

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections

Archives

GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Finding Aid for the  
John S. Lawrence Papers  
Collection # 002

August 2009 version

### Abstract

John S. Lawrence (1849-1924) was a Grand Rapids, Michigan lawyer and a businessman. He was an active member of the Democratic Party, a rare book collector, and member or officer in numerous civic organizations, such as President of the Grand Rapids Historical Society and the Grand Rapids Library Commission. This collection primarily documents Lawrence's position as Master in Chancery of United States District Court (1887-1924). There he acted as receiver for insolvent railroad companies and banks, including Northern National Bank and Big Rapids National Bank in Big Rapids, Michigan. Some of the papers provide documentation on the Depression of 1893 in the Grand Rapids area. Other papers relate to Lawrence's political interests and book collecting activities. The collection includes correspondence, Democratic County Committee records, several scrapbooks with reference to those he prepared for the Peninsular Club, legal records, title abstracts, miscellaneous papers, a catalog of his library books, and account books. Book items which he donated to the Grand Rapids Public Library, known to be part of the Local History Book Collection, are marked with a bookplate in his name at the front of the book. Some examples of these books are being added to this archival collection, when the items physical condition requires more protective housing. Other materials with a Lawrence bookplate or marked as given by Lawrence may be found in other archival collections, with some cross-referenced here when found.

Collection #: 002

Accession #: 00.000

Span dates: 1864-1921

Donor: John S. Lawrence Estate, 1926

Processor: William Cunningham, 1983, 1988.

Additions & revisions: R. Mayne, Dec. 1999-2007. Box Summary: Marcella Beck, August 28, 2000.

Size: 8 linear ft. (166.5 includes)

### Related Collections

240-2.3 Has a map of Part of Leonard & Co's Addition, from the "Lawrence Estate".

Box Summary

Box No.	Description of Contents	Box Description
Box Inventory, 8/4/2009		
1	correspondence	standard
2	corr.	standard
3	corr.	standard
4	corr.	standard
5	Dem County Comm Records	standard
	Scrapbooks	
6	legal records	standard legal
7	legal records	standard legal
8	legal records	standard legal
9	legal records	standard legal
10	title abstracts/misc.	standard legal
11	catalogue of library holdings	slim
12	Library Holdings books	gray lid/w 4x11.5x20
13	papers	standard
	Scrapbook	
14	correspondence	gray lid/w 4x16x20
15	correspondence	gray lid/w 3.5x11.5x17
16	correspondence	same
17	Organ. Docs.	Standard
Changed from slim to Standard 7/8/2008		
18	Travel photo album	gray lidded w label window
19	Biographical, photos, etc.	slim
Added 4/17/2007		

Note: Additional scrapbooks prepared by Lawrence, related to the Peninsular Club, or his political activities, are located in Coll. 239, the GRPL Scrapbooks Collection.

## Biography

John Strachan Lawrence was born in Waterford, New York, 15 April 1849, the oldest son of John and Cornelia Porter Lawrence. The family moved to Chicago when John Jr. was 14. John went on a trip to Europe with his parents in 1867, only to receive word upon their return to New York where his younger siblings had been staying, that his younger brother Porter had accidentally drowned. A family genealogy later prepared by John S. Lawrence documents the earlier deaths of two young daughters, Eva (1851-1862), and Mary Lawrence (1856-1858). Another sister, Mary Porter Lawrence was born in 1860 and survived to adulthood. Cornelia Porter herself died in March of 1868; his father remarried.

John S. Lawrence graduated from Harvard University in 1871, and after studying modern languages at the University of Berlin, he returned to the United States to manage his father's lumber interests in Newago, Michigan for about five year. In 1877 he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he studied law in the offices of Hughes, O'Brien, and Smillie.

