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## Finding aid for the John S. Lawrence papers Collection 002

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Prepared by William Cunningham

Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

111 Library Street NE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Business Number: 616-988-5497

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URL: <https://www.grpl.org/history/>

## Table of Contents

Summary Information .....	3
Biography .....	3
Scope and Contents .....	4
Administrative Information .....	5
Related Materials .....	6
Controlled Access Headings .....	6
Collection Inventory .....	6
Series I. Correspondence .....	6
Northern National Bank, Big Rapids, Mich. ....	6
Comptroller of Currency (United States Treasury Department) .....	7
Big Rapids National Bank (Big Rapids, Michigan) .....	7
Series II. Legal Records / Publications .....	7
Claims .....	7
Abstracts of Title .....	8
Series III. Democratic County Committee Records .....	9
Series IV. Scrapbooks and Personal Information .....	9
Scrapbooks .....	9
Biographical .....	9
Photographs .....	10
Series V. Miscellaneous Documents. ....	10
Library books .....	10
Account Books, 1896-1899. ....	10
Organizations Records .....	10
Maps .....	11

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Rapids History Center
<b>Title:</b>	John S. Lawrence papers
<b>ID:</b>	Collection 002
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1864-1921
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Linear Feet 19 boxes
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .
<b>Abstract:</b>	John S. Lawrence (1849-1924) was a Grand Rapids lawyer and 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 the 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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Biography

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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.

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 years. 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 document related to a 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's 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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Scope and Contents

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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. Circa 2000, some books with his bookplate were moved to the collection, while others remain undiscovered in the book holdings of the local history collection.

In February 2002 some photos found in Collection 54, Box 12 Folder 11 (Grand River Views - Log Jam 1883) were discovered to have the note "Lawrence Coll." on the verso. These have been left in Collection 54, with a photocopy representation of the images placed in the Lawrence Collection. There may be other photos given by Lawrence in Collection 054 in addition to the items located to date.

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Grand Rapids History Center

Grand Rapids Public Library

111 Library Street NE

Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Business Number: 616-988-5497

[localhis@grpl.org](mailto:localhis@grpl.org)

URL: <https://www.grpl.org/history/>

### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Accession Number: 1983.001; Donor: John S. Lawrence Estate, 1926

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Related Materials

### Related Materials

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Controlled Access Headings

- personal papers
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History

## Collection Inventory

### Series I. Correspondence

Title/Description	Instances	
Lowell National Bank (Lowell, Michigan), 1888,1890, n.d.	Box 5	Folder 3
Sturgeon River Lumber Company, 1893.	Box 5	Folder 4
Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1906.	Box 5	Folder 5

### Northern National Bank, Big Rapids, Mich.

Title/Description	Instances	
1893, A-Y.	Box 1	Folder 1-4
1894, A-J.	Box 1	Folder 5-6
1894, K-S.	Box 2	Folder 1-2
1895, A-Y.	Box 2	Folder 3-6
1896-97, A-G.	Box 2	Folder 7
1896-97, H-W.	Box 3	Folder 1-2
1898-99, A-Z.	Box 2	Folder 3-7

8/12/1890 - 1/17/1891 (letterpress copies).

	Box 14	Folder Vol. 1
7/20/1891 - 1/22/1892 (letterpress copies).	Box 14	Folder vol. 2
1/23/1892 - 5/24/1892 (letterpress copies).	Box 15	Folder Vol. 1
5/25/1892 - 10/6/1892 (letterpress copies).	Box 15	Folder vol. 2
General Correspondence, 1889-1890.	Box 13	Folder 1
Taylor and Company, 1888-1889.	Box 13	Folder 2
McElwee and Company, 1889-1891.	Box 13	Folder 3
Balance Sheet, 1891.	Box 13	Folder 4
Uncollectable Loans, 1888-1891.	Box 13	Folder 5

