

K Shalor Winchell Eldridge (1816-1899) Letters, 1863
0217 0.01 cubic feet

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INTRODUCTION

The collection contains letters relating to Eldridge's petitions for aid to rebuild his hotel, the Eldridge House, in Lawrence, Kansas, following its destruction during Quantrill's raid in August 1863.

DONOR INFORMATION

The letters were part of a transfer from the General Library of the University of Missouri-Kansas City on 10/24/1980 (KA0054). The letters are believed to have been collected by Robert M. Snyder, Jr. and sold to the University in the mid-1940s.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shalor Winchell Eldridge was born at West Springfield, Massachusetts, on August 29, 1816. The New England Emigrant Aid Company hired Eldridge to come to Kansas City in 1855 and operate the American Hotel – also called the Gillis House – as the headquarters for emigrants brought to the Kansas Territory. As tensions heightened within the city over the slavery question and opposition to the Emigrant Aid Company developed, Eldridge bought the hotel and was able, for a time, to maintain better relations with the community. In 1856, Eldridge leased the newly constructed Free State Hotel in Lawrence, Kansas, from the Emigrant Aid Company and also established the first stage lines from Kansas City to Lawrence, Topeka, Leavenworth, and other towns in Kansas.

In May 1856, a mob erupted over the issue of slavery, and the Free State Hotel was destroyed by fire. The Emigrant Aid Company decided not to rebuild the hotel. Eldridge bought the site and constructed the Eldridge House, sometimes still called the Free State Hotel. At the outbreak of war, Eldridge enlisted in the 2nd Kansas Volunteers. He was not present when William Clark Quantrill and his men attacked and burned Lawrence on August 21, 1863. Again the Free State Hotel was destroyed, and Eldridge sought reparations from the city, state and federal governments to assist him in rebuilding. There is no indication he received any federal or state monies. However, the city of Lawrence raised \$15,000 to help replace the structure.

After the war, Eldridge returned to Lawrence and became a building contractor. He rebuilt his Eldridge Hotel, along with hotels and buildings in other cities. Eldridge died on April 5, 1899.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of six letters related to Eldridge's petitions for aid to rebuild his hotel after it was destroyed during Quantrill's raid on Lawrence in August 1863. The letters record support from a number of prominent Kansas men.

PREFERRED CITATION

Specific item; box number; folder number; *Shalor Winchell Eldridge (1816-1899) Letters (K0217)*; The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-KC].

FOLDER LIST

f. 1 Letters, 1863

LOCATION NOTE

The collection is stored offsite (062870) and will need to be retrieved before viewing.

SUBJECT TERMS

Hotels – Kansas – Lawrence
Lawrence Massacre, Lawrence, Kan., 1863
Petitions
Snyder Collection of Americana
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865