Lawrence was admitted to the bar in 1879 and appointed Master in Chancery of the United States District Court in 1887, a position he held for 37 years. In 1887, the Comptroller of Currency appointed him receiver of Lowell National Bank and, in 1893, he was appointed receiver of Northern National Bank in Big Rapids, Michigan. An active member of the Democratic Party, Lawrence was nominated for state senator in 1876 and was a candidate for regent of the University of Michigan in 1889. He was defeated by Charles Belknap in the congressional election of 1891. Lawrence was a member of numerous civic organizations including the Grand Rapids Historical Association, the Grand Rapids Library Commission, Police and Fire Commission, one of the original organizers of the Peninsular Club, and the University Club.

Lawrence maintained a lifelong interest in literature. He studied Romance languages under James Russell Lowell at Harvard and attended lectures by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wordsworth Longfellow. He acquired a large personal library and a fine collection of rare books.

Of interest in the collection is a documents related to libel suit, Lawrence vs Mayor George Ellis and the GR Herald, dated 1909. It provides primarily autobiographical information by Lawrence, and mentions his windowed sister & family living in Muskegon, as well as his cousin and wife in Lansing, and relatives in Detroit. On July 31, 1922, the Grand Rapids Herald reported that Lawrence was the main beneficiary of the million dollar will of his cousin, William L. Porter of Horicom, N.Y. No research has been done to determine the final disposition of these funds, either before or at Lawrence own death. He never married, but his sister Mary Lawrence Loomis of Princeton, New Jersey, as well as his name sake nephew John L. Loomis of Ann Arbor, were with him in Grand Rapids at his death 20 July 1924.

Processor's Note

Users of the Lawrence papers should be aware that parts of the collection were separated from the main body of papers, after the collection was received by the Grand Rapids Public Library in 1926. The separated papers were cataloged under various subject headings in the card catalog and shelved in several different locations. Between 1983 and 1988, some of the dispersed papers were discovered and refiled with the Lawrence collection. Between 2000-xxxx, some books with his bookplate were moved to the collection, while other remain undiscovered in the book holdings of the Local History Reference Collection. In Feb. 2002 some photos found in the 54-12-11 Grand River Views - Log Jam 1883 folder were discovered to have the note "Lawrence Coll." On verso. These have been left in Coll. 54, with a photocopy representation of the images placed in the Lawrence Collection. There may be other photos given by Lawrence in Coll. 054 in addition to the items located to date. In April of 2007 a folder of photos was discovered within the Lawrence Collection containing 11 portrait photos of Michigan residence, not previously documented in the finding aid or people indexes. These have now been formally processed for the collection.

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
<b>Series I. Correspondence</b>		
Northern National Bank, Big Rapids, Mich.		
1	1-4	1893, A-Y.
1	5-6	1894, A-J.
2	1-2	1894, K-S.
2	3-6	1895, A-Y.
2	7	1896-97, A-G.
3	1-2	1896-97, H-W.
2	3-7	1898-99, A-Z.
14	Vol. 1	8/12/1890 - 1/17/1891 (letterpress copies).
14	vol. 2	7/20/1891 - 1/22/1892 (letterpress copies).
15	Vol. 1	1/23/1892 - 5/24/1892 (letterpress copies).
15	vol. 2	5/25/1892 - 10/6/1892 (letterpress copies).
13	1	General Correspondence, 1889-1890.
13	2	Taylor & Company, 1888-1889.
13	3	McElwee & Company, 1889-1891.
13	4	Balance Sheet, 1891.
13	5	Uncollectable Loans, 1888-1891.
Comptroller of Currency (United States Treasury Department)		
3	8	1893.
4	1-6	1894-1900.
16	Vol. 1	1893-1898 (letterpress copies).
4	7	Miscellaneous Correspondents, 1882-1896.

