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GEORGE BLISS AGNEW
PAPERS, 1868-1929

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Summary

Main Entry: George Bliss Agnew (1869-1941)

Title: George Bliss Agnew Papers, 1868-1929 (bulk dates 1882-1929)

Size: 3.9 linear feet. (9 archival boxes, 4 vols.)

Source: Gift of Charles D. Agnew, 1947.

Restrictions: none

Description: George Bliss Agnew (1869-1941) was a New York City businessman and politician. He entered politics in 1895 with his appointment as aide-de-camp to New York Governor Levi P. Morton. The collection consists mainly of political correspondence that includes letters from constituents, associates, and others interested in the outcome of bills before the New York State Legislature. A letter copybook (1893-1904) is almost entirely of a business and political nature. The collection also incorporates assorted political material, including speeches, assembly and senate bills, and newspaper clippings. Papers pertaining to the Racetrack Gambling Act (1907-1909) document the dominant political issue within this collection. A very small portion of the collection contains family papers. There are four scrapbooks concerning family interests, the National Guard, New York State and national politics.

Special Formats: Artifact (ceremonial pen).

Biographical Note

George Bliss Agnew was born in New York City in 1869. He graduated from Princeton University in 1891 and began his business career with the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Company. He was subsequently associated with Cuyler, Morgan and Company, a banking firm in New York City, and many other firms including North Star Mines Company, which owned gold mines and mining claims near Nevada City, California (Agnew was elected the company's president in 1908) and the Northern Empire Mines Co. LTD., a Canadian gold mining company and a subsidiary of the Gauley Mountain Coal Company, of West Virginia (Agnew was a Vice President). He was also a director of the Phelps Dodge Corporation, Intertype Corporation, Robins Conveying Belt Corporation, Towne Securities Corporation, Erie and Kalamazoo Railroad Company, and the Mexican Northern Railway.

Agnew entered public and political life in 1895 with his appointment as aide-de-camp (with rank of colonel) on the staff of Governor Levi P. Morton of New York. From 1896 to 1911 he was a member of Squadron A, New York National Guard, with the rank of first lieutenant. In 1901, Agnew was elected as Republican member of the New York State Assembly, followed by two terms in the New York State Senate, 1906-1910. He was widely known for co-sponsoring the Agnew-Hart Act prohibiting racetrack gambling in New York.

Agnew volunteered extensively at many organizations and clubs. He had a long association with the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, serving as treasurer, clerk of the session, an elder, and as a trustee from 1899 through 1941. He was treasurer and a director of the Honest Ballot Association. He was also a trustee of Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York, and was active in Children's Village, Dobbs Ferry, New York; West County Defense Council; Sons of the Revolution; Union League; Princeton Clubs; Downtown Association of New York City; and the Seawauhaka Corinthian Yacht Club, Oyster Bay, Long Island, NY.

George B. Agnew was married in New York City, December 2, 1908, to Emily Dutilh, and had five children: George Bliss, Andrew Gifford, Charles Dutilh, Catherine Madelaine Dutilh, and David Agnew. George Bliss Agnew died in New York City, June 21, 1941.

Scope and Content Note

This collection, which spans the dates 1868-1929, is particularly strong in political correspondence from 1896 to 1929. Most of the correspondence is with business and political constituents; a small amount is with private citizens of New York. The political letters reflect the progress of legislation pending before the Assembly and Senate – for example, the racetrack gambling issue – in which Agnew's position could influence the passage or death of such bills. The assorted political materials in this collection parallel the political correspondence consist of Assembly Bills (1903-1911); Senate Bills (1905-1910); speeches; newspaper clippings; campaign matter; and dinner and reception invitations. The Agnew-Hart Act (anti-racetrack gambling) files contain transcriptions of legislative hearings and debates, public advertisements, and newspaper clippings. There is a small series of family papers which consists of Agnew's pocket diary (1898) and miscellaneous financial, real estate and other documents. There are four scrapbooks, pertaining to the National Guard (1894-1897); family interests; and state and national politics. There are also several certificates and awards, including a ceremonial pen.

Provenance: Gift of Charles D. Agnew, the son of George Bliss Agnew, 1947.

Series Arrangement Note

The collection is arranged in five series: 1) Political Correspondence; 2) Assorted Political Materials; 3) Racetrack Gambling Series; 4) Family Papers; 5) Scrapbooks, certificates and awards.

Series Descriptions

Series I: Political Correspondence, Boxes 1-4

This series, spanning 1896-1929, is arranged chronologically. The political letters are between George Bliss Agnew and businessmen, political colleagues, constituents, and the general public. Among the notable items in this series are letters to and from Booker T. Washington, Gov. Charles E. Hughes, and woman suffragists, and debates pertaining to the naming of Hunter College.

