

Guide to the Alexander A. Meggett Papers, 1839-1947

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Summary Information

Title: Alexander A. Meggett Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1839-1947

Creator: Meggett, Alexander A., 1824-1907

Call Number: Eau Claire Mss Q

Quantity: 0.4 c.f. (1 archives box)

Repository: Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

Archival Locations: UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

Abstract: Papers of Meggett, Eau Claire, Wisconsin's first lawyer, including correspondence, articles and speeches, biographical data, clippings, and mercantile business account books kept by him and his father, Alexander Meggett, in Chickopee Falls, Mass., in 1839. Correspondence includes family letters and exchanges with Wisconsin political figures Jeremiah Rusk and Elisha Keyes. Also included is a biography of Henry Cousins of Eau Claire, and a pamphlet concerning an 1870 railroad celebration at Eau Claire.

Language: English

Search Terms/Subject Terms

- Cousins, Henry, 1826-1888
- Keyes, Elisha W. (Elisha Williams), 1828-1910
- Rusk, Jeremiah McLain, 1830-1893
- Lawyers—Wisconsin—Eau Claire
- Railroads—Wisconsin—Eau Claire
- Chickopee (Mass.)—Commerce
- Eau Claire (Wis.)
- Wisconsin—Politics and government

Biography/History

Alexander A. Meggett, son of Alexander and Sarah Meggett, was born in Glasgow, Scotland, 26 March 1824, and emigrated to Uxbridge, Massachusetts, with his parents when three years of age. The family lived in Chickopee Falls, Massachusetts between 1837 and 1841, where the father opened a mercantile business in 1839. They soon moved to Slaterville, Rhode Island, where the son, Alexander A., continued working in cotton mills.

At the age of nineteen he decided to seek an education. He first attended Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts and then a preparatory school in Washington, Connecticut. After three years at Middletown University, he taught for a number of years while at the same time studying and reading law. He was admitted to the Rhode Island bar in 1853. In 1847 he had married and had two children. His wife died in 1854, and the following year his second wife died only a month after his remarriage.

In 1857, Meggett visited Eau Claire, Wisconsin and decided to settle there, becoming the first lawyer to reside in the city. That first year he was also editor of the *Eau Claire Times*. In addition to his legal practice, he became a civic leader, a public speaker, and was active in politics. In 1859, he unsuccessfully ran for state senator on the democratic ticket; and in 1870, ran for Congress on the Union ticket in opposition to Jeremiah M. Rusk, in a heavily Republican district. He served as city attorney for Eau Claire, was defeated for judge of the circuit court in 1876, was appointed Register of the United States land office at Eau Claire in 1885 and the following year made an unsuccessful bid for the office of county judge, this time on the Republican ticket.

Meggett was a prominent Mason and was installed as Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin on the evening of 10 June 1868, the day of his third marriage--to Sarah A. Drew of Milwaukee. Impaired hearing restricted his activities in later life. He died in Eau Claire in 1907.

Scope and Content Note

Although the Alexander A. Meggett Papers cover a span of years from 1839 to 1947, there are many periods for which there are no manuscripts. The papers do, however, give an overview of Meggett's life.

The correspondence from 1843 to 1846 is composed of letters exchanged between Meggett and his parents, and between Meggett and Mary C. Taber, who became his first wife. During this period he was attending school in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, and Washington and Middletown, Connecticut. Only one letter appears in 1851 - from Meggett to his mother while he was teaching and studying law at Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

Two other periods of correspondence are of particular note: (1) correspondence of 1870-1872, which includes an exchange of letters with Jeremiah M. Rusk when they opposed each other in the race for Congress, and letters from Elisha W. Keyes of the Republican Central Committee; and (2) letters written by Meggett in 1884 to 1887 to his son, Frank, who was in school in Providence, Rhode Island. A single letter, dated January 23, 1894, is from Mrs. Mary Elizabeth MacArthur.

A small group of articles and speeches includes a biography of Henry Cousins (1826-1889) of Eau Claire, and a printed pamphlet concerning the railroad celebration at Eau Claire, August 11, 1870, prepared by Meggett, who was chairman of the event. A folder of widely scattered clippings, 1857-1947, concerns chiefly his legal and political career, as does the scrapbook, 1857-1951. Filed with ephemera is a small notebook of notes relating to the presidential campaign of 1852.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Acquisition Information

Presented by Mrs. Messenger, Eau Claire, Wis., Oct. 14, 1954; and by Clyde Meggett, Eau Claire, Wis., March 21, 1967.

Processing Information

Processed by Margaret Hafstad, 1968.

Contents List

	Correspondence
Box/Folder 1/1	1843-1851
Box/Folder 1/2	1862, 1870-1872, 1881
Box/Folder 1/3	1884-1894
Box/Folder 1/4	Biographical material and genealogy
Box/Folder 1/5	Articles and speeches
Box/Folder 1/6	Clippings 1857, 1881, 1897, 1902, 1918, 1937, 1947
Box/Folder 1/7	Ephemera
Box/Folder 1/8	Volume 1: Day Book for mercantile business started by Alexander Meggett at Chickopee Falls, Mass., 1839
Box/Folder 1/9	Volume 2: Day Book for mercantile business started by Alexander Meggett at Chickopee Falls, Mass., 1839
Box/Folder 1/10	Volume 3: Day Book for mercantile business started by Alexander Meggett at Chickopee Falls, Mass., 1839
	Volume 4: Record book of miscellaneous accounts, Town of Eau Claire, 1856-1860; Accounts of legal

Box/Folder 1/11	services for Eau Claire Improvement Company, 1876-1877; Statement of expenses for building the Block on Barstow Street in Eau Claire, 1885-1886; Fire insurance policies, 1887-circa 1892
Box/Folder 1/12	Volume 5: Scrapbook of Alexander A. Meggett's life as a lawyer and politician