**Series I. Correspondence**

		Big Rapids National Bank (Big Rapids, Michigan)
4	8-10	1897-1898.
5	1-2	1899-1901.
13	6	A-D, 1892-96.
13	7	E-H, 1893;496.
13	8	I-P, 1886-1895.
13	9	S-W, 1888-1895.
5	3	Lowell National Bank (Lowell, Michigan), 1888,1890, n.d.
5	4	Sturgeon River Lumber Company, 1893.
5	5	Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1906.

**Series II. Legal Records / Publications**

**Claims**

- |   |     |  |
|---|-----|--|
| 6 | 1-5 | C. L. Ayers Coal Company vs Manistee and Northeastern Railroad Co. and the Michigan Trust Company, 1919-1920.      |
| 7 | 1-2 | C. L. Ayers Coal Company vs Manistee and Northeastern Railroad Co. and the Michigan Trust Company, 1919-1920.      |
| 7 | 3   | Metropolitan Trust Company of New York vs the Manistee, Filer City and East Lake Railway Company, 1904-1910.       |
| 7 | 4   | John E. Davidson and William Barnes, Trustees, vs the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Company, et al, 1895-1896. |
| 7 | 5   | Calvin P. Austin vs the Muskegon, Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Company, et al, 1887-1888.                     |
| 7 | 6   | Miscellaneous Railroad Claims, 1896, 1913, 1914.<br>Michigan Trust Company vs the Cass County Telephone Company.   |
| 7 | 7   | Anderson - Green, 1917.  |
| 8 | 1-2 | Hall - Wright, 1917.   |
| 8 | 3   | Fourth National Bank of Grand Rapids vs the Newago Manufacturing Company, 1887-1890.                               |
| 8 | 4   | New England Trust Company vs the Manistee Light and Traction Company, 1910-1912. William Scott Estate              |
| 8 | 5   | Ira Scott, et al vs James Smeed, et al, 1895-1896.   |
| 8 | 6   | Ira Scott, et al vs Conroy M. Stockhan, et al, 1893.   |
| 8 | 7   | Ira Scott, et al vs Thomas T. Condley, et al, 1898.  |
| 8 | 8   | Ira Scott, et al vs Isaac Woodruff, et al, 1892-1893.<br>Claims  |
| 8 | 9   | Scott Case Accounts, 1891-1893.  |
| 8 | 10  | Miscellaneous Scott Records, 1892-1897, n.d.   |

**Series II. Legal Records**

**Claims**

- |   |       |  |
|---|-------|--|
| 8 | 11-12 | Robert N. Bassett Company, et al v,4. the Kalamazoo Corset Company, 1915.  |
| 9 | 1-5   | O & W Thum Company (Tangelfoot Fly Paper) vs A. K. Ackerman Company (Grand Rapids Sticky Fly Paper Co.), ca. 1915-1922.  |
| 9 | 6     | John S. Lawrence vs Mayor George E. Ellis and the Grand Rapids Herald (libel claim), 1908. "...bearing on damage caused to John S. Lawrence by a libel on him, published in the Grand Rapids Herald, May 28, 1908, and purporting to be an interview with George E. Ellis."<br>L4:A9.1 Source of biographical information on Lawrence. |
| 9 | 7     | Miscellaneous Legal Records, ca. 1887-1919.  |
| 9 | 8     | Rules of Practice, as Amended and Adopted by the Superior Court of Grand Rapids, June 11, 1877<br>Formerly MKG340.G76<br>00.[3094].1 Added 7/8/2009  |

NOTE: Unknown Accession 00.[2244].1-12, legal documents from 2 court cases: Bullard vs American Seating & Garretson vs American Seating, may in fact be items separated from the John S. Lawrence accession. In the absence of an inventory showing this fact, however, these items have been processed for Coll. 233, the Grand Rapids Public Library Furniture Industry Coll., Boxes 14.6 & 14.7. 5/2/2002

