

## Finding Aid to the George A. Sinner Papers

### Sinner, George A.

George A. Sinner Papers, 1962-1993

4 linear ft.

Collection number: Mss 346

---

[Biography](#)

[Scope and Content](#)

[Box and Folder List](#)

### OVERVIEW

**Links:** Finding aid to [George A. Sinner Photograph Collection](#)

**Access:** The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

**Provenance:** Donated by George Sinner, 1997 (Acc. 2614).

**Property rights:** The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

**Copyrights:** Copyrights to this collection remain with Institute for Regional Studies.

**Citation:** [Identification of item]. George A. Sinner Papers, Ms 346, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

### BIOGRAPHY

George A. Sinner was born May 19, 1928, the youngest of four children of Albert and Katherine (Wild) Sinner. The family lived on a farm near Casselton, N.D. He attended St. John's Preparatory School and went on to obtain college degree from Saint John's University at Collegeville, Minnesota. Sinner credits his years at Saint John's for his life-long commitment to public service. In 1950 he enlisted in the Air National Guard at Fargo and was called to active duty in 1951. He married Elizabeth "Jane" Sinner in 1951. After military service he returned to the family farming operation at Casselton. The Mr. and Mrs. Sinner raised ten children.

George Sinner's entry into politics was in 1962 when he won a seat in the North Dakota Senate. In 1964 he ran for the seat in the U.S. House of Representatives but lost to incumbent Mark Andrews. Sinner also chaired circa 1966/1967 the board of directors that established the Southeast Region Mental Health and Retardation Clinic in Fargo. In 1967 Governor Guy appointed him to the State Board of Higher Education. Sinner continued to be very active in politics and local issues, serving as a member of the 1972 North Dakota Constitutional Convention. He chaired a group that successfully worked for a new greenhouse complex at North Dakota State University as well as an ad hoc group that organized the Northern Crops Institute in 1981, located on the North Dakota State University campus.

George Sinner became the 29<sup>th</sup> governor of the state of North Dakota, serving two terms from 1985 to 1992. During his governorship North Dakota celebrated its centennial. After his term as governor, Sinner became the vice president of Public and Government Relations for American Crystal Sugar Company in Moorhead Minnesota.

The April 2010 issue (Vol. 75, nos. 3 & 4) of *North Dakota History* is devoted entirely to the life and career of Governor George Sinner and Jane Sinner.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **George Sinner Papers** spans from 1962 to 1993. This collection consists of nine scrapbooks that deal primarily with Sinner's political career. These articles show the different issues that Sinner was passionate about on the national political level. There are also articles and a variety of documents about issues, projects, and events that Sinner was actively involved in when governor of North Dakota. This collection has been arranged into; Correspondence, Articles about Sinner, Speeches and Press Releases by Governor Sinner, and Topical.

The [Correspondence Series](#) are primarily incoming letters to Sinner during his years in the North Dakota political spotlight. The incoming letters were written to Sinner concerning his unsuccessful run for the U.S. House of Representatives against incumbent, Mark Andrews