

COLORADO GOVERNORS

George Alfred Carlson



Scope and Content Note

This governor's collection comprises sixteen cubic feet of material related to George Alfred Carlson during the two years (1915-1917) he served as governor of the state. Record series included in the collection are the Executive Record; correspondence; extraditions and requisitions; proclamations; speeches and messages; appointments; reports; and maps. The materials date essentially from 1915-1917, although there are a few items that precede and post date the official term. The physical condition of the collection is generally good.

Biography

George Alfred Carlson was born on October 23, 1876, in Alta, Iowa, of parents who emigrated from Sweden. The family moved to Colorado in 1881 and established a home in Villa Park, a suburb of Denver. Carlson graduated from the Colorado State Normal School in 1898 and then attended the University of Colorado. He graduated in 1902 and soon obtained his Juris Doctorate of Law Degree from the same institution in 1904. He then practiced law for one year in Lewiston, Idaho, and in 1905, returned to Colorado to establish a private law office in Fort Collins.

In 1908, he was elected District Attorney for the Eighth Judicial District and was serving in that capacity when he was elected governor in 1914. The coal strike that resulted in the "Ludlow Massacre" in 1914 near Trinidad, Colorado, and liquor prohibition were the main issues in the campaign. Voters split their votes between the Democrats and the Progressives which resulted in the Republicans ousting Democrat Governor Elias M. Ammons and electing George A. Carlson as governor. The Republicans also won most of the state offices in this election.

The influence of the reforming Progressive Party was felt upon the new administration. With the inauguration of Governor Carlson, the coal strike conditions that had dominated Ammons' administration virtually ceased and the federal troops that were brought in to squelch the strike in southern Colorado soon withdrew. Carlson aided in passing laws designed to promote the cause of labor and prevent strikes. For instance, the Industrial Commission of Colorado was created to investigate the causes that lead to strikes. The Commission was also given regulatory power intended to improve the conditions of labor, and was authorized to arbitrate in cases of disputes between employers and employees, with a view to preventing strikes or lockouts. These measures greatly reduced the number of strikes by requiring a thirty day cooling off period. A Workmen's Compensation law was also passed, providing insurance for laborers against accidents or death.

John D. Rockefeller Jr., one of the larger property owners in the coal field where the principal strikes in

1914 had occurred, made an inquiry into the causes of the strike difficulties. After considerable investigation, he evolved a policy whereby all interests were to be given representation, unions were not to be antagonized, and non-union men were to be safeguarded.

Governor Carlson was instrumental in securing passage of another reform measure, the state "Dry Law" which prohibited the manufacture or sale of alcohol. He strongly encouraged the enforcement of this law as well as many others, which resulted in the reduction of lawlessness during his tenure. After one term, he resumed his law practice in Denver and resided at 915 Emerson Street.

He first married Rosa Lillian Alps of Loveland, Colorado, on August 29, 1906. She died on February 9, 1922, leaving four children: Elaine B., George Alfred Jr., John Swink, and Juanita Rosa. His second marriage was to Louise Avery Crose, whom he married on March 11, 1924. They had one daughter, Bessie.

Carlson died in Denver on December 6, 1926, and is buried in Greeley, Colorado.

Bibliography - Governor George A. Carlson

- Hafen, Le Roy R. Colorado and Its People. New York, Lewis Historical Publishing Company. Inc., 1927
- George Alfred Carlson Collection, 1876-1926, Denver, CO.: Colorado Historical Society Collection.
- George Alfred Carlson Collection, 1876-1926, Denver, CO.: Denver Public Library Western History Collection.
- State Historical and Natural History Society of Colorado. History of Colorado. Denver, CO., Linderman Co., Inc., 1927.

Series Descriptions

Executive Record

The Executive Record contains executive orders; appointments; legislative messages; pardons; extraditions and requisitions; honorary citations; and proclamations which were issued by Governor Carlson during his term of office from 1915-1917. This is the best source in the Carlson collection for documentation concerning the labor and prohibition reform measures that were passed during his administration.

Correspondence

Included in this series is correspondence between Governor Carlson and his constituents, state agencies, and other public officials. The correspondence is organized generally by subject. There is specific correspondence concerning peace efforts in Europe, the Panama-Pacific Exposition, and an investigation of the Racing Commission.

Speeches and Messages

Carlson's Inaugural Address (1915) and a speech concerning the coal strikes (1915) comprise this series.

Proclamations

This series consists of Executive Proclamations issued by the governor and deposited as filings in the Office of the Secretary of State. It includes a proclamation concerning the Armenian Jews who were being killed by the Turks in World War I.

Applications and Appointments

Three cubic feet of records documenting gubernatorial appointments to state agency offices and various boards and commissions are included in this series.

Reports

This series consists primarily of annual or biennial reports to the Governor from state agencies. Included is an investigative report of the Reformatory warden.

Extraditions and Requisitions

This series includes documentation concerning the surrendering of alleged criminals to a different jurisdiction for trial. Documentation may include the application for extradition, the warrant for arrest, and correspondence from the Attorney General's office concerning the extradition.

Maps

Two maps of San Isabel National Forest with the Proposed Spanish Peaks Game Reserve (1916) and the Colorado National Forest (1917) comprise this series.