**Abstracts of Title**

Grand Rapids

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 10 | 1 | Additions B-C, 1868-1886.   |
| 10 | 2 | Additions D-L, 1869-1890.   |
| 10 | 3 | Additions M-W, 1869-1888.   |
| 10 | 4 | Grand Rapids Township, 1872-1883.inse   |
| 10 | 5 | Town 8 N, Town 2 N, 9N, 1864-1889.  |
| 10 | 6 | Miscellaneous Papers, ca.1880s-1890s.<br>Mostly related to law practice, but one item RE Peninsular Club. |

**Series III. Democratic County Committee Records**

- |   |     |                 |
|---|-----|-----------------|
| 5 | 6   | Ledger, 1890.   |
| 5 | 7-8 | Vouchers, 1890. |

**Series IV. Scrapbooks and Personal Information**

**Scrapbooks**

- |        |    |  |
|--------|----|--|
| 5      | 9  | Original SB. [1885-1921] Political and personal.   |
| 5      | 10 | Political. 1903-1914. Photocopy only. Original housed at 239-  |
| 5      | 11 | U. S. Court Cases, 1887-1921. Photocopy only. Original housed at 239-  |
| 13     | 10 | Labeled "4. 1886-1903" on the cover. Original.<br>Includes: Politics, Peninsular Club, Grand Rapids Park and<br>Boulevard Association, Enoch Pettiford ...<br>Includes two portrait sketches of John S. Lawrence, as well as others,<br>published in local newspapers.<br>Formerly MKG9.L43. v.2 |
| 239-38 |    | Spine label: J.S. Lawrence Scrapbook. Elections, notices, 1864-1872<br>[1877]<br>Voter registration notices scrapbook, from City Clerk's Office?   |
| 239-60 |    | History of the Peninsular Club, told in newspaper clippings, 1881-1883 /<br>compiled by John Lawrence.<br>Formerly MKG367.L37 v.1  |
| 239-60 |    | Peninsular Club Scrapbook ,<br>Formerly MKG367.L37 v.2   |
| 239-60 |    | Peninsular Club Scrapbook, Programs, invitations, membership list, 1890<br>Formerly MKG367.P37a  |

**Biographical**

- |    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 19 | 1 | Newspapers articles, Census information, and family genealogy<br>information.<br>See also 2-9-6. |
|----|---|--|

**Series IV. Scrapbooks and Personal Information**

**Photographs**

- 19 2 Portrait photos (11 4/17/2007)  
The items found at Box 10-7 4/17/2007, and not previously documented in the finding aid. Moved to a new box with Lawrence biographical information.
1. Lucius Paddock (Boy)
  2. Charles Paddock (Boy)
  3. Martin Ryerson
  4. D. Darwin Hughes
  5. E.M. Doubleday
  6. Henry M. Hinsdale
  7. E. Crofton Fox
  8. Rev. J. Morgan Smith
  9. Henry S. Fralick, by Arthur & Philbric studio
  10. Henry Fralick, with a handwritten bio note.
  11. George Luton, Newaygo
- 19 2 William Black.  
This photographic image, in poor condition, was found at 2-10-6 with Misc. Papers, and moved to 2-19-2 to sit with other portrait.
- 18 x Album. Windward Islands. Travel photographs.  
Formerly R917.9.W72. 00.[2313].1 6/14/2002

**Series V. Miscellaneous Documents.**

**Library books**

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 11 | 1 | Misc. handwritten lists of books  |
| 11 | 2 | Catalog of Books in the Library of John S. Lawrence. Thick ledger type volume giving a unique number, author, title, publisher and date, etc. for each item. His name on the cover. |

**Account books**

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| 12 |  | Account Books, 1896-1899. (3, 4/17/2007) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● L4:A4.1 Receiver's Certificates of Proof of Claim.</li><li>● L4:A4.4 Claimants Exhibit E. Dec. 15, 1896. "Car Book"-- Spine. Most pages are blank.</li><li>● [Payment schedules for Investors of Big Rapids Bank]</li></ul> |
|----|--|--|

**Series V. Miscellaneous Documents.**

**Organizations Records**

City of Grand Rapids

See Coll. 303 items in this collection from Lawrence.