The bulk of the letters were prompted by the various acts that were pending before the Assembly and Senate. Represented in this series are letters in reference to the Agnew-Hart Act (racetrack gambling bill), from religious societies (Presbyterian Church, Quakers), horse breeders, political constituents and private citizens expressing support for the Agnew-Hart cause. Other legislation discussed in this correspondence includes the Insurance Company Tax bill; Lincoln Hospital and Home Bill; Child Labor Bill; Brown's Bill (prohibiting the shooting of wild fowl in the spring); Mortgage Tax Bill; Nye Bill (pertaining to the New York State Nurses Association); Farm Colony Bill (to establish a reformatory for misdemeanor offenders); the McGrath Bill (promoting Sunday baseball games); Water Supply Bill; Boshart Cannery Bill (abolishing the sixty hour week for women over sixteen years of age employed in canneries); and the Callan Motor Vehicle Bill.

Other political correspondence refers to Agnew's campaigns, including letters of support and congratulatory notes; business and organizational matters (North Star Mining Company and Presbyterian Church); and the National Guard. The remainder of this series consists of a letter copybook, 1893-1904, reflecting all of the issues noted above.

Series II: Assorted Political Material, Boxes 5-6.

This series contains a variety of political materials concerning a number of that G. B. Agnew encountered during his public and political life. Assembly Bills (1903-1911) and Senate Bills (1905-1910) are chronologically arranged. There are a number of speech drafts including a speech by Herbert Parsons before Convention of the Thirteenth Congressional District, September 20, 1910; a speech by Gov. Charles E. Hughes at the dinner of the Brooklyn League, April 16, 1908; Gov. Charles E. Hughes' speech at the

dinner of the Northside Board of Trade at Ebling's Casino, March 5, 1908; G. B. Agnew's Racetrack legislative speech at Convention Hall, Buffalo, New York, October 3, 1908; and Gov. Hughes' speech to the Young Republican Club, February 20, 1909.

There is an Assembly calendar book cover and a small black book (handwritten) that provides an index to the bills introduced in the Assembly as well as typed and handwritten rough drafts of various bills. There are a number of newspaper clippings, (only some of which are intact) as well as political campaign matter. The campaign materials include Agnew's campaign committee papers; documents pertaining to Agnew's senatorial nomination and re-nomination; a campaign card bearing a photograph of Agnew; handwritten list of the New York County vote, 1908; *Evening Post* voter's directory; official returns of the Twenty-Seventh Assembly District in the election of November, 1908; Parsons vs. Agnew vote analysis; and G. B. Agnew's statement on the campaign.

The series also contains subject files on various political issues including child labor, North Star Mining Company, women's suffrage, osteopathic legislation, environment and animal issues, labor law, tax issues, direct nominations, motor vehicle laws, highway and roads issues, marriage issues, and the El Dorado Convention report. This series ends with dinner and reception invitations, a map of fifty senatorial district, and two engraved portraits of Gov. Charles E. Hughes.

Series III: Racetrack Gambling, Box 7

This series, 1907-1909, is arranged chronologically and contains files pertaining to the racetrack gambling issue, such as transcripts of hearings, the debate in the Senate, booklets and flyers, newspaper clippings, and debates pertaining to the "public advertisement of poolselling." There are two pages missing from the Percy-Gray Law Bill repeal of 1908.

Series IV: Family Papers, Box 8

This series contains only a few items representative of Agnew's family. The series includes a 1898 pocket diary in which belonged to G. B. Agnew. The diary mainly documents Agnew's trip to Colfax county, New Mexico, which began on November 17, 1898. Also in this series are Catherine A. Bliss's memorandum to her will; a birthday letter from G. B. Agnew to one of his sons; letters pertaining to the Bliss Estate and Warren House (Agnew properties); newspaper clippings announcing the wedding of Catherine Sanford Agnew (G. B. Agnew's sister), and letters written to Agnew and his family by Helen Adain (1913-1918) whose relationship to the Agnew family is not know. See also: **Series V**.

Series V: Scrapbooks, Certificates and Awards, Boxes 9-10

This series consists of four scrapbooks. Two of these books pertain to G. B. Agnew's National Guard activities (1894-1897) and contain newspaper clippings, reception invitations, letters, and Western Union telegram messages.

The remaining two scrapbooks hold material that relates to Agnew's political and family life. The political scrapbook consists almost entirely of brittle newspaper clippings (1907-1910). There are a few letters within this scrapbook.