### Comptroller of Currency (United States Treasury Department)

Title/Description	Instances	
1893	Box 3	Folder 8
1894-1900.	Box 4	Folder 1-6
Vol. 1 1893-1898 (letterpress copies).	Box 16	
Miscellaneous Correspondents, 1882-1896.	Box 4	Folder 7

### Big Rapids National Bank (Big Rapids, Michigan)

Title/Description	Instances	
1897-1898.	Box 4	Folder 8-10
1899-1901.	Box 5	Folder 1-2
A-D, 1892-96.	Box 13	Folder 6
E-H, 1893;496.	Box 13	Folder 7
I-P, 1886-1895.	Box 13	Folder 8
S-W, 1888-1895.	Box 13	Folder 9

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series II. Legal Records / Publications

### Claims

Title/Description	Instances
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Finding aid for the John S. Lawrence papers Collection 002

C. L. Ayers Coal Company vs Manistee and Northeastern Railroad Co. and the Michigan Trust Company, 1919-1920.	Box 6	Folder 1-5
C. L. Ayers Coal Company vs Manistee and Northeastern Railroad Co. and the Michigan Trust Company, 1919-1920.	Box 7	Folder 1-2
Metropolitan Trust Company of New York vs the Manistee, Filer City and East Lake Railway Company, 1904-1910.	Box 7	Folder 3
John E. Davidson and William Barnes, Trustees, vs the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Company, et al, 1895-1896.	Box 7	Folder 4
Calvin P. Austin vs the Muskegon, Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Company, et al, 1887-1888.	Box 7	Folder 5
Miscellaneous Railroad Claims, 1896, 1913, 1914.	Box 7	Folder 6
Anderson - Green, 1917.	Box 7	Folder 7
Hall - Wright, 1917.	Box 8	Folder 1-2
Fourth National Bank of Grand Rapids vs the Newago Manufacturing Company, 1887-1890.	Box 8	Folder 3
New England Trust Company vs the Manistee Light and Traction Company, 1910-1912. William Scott Estate	Box 8	Folder 4
Ira Scott, et al vs James Smeed, et al, 1895-1896.	Box 8	Folder 5
Ira Scott, et al vs Conroy M. Stockhan, et al, 1893.	Box 8	Folder 6
Ira Scott, et al vs Thomas T. Condley, et al, 1898.	Box 8	Folder 7
Ira Scott, et al vs Isaac Woodruff, et al, 1892-1893.	Box 8	Folder 8
Scott Case Accounts, 1891-1893.	Box 8	Folder 9
Miscellaneous Scott Records, 1892-1897, n.d.	Box 8	Folder 10
Robert N. Bassett Company, et al v.4. the Kalamazoo Corset Company, 1915.	Box 8	Folder 11-12
O and W Thum Company (Tangelfoot Fly Paper) vs A. K. Ackerman Company (Grand Rapids Sticky Fly Paper Co.), ca. 1915-1922.	Box 9	Folder 1-5
John S. Lawrence vs Mayor George E. Ellis and the Grand Rapids Herald (libel claim), 1908. L4:A9.1	Box 9	Folder 6
Miscellaneous Legal Records, ca. 1887-1919.	Box 9	Folder 7
Rules of Practice, as Amended and Adopted by the Superior Court of Grand Rapids, June 11, 1877. Formerly MKG340.G76; 00.[3094].1.	Box 9	Folder 8

## Abstracts of Title



Title/Description	Instances	
Grand Rapids additions B-C, 1868-1886	Box 10	Folder 1
Grand Rapids additions D-L, 1869-1890	Box 10	Folder 2
Grand Rapids additions M-W, 1869-1888	Box 10	Folder 3
Grand Rapids Township, 1872-1883	Box 10	Folder 4
Town 8 N, Town 2 N, 9N, 1864-1889.	Box 10	Folder 5
Miscellaneous Papers, ca.1880s-1890s.	Box 10	Folder 6

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

### Series III. Democratic County Committee Records

Title/Description	Instances	
Ledger, 1890.	Box 5	Folder 6
Vouchers, 1890.	Box 5	Folder 7-8