- 17 .5 The Story of a Home : an outline of what is being done for children by the D.A. Blodgett Home. Feb. 1922  
Formerly MKG362.7.B62s  
00.[3364].1 Added 4/1/2008
- 17 1 The Country Club of Grand Rapids. G.R. : Valley City Engraving & Printing Co., Issued May 15, 1896. 00.[1328].1  
Formerly MKG367.C83 [Added 11/1/2001]  
Includes Articles of Assoc., By-Laws, Members.
- 17 2 Articles of Association, Pension Act and By-Laws of the Grand Rapids Fireman's Fund Assoc. of G.R., Mich. 1895. 00.[1376].1  
Formerly MKG352.3.G762 [Added 11/2001]
- 17 2.5 Kent Country Club, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Membership list, Treasurer's Report, By-Laws, 1905.00.[2757].1 2/24/2004  
Formerly M796.K41
- 17 3 Rules Governing the Kent Scientific Museum, adopted by the Board of Library Commissioners of the city of Grand Rapids, Mich. Apr. 29, 1910.00.[1377].1  
Formerly MKG507.K41 [Added 11/2001]

**Series V. Miscellaneous Documents.  
Organizations Records**

- Masons
- 17 3.1 History, ByLaws and Roster, DeMolai Commandery, no. 5, K.T. Grand Rapids, Mich. 1884.  
Formerly MKG366.F87  
00.[3373].1 Added 4/1/2008
- 17 3.3 OwashtaNong Boat Club. Yearbook. 1887  
Formerly MKG367Ow1  
00.[3360].1 Added 3/18/2008  
loose pages
- 17 3.5 Peninsular Club. Yearbooks  
Formerly MKG367.P37  
1881 00.[3362].1  
1881-1885. 00.[3362].2 Added 3/18/2008  
Includes an illustration of the 1883 club building by E. Eldin Deane, del.  
This building served the club at Fountain St. and Ottawa until 1913, when it was demolished and the 1914 building still in use in 2008, built on the same site.
- 17 4 Tamarack Mining Co., Report, June 30, 1891 & June 30 1892. [Annual Report] Boston : L. Barta & Co. 00.[1565].1-2  
Formerly M622.T15 [Added 11/9/2001]  
See also items in Coll. 303, Police Dept.  
See also items in Coll. 303, Fire Dept.  
See also items in Coll. 303, Public Welfare Commission

**Miscellaneous Reference Books**

- 17 5 Grand Rapids Herald Almanac for 1899 : a volume of Statistical, official and historical, City, State, National and General Information. ..v. 1,no. 1, Jan. 1899. Quarterly. 00.[1853].1  
Formerly MKG316.76 [Added 12/31/2001]
- 17 6 William B. Ogden and early days in Chicago : a paper, read before the Chicago Hist. Society, Dec. 20, 1882. / by Hon. Isaac N. Arnold.  
Chicago : Fergue Printing Co., 1882. 00.[1647].1  
Formerly M92.Og2 [Added 1/23/2002]

See also Coll. 254 for "The House that Jack Built : Fuller & Rice Lumber Co." gift of Lawrence  
See also Coll. 254 for " Lots for Sale on Monthly Payments / E.W. Fliss & Co. 11/10/2005

**Series V. Miscellaneous Documents.**

17 7

**Miscellaneous Additions**

Adams Express Co. "Contract"s. Contain stamps.

2 dated 1898 & 1899, "To the Comptroller of Currency, Wash. D.C."

2 dated 1899, To: Fred N. Edie, Big Rapids, Mich." 00.[2083].1-4

**Maps**

FF-12-D

[Plat] Kent County, Wyoming township + pt. Of Walker. 6 N 12 W.

Entry added 1/12/2004