The family scrapbook is in better condition but is very limited in terms of the amount of material that it holds in reference to Agnew's family life. The family scrapbook contains pressed flowers (dating from 1877); prints reflecting the family's religious interests (Martin Luther); ink drawing by "cousin Arthur"; political newspaper clippings; and Princeton University commencement cards.

Included in this series are certificates and awards issued to G. B. Agnew. Attached to one of these certificates is a pen. Gov. Charles E. Hughes used this pen in the signing of Chamber 506 of the laws of 1908, amending the Percy-Gray Law (Agnew-Hart Bill).

Container List

Box	Folder	Contents
1		I. POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE
	1	1896-1902
	2	1903 January- February
	3	1903 March
	4	1903 April-December
	5	1904 January-March
	6	1904 April-November
	7	1905 January-February
	8	1905 March (2-13)
	9	1905 March (15-31)
	10	1905 April
	11	1905 May-December
	12	1906 January-February
	13	1906 March-May
	14	1906 July-October
	15	1906 November-December
	16	1907 (January-December)
	17	1908 January
	18	1908 February
2	1	1908 March (1-14)
	2	1908 March (14-31)
	3	1908 April (1-15)
	4	1908 April (16-19)
	5	1908 May
	6	1908 undated letters
	7	1908 June-September
	8	1908 October-December
	9	1909 January-February
	10	1909 March
	11	1909 April-May

	12	1909 October-December
	13	1910 January (3-14)
	14	1910 January (15-31)
	15	1910 February
	16	1910 March (1-15)
	17	1910 March (15-30)
	18	Booker T. Washington 1910 February
	19	Hunter College 1910 February-March
	20	Hunter College Petitions 1910
3	1	1910 April (1-15)
	2	1910 April (16-30)
	3	1910 May (1-13)
	4	1910 May (14-30)
	5	1910 June-October
	6	1910 November
	7	1911-1929
	8	N.D.
	9	Letterheads (blank)
4	1	Letter copy book 1893-1904
		II. ASSORTED POLITICAL MATERIAL
5	1	Index of bills
	2	Rough drafts (bills)
	3	1903-04 Assembly Bills
	4	1905-06 Assembly Bills
	5	1907-11 Assembly Bills
	6	1905-07 Senate Bills
	7	1908-10 Senate Bills
	8	Speeches
	9	Newspaper Clippings
	10	Newspaper Clippings
	11	Newspaper Clippings
	12	Campaign Matter
	13	Campaign Matter

- 6 1 Child Labor
 2 North Star Mining Company 1868-1929
 3 Osteopathic bill, women's suffrage issues
 4 Environmental/Animal issues, Labor law, Election law
 5 Tax issue, direct nominations, honorable discharge extract
 6 Banking law, motor vehicle law, highway/roads issues
 7 Marriage issues, tenement house, immigration
 8 El Dorado Convention report, booklet/strikes
 9 Miscellaneous
 10 Invitations to dinners and receptions
 11 Map of fifty Senatorial districts
 12 Gov. Charles E. Hughes (portraits)

III. RACETRACK GAMBLING

- 7 1 1907 March 20, Agnew-Hart Bill
 2 1908 Percy-Gray Law (bill repeal)
 3 1908 February 19, Agnew-Hart Bill
 4 1908 March 4, Agnew-Hart Bill
 5 1908 April 1, Agnew-Hart Bill (debate in Senate)
 6 1908 June 11, Agnew-Hart Bill
 7 1909 April 5, Poolselling (advertisements)
 8 1909 April 15, Poolselling (advertisements)
 9 Agnew-Hart Bill newspaper clippings
 10-11 Miscellaneous racetrack gambling issues

IV. FAMILY PAPERS

- 8 1 1898 Pocket Diary
 2 Warren House Purchase/ telephone bill
 3 Bliss Estate/ newspaper clippings
 4 Helen Adain, 1913-1918
 Certificates and Awards *see: Box 9*

V. SCRAPBOOKS

- 1 National Guard 1894-95
 2 National Guard 1895-97
 3 Family Interests 1882-83
 4 Political Interests 1907-10

CERTIFICATES AND AWARDS

State of New York. Executive Chamber. Albany. 18 June 1908. Hon. George B. Agnew. "My dear Senator." Pen attached to vellum letter used by Charles E. Hughes to sign Chapter 506 of the Laws of 1908, amending the Percy-Gray Law, one of the "Agnew-Hart bills." Letter signed and sealed by Charles E. Hughes

Certificate. To the Republican National Convention. New York 9 April 1908. Signed. Delegates William Harris Douglas, George B. Agnew.

Award. Appointing George B. Agnew to the position of First Lieutenant as Assistant Inspector of small arms practice, 11 April 1905. Document signed and sealed.