civil War, Thayer took an active part in securing Nebraska's admission to the Union. When Nebraska became the 37th state, Thayer was one of the first two United States Senators from the state. He served in the Senate until 1871. In 1875, President Grant appointed him governor of the Wyoming territory and he held that post until 1878. He returned to Nebraska and in 1886, he was elected Governor on the Republican ticket. He was re-elected Governor in 1888.

Thayer was not a gubernatorial candidate in 1890, and normally his term of office should have expired January 8, 1891. However, he contested Governor-Elect James Boyd's eligibility to hold office due to a question about his citizenship (as he was originally born in Ireland). Thayer refused to vacate office and the controversy went all the way to the United States Supreme Court, where it was decided Boyd was a citizen and allowed to be governor. Following this decision, Thayer stepped down on February 8, 1892.

Thayer died on March 19, 1906 and is buried in Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln, Nebraska.

## Scope And Content

This subgroup consists of 12 boxes of the papers of Governor John M. Thayer, arranged in three series:

1. Correspondence, 1886-1892
2. Applications, 1886-1892
3. Miscellany, 1886-1892

These records relate to the affairs of the Governor's office during the administration of John M. Thayer, 1887-1892. The bulk of the collection consists of incoming and outgoing correspondence relating to the organization of counties; state normal schools; state institutions; droughts; water rights; railroads; the Boyd-Thayer gubernatorial controversy; the state militia; and the election of 1892. Additional material includes applications, petitions and proclamations.

### **Series One Correspondence, 1886-1892**

#### Box 1

- Folder 1. November 21, 1886-December 23, 1886
- Folder 2. January 1, 1887-January 31, 1887
- Folder 3. February 1, 1887-February 15, 1887
- Folder 4. February 16, 1887-February 28, 1887
- Folder 5. March 1, 1887-March 15, 1887
- Folder 6. March 16, 1887-March 31, 1887
- Folder 7. April 1, 1887-April 15, 1887
- Folder 8. April 16, 1887-April 30, 1887
- Folder 9. May 1, 1887-May 30, 1887
- Folder 10. June 1, 1887-June 15, 1887
- Folder 11. June 16, 1887-June 30, 1887

#### Box 2

- Folder 12. July 1, 1887-July 30, 1887
- Folder 13. August 1, 1887-August 31, 1887
- Folder 14. September 1, 1887-September 30, 1887
- Folder 15. October 1, 1887-October 31, 1887
- Folder 16. November 1, 1887-November 30, 1887
- Folder 17. December 1, 1887-December 31, 1887
- Folder 18. January 1, 1888-January 31, 1888
- Folder 19. February 1, 1888-February 29, 1888
- Folder 20. March 1, 1888-March 15, 1888
- Folder 21. March 16, 1888-March 29, 1888
- Folder 22. April 1, 1888-April 30, 1888
- Folder 23. May 1, 1888-May 31, 1888

#### Box 3

- Folder 24. June 1, 1888-June 30, 1888
- Folder 25. July 1, 1888-July 1, 1888
- Folder 26. August 1, 1888-August 15, 1888

- Folder 27. August 16,1888-August 31, 1888
- Folder 28. September 1, 1888-September 29, 1888
- Folder 29. October 1, 1888-October 31, 1888
- Folder 30. November 2, 1888-November 15, 1888
- Folder 31. November 16, 1888-November 30, 1888
- Folder 32. December 1, 1888-December 15, 1888
- Folder 33. December 17, 1888-December 31, 1888

Box 4

- Folder 34. January 1, 1889-January 5, 1889
- Folder 35. January 18, 1889-January 31, 1889
- Folder 36. February 1, 1889-February 15,1889
- Folder 37. February 16, 1889-February 29, 1889
- Folder 38. March 1, 1889-March 30, 1889
- Folder 39. April 1, 1889-April 27, 1889
- Folder 40. May 1, 1889-May 31, 1889
- Folder 41. June 1, 1889-June 15, 1889
- Folder 42. June 16, 1889-June 30, 1889
- Folder 43. July 2, 1889-July15, 1889
- Folder 44. July 16, 1889-July 31, 1889

