

Redfield Proctor (1831-1908)
Scrapbooks, 1889-1906
XMSC 32, Folio XMSC 32.6

Introduction

This collection contains the scrapbooks of Redfield Proctor (1831-1908), a prominent Vermont lawyer, marble executive, and politician in the end of the 19th century. The scrapbooks' newspaper clippings reflect contemporary events Proctor, as a public figure and especially U.S. Secretary of War (1889-1891), was interested in following. The collection was given to the Vermont Historical Society by the estate of Redfield Proctor, Jr., in 1959. It comprises six manuscript volumes and one oversized manuscript volume and occupies 1.75 linear feet of shelf space.

Biographical Note

Redfield Proctor was born in Cavendish, Vermont, and graduated from Dartmouth College in 1851 and Albany Law School in 1859. As an officer in the Civil War, he commanded Vermont troops and helped put down the New York City draft riots. After Proctor was mustered out in 1863, he practiced law in Rutland for six years. He then managed the Sutherland Falls Marble Company, guiding it into consolidation with the Rutland Marble Company and becoming president of the conglomerate, Vermont Marble Company.

Proctor's public service career began in 1867 with local appointments as selectman and representative. He was elected as Vermont state senator in 1874, lieutenant governor in 1876, and governor in 1878. In 1889 President Benjamin Harrison appointed him as Secretary of War, and he resigned in 1891 to fill a vacant U.S. Senate seat. He continued to serve in the Senate for the rest of his life, being re-elected in 1892, 1898, and 1904. His Senate speech regarding the condition of Cuba under Spanish domination (featured in this collection) was credited by his contemporaries as bearing more influence than the conflagration of the *USS Maine* in inciting the Spanish-American War. He framed the gold standard of the 1896 Republican platform, and at his invitation Presidents Harrison, McKinley, and Roosevelt all visited Vermont.

Scope and Content

This collection contains seven scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and letters dating from shortly before Vermonter Redfield Proctor (1831-1908) started as Secretary of War in April 1889 to two years before his death in 1908. The clippings, grouped roughly into volumes from each year of Proctor's term in office and beyond, reflect contemporary reportage on U.S. military, current, and international events (notably the Spanish-American War), as well as much publicity related to his selection and performance as President Harrison's Secretary of War.

Five of the scrapbooks are large, ledger-lined "Invoice" books, while two (XMSC 32:4 and XMSC 32:5) are proper "scrapbooks" with blank pages. Scrapbook XMSC 34:6 is oversized and kept in the library's manuscript folio collection. The newspapers from which Proctor culled his clippings include publications like the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe* as well as an impressive array of local publications from Springfield Mass., Elmira, N.Y., to the *San Francisco Bulletin*, and the Memphis, Tennessee, *Avalanche*.

The first scrapbook, XMSC 32:1, contains articles dealing with the treatment of new army recruits and the phenomenon of desertion; the resettlement of Native Americans; Proctor's refusal to fly the flag at half-mast for the death of Jefferson Davis, who had been Secretary of War from 1853 to 1857; and the hubbub and allegations of vote-trading due to his appointment as Secretary of War by President Harrison.

Scrapbook XMSC 32:2 contains articles about Proctor's army reforms, including the creation of a court-martial "Board of Review" and changes in military promotions, examinations, and regiment sizes. There are also articles related to the dearth of Catholic chaplains in the army and Proctor's national tour of military inspection. This scrapbook also contains some scathingly critical articles with titles like "Proctor, too, a Plutocrat" and "Proctor's White Slaves," condemning Proctor's wealth and labor practices related in his family's marble fiefdom in Rutland County, Vermont. There is also an article from the *Columbus Press* describing the new cabinet's first ladies and their role as social leaders in Washington, D.C., society.

Scrapbook XMSC 32:3 (originally XMSC 38) includes articles related to the resettlement of Native Americans and an enclosed issue of the August 20, 1891, *Burlington Free Press* with a front page article covering the dedication of the Bennington Monument, attended by President Harrison.

Scrapbook XMSC 32:4 includes articles related mainly to Proctor's resignation as Secretary of War and the appointment of his successor, both in 1891.

Scrapbook XMSC 32:5 includes many articles from Rutland, Vermont, newspapers which take a critical stance towards Proctor. Enclosed in the front are many labeled envelopes containing brochure copies of Proctor's speeches on the condition of Cuba (the famous one), the Revenue Bill, Our Duty toward Puerto Rico, Army Reorganization, Lengthening the Terms of the President and Congress, Defense, and Sheep Husbandry.

Scrapbook XMSC 32:6, an oversized folio volume, concerns the Spanish-American War and the events leading up to it. Proctor also scrapbooked numerous letters he received, many being congratulations on his speech about Spanish treatment of Cuba. The letters are from ordinary citizens as well as college presidents, senators, publishers, and pastors.

The seventh and final scrapbook, XMSC 32:7, features articles grouped by an index into these topics: Re-election in 1904; Retirement from the U.S. Senate; Ft. Ethan

Allen; Personal Anecdotes; Oleomargarine; Government Marble Contract Criticism; Fish & Game Matters; N.H. Coon Incident; and Vermont Officers' Re-union Speech re Philippines.

Related Collections

The VHS Library holds several other manuscript collections directly related to Redfield Proctor, including three letters written by Proctor as a quartermaster during the Civil War (MSS-24 #87); the Vermont Marble Company's record books from 1881 to 1888 (XMSC 100:2-3); the Vermont Marble Company's treasurer's records from 1849 to 1940 (bulk 1866-1884) (Doc 423-428); and the Vermont Marble Company store records from 1860 to 1913 (Doc 79, 80-83.2, 175-176). The Proctor Family Papers are held by the Proctor Free Library in Proctor, Vermont.

Inventory

- XMSC 32:01 First year as Secretary of War, January 5, 1889-June 29, 1890
- :02 Second year as Secretary of War, July 1, 1890-April 15, 1891
- :03 Third year as Secretary of War, January 30, 1891-May 15, 1892
- :04 Resignation as Secretary of War, 1891
- :05 Local coverage and criticism, 1894-1900
- Folio XMSC 32:06 Spanish-American War and aftermath, February 20, 1898-April 16, 1900
- XMSC 32:07 Late career, March 1893-June 1906

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