

INVENTORY

GEORGE A. CRAWFORD COLLECTION

# 168

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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INTRODUCTION:

George Addison Crawford, originally from Pine Creek township, Pennsylvania, distinguished himself as a politician, journalist, and developer of the American West. He played an influential role in the development of Kansas and Mesa County, Colorado providing not only financial backing, but the ambition and inspiration necessary for the growth and development of a community.

Crawford was born on July 27, 1827 to George and Elizabeth White Crawford. He received his early education at Clinton Academy and Lock Haven Academy. He was graduated from Jefferson College. Shortly after his graduation Crawford accepted a teaching position in Salem, Kentucky, and, later, managed a school in Canton, Mississippi.

In 1848 Crawford returned to his native Pennsylvania to commence his studies of the law under the auspices of Messrs. Allison White and James W. Quiggle. While still engrossed in his studies Crawford became the owner and editor of the Clinton Democrat, the party organ of Clinton county.

In 1853 Crawford was appointed the postmaster general. He spent most of his time in Washington, D.C. He also, during this time period, became a correspondent for numerous newspapers, among them the Pittsburg Daily.

During the 1850's Crawford became actively involved in politics, mainly as a staunch supporter of various politicians and their party. During the political contests of 1854 and 1855 Crawford publically denounced the know-nothings in Pennsylvania and Washington. In 1855 he was a delegate to the democratic state convention of Pennsylvania. Also, in 1855, he actively campaigned for Pennsylvania Governor Bigler's election to the United States senate. In 1856 Crawford was chosen by the Pennsylvania state convention as a candidate for presidential elector. He took to this new position with vigor, campaigning for presidential nominee Buchanan. During the fall of 1856 Crawford was once again on the campaign trail, this time for the nomination of William F. Packer for governor.

In the spring of 1857 Crawford became intrigued with the idea of heading west. He joined a party going to Fort Scott, Kansas to secure a town site. Crawford eventually became a partner in the town project. He played an active

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role in the development and progress of the town.

During the years that the country was torn by civil strife Crawford established and maintained law and order in Kansas by organizing a committee of safety. He conducted this campaign of martial law as a private citizen, and, for his good services, the people of Kansas honored him with the nomination for governor. Although nominated, the election was declared illegal by the Supreme Court because of a misconstruction of the Constitution. Crawford ran for governor two more times, but was defeated on both occasions.

In 1867 Crawford was appointed commissioner of immigration. Four years later, in 1871, he was appointed a United States commissioner for the centennial celebration. His responsibilities as commissioner included attending meetings in Philadelphia, serving as secretary of the committee of manufacturers, taking an active role as a member of the committee on ceremonies, and arranging the program for the July Fourth celebration.

After attending the Philadelphia Exposition in 1877 Crawford became intrigued with the untapped country of Colorado's western slope. He believed it had the potential of becoming a great empire. Crawford's plan was to establish a large town "at or near" the junction of the Colorado and the Gunnison Rivers. Crawford was unable to do this immediately since the Utes considered the region their home. Not until the region became public land as a result of the Treaty of 1880 and the exodus of the Utes had occurred could the frontiersmen begin making claims on the area. Once the land was vacated Crawford, along with R.D. Mobley, M.R. Warner, S.W. Harper, and Colonel Morris, made his way to the junction of the two rivers. On September 26, 1880 the future townsite of Grand Junction was formally located on the northeast side of the rivers. Crawford immediately organized a town company and building commenced. Cabins were erected for the new inhabitants of the valley, an irrigation ditch was constructed, a hotel was built, and a company to manufacture pressed brick was established. In time, stores were opened, churches and schools were organized, the railroad came through the area, and doctors, lawyers, and the like settled in Grand Junction. By 1881 Grand Junction was taking on the characteristics of a hopeful, ambitious, and thriving community. Crawford, an avid believer and supporter of

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Grand Junction, was at the root of its successful growth and development.

Crawford once again pursued journalism, serving as president of the Grand Junction Publishing Company and founding the Grand Junction Star. Up until his death in January 1891 Crawford continued to be involved in both the business and civic activities of Grand Junction. At the time of his death he was one of the most revered citizens of the community.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The collection is comprised of correspondence (1880-1882), diaries (1851-1888), an address book, legal documents pertaining to the Wm. Keith vs. Town Site of Grand Junction case (1884), photocopies of indorsements for Thomas B. Crawford (1905), photocopies of receipts from the Vanderbilt Hotel (4/25/1881), and a bible autographed by George A. Crawford (1867). The collection also contains a clipping from the Grand Junction Daily Star pertaining to Crawford's death and microfilm of correspondence (1815-1943).

The diaries found in the collection delineate in great detail the activities of George A. Crawford. They throw valuable light on pioneer development of the American West, specifically Fort Scott, Kansas, and Grand Junction, Colorado.

PROVENANCE:

The records found in the George A. Crawford Collection were donated by three different individuals. The first donation appears to have been made in 1935 by John G. McKinney; the second by Lucy Kissell, a great-great niece of George Crawford, in 1961; and the final donation was made by Lucile Allsion Barnes. There is no record of the date of the Barnes' donation.

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- FF 1: Correspondence, 1/31/1880-5/26/1882 and no date
  - FF 2: Diary, 1851
  - FF 3: Diary, 1853
  - FF 4: Diary, 1854
  - FF 5: Diary, 1855
  - FF 6: Diary, 1862
  - FF 7: Diary, 1865
  - FF 8: Diary, 1867
  - FF 9: Diary, 1868
  - FF 10: Diary, 1869
  - FF 11: Diary, 1876
  - FF 12: Diary, 1879
  - FF 13: Diary, 1881
  - FF 14: Diary, 1882
  - FF 15: Diary, 1888
  - FF 16: Address book
  - FF 17: Legal documents/Brief and Argument: Wm. Keith, Contestant, vs. Town Site of Grand Junction, 1884
  - FF 18: Indorsements: Thomas B. Crawford, 1905 (copies)
  - FF 19: Receipts: Vanderbilt Hotel, 4/25/1881 (copies)
  - FF 20: Bible, 1867 (Autographed by George A. Crawford)
- OVERSIZED: Newspaper clipping: Grand Junction Daily Star, 1/29/1891 (George A. Crawford obituary)
- Microfilm of correspondence, 1815-1943