Box 5

- Folder 45. August 1, 1889-August 15, 1889
- Folder 46. August 16, 1889-August 31, 1889
- Folder 47. September 3, 1889-October 31, 1889
- Folder 48. November 2, 1889-November 30, 1889
- Folder 49. December 1, 1889-December 31, 1889
- Folder 50. January 1, 1890-January 30, 1890
- Folder 51. February 1, 1890-February 15, 1890
- Folder 52. February 17, 1890-February 28, 1890
- Folder 53. March 1, 1890-March 15, 1890
- Folder 54. March 16, 1890-March 31, 1890

Box 6

- Folder 55. April 1, 1890-April 28, 1890
- Folder 56. May 2, 1890-May 15, 1890
- Folder 57. May 16, 1890-May 31, 1890
- Folder 58. June 1, 1890-June 30, 1890
- Folder 59. July 1, 1890-July 31, 1890
- Folder 60. August 1, 1890-August 30, 1890
- Folder 61. September 1, 1890-September 30, 1890
- Folder 62. October 1, 1890-October 30, 1890
- Folder 63. November 1, 1890-November 20, 1890

Box 7

Folder 64. November 21, 1890-November 30, 1890  
Folder 65. December 1, 1890-December 29, 1890  
Folder 66. January 2, 1891-April 30, 1891  
Folder 67. May 1, 1891-May 10, 1891  
Folder 68. May 11, 1891-May 20, 1891  
Folder 69. May 21, 1891-May 31, 1891  
Folder 70. June 1, 1891-June 15, 1891  
Folder 71. June 16, 1891-June 30, 1891  
Folder 72. July 1, 1891-July 31, 1891  
Folder 73. August 1, 1891-August 31, 1891

Box 8

Folder 74. September 1, 1891-September 30, 1891  
Folder 75. October 2, 1891-October 31, 1891  
Folder 76. November 1, 1891-November 30, 1891  
Folder 77. December 1, 1891-December 15, 1891  
Folder 78. December 16, 1891-December 31, 1891  
Folder 79. Undated  
Folder 80. Correspondence, 1862-1887  
Vol. 1. Letterpress Book, 1887

Box 9

Vol. 2. Letterpress Book, 1887  
Vol 3. Letterpress Book, 1887-1888  
Vol 4. Letterpress Book, 1888  
Vol 5. Letterpress Book, 1891

Box 10

Vol. 6. Letterpress Book, 1888-1889  
Vol 7. Letterpress Book, 1889-1890  
Vol 8. Letterpress Book, 1888-1889  
Vol 9. Letterpress Book, 1890

Box 11

Vol. 10. Letterpress Book, 1890-1891  
Vol. 11. Letterpress Book, 1890  
Vol. 12. Letterpress Book, 1891  
Vol. 13. Letterpress Book, 1891-1892

**Series Two Applications, 1887-1892**

Box 12

Folder 1. Applications for Commissioner of Deeds, 1887-1892

Folder 2. Correspondence for Hospital for Insane, 1887-1892

### **Series Three Miscellany, 1886-1906**

#### Box 12

- Folder 1. Petitions, 1886-1892
- Folder 2. Petitions, Undated
- Folder 3. Petitions, Undated.
- Folder 4. Proclamations, 1886-1892
- Folder 5. Reports and Resolutions, 1886-1892
- Folder 6. Miscellany, 1892
- Folder 7. January 1, 1892-February 5, 1892
- Folder 8. Speeches concerning J. M. Thayer, undated.
- Folder 9. Program, 1906
- Folder 10. Printed article, undated.
- Folder 11. Biographical data (written by his son, John M. Thayer, 1933)

Finding aid updated by ABH on 3/30/2022