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

### Series IV. Scrapbooks and Personal Information

#### Scrapbooks

Title/Description	Instances	
Original scrapbook. [1885-1921] Political and personal.	Box 5	Folder 9
Political. 1903-1914. Photocopy only. Original housed at 239-	Box 5	Folder 10
U. S. Court Cases, 1887-1921. Photocopy only. Original housed at 239-	Box 5	Folder 11
Labeled "4. 1886-1903" on the cover. Original. Formerly MKG9.L43. v.2	Box 13	Folder 10
Spine label: J.S. Lawrence Scrapbook. Elections, notices, 1864-1872 [1877]	Box 239-38	
History of the Peninsular Club, told in newspaper clippings, 1881-1883/compiled by John Lawrence. Formerly MKG367.L37 v.1	Box 239-60	
Peninsular Club Scrapbook, Formerly MKG367.L37 v.2	Box 239-60	
Peninsular Club Scrapbook, 1890 Formerly MKG367.P37a	Box 239-60	

#### Biographical

Title/Description	Instances	
Newspapers articles, Census information, and family genealogy information.	Box 19	Folder 1

## Photographs

Title/Description	Instances	
Portrait photos, including Lucius Paddock, Charles Paddock, Martin Ryerson, D. Darwin Hughes, E.M. Doubleday, Henry M. Hinsdale, E. Crofton Fox, Rev. J. Morgan Smith, Henry S. Fralick, George Luton	Box 19	Folder 2
William Black	Box 19	Folder 2
Album. Windward Islands. Travel photographs. Formerly R917.9.W72. 00.[2313].1	Box 18	Folder x

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series V. Miscellaneous Documents.

### Library books

Title/Description	Instances	
Misc. handwritten lists of books	Box 11	Folder 1
Catalog of Books in the Library of John S. Lawrence	Box 11	Folder 2

### Account Books, 1896-1899.

Title/Description	Instances	
Receiver's Certificates of Proof of Claim. L4:A4.1	Box 12	
Payment schedules for investors of Big Rapids Bank. L4:A4.5	Box 12	
Car Book - record of goods shipped by train. L4:A4.4	Box 12	

### Organizations Records

Title/Description	Instances	
City of Grand Rapids		
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	Box 17	Folder 0.5
The Country Club of Grand Rapids. G.R. : Valley City Engraving and Printing Co., Issued May 15, 1896. 00. [1328].1 Formerly MKG367.C83	Box 17	Folder 1

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	Box 17	Folder 2
Kent Country Club, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Membership list, Treasurer's Report, By-Laws, 1905.00. [2757].1 Formerly M796.K41	Box 17	Folder 2.5
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	Box 17	Folder 3
<b>Masons</b>		
History, ByLaws and Roster, DeMolai Commandery, no. 5, K.T. Grand Rapids, Mich. 1884. Formerly MKG366.F87 00.[3373].1	Box 17	Folder 3.1
OwashtaNong Boat Club. Yearbook. 1887 Formerly MKG367Ow1 00.[3360].1	Box 17	Folder 3.3
Peninsular Club. Yearbooks Formerly MKG367.P37 1881 00.[3362].1 1881-1885. 00.[3362].2	Box 17	Folder 3.5
Tamarack Mining Co., Report, June 30, 1891 and June 30 1892. [Annual Report] Boston : L. Barta and Co. 00. [1565].1-2 Formerly M622.T15	Box 17	Folder 4
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	Box 17	Folder 5
William B. Ogden and early days in Chicago : a paper, read before the Chicago Hist. Society, Dec. 20, 1882. / by Hon. Isaac N. Arnold. 00.[1647].1 Formerly M92.Og2	Box 17	Folder 6
Adams Express Co. "Contract"s. Contain stamps. 2 dated 1898 and 1899. 00.[2083].1-4	Box 17	Folder 7

## Maps

Title/Description	Instances
[Plat] Kent County, Wyoming township + pt. Of Walker. 6 N 12 W. Entry added 1/12/2004	Box FF-12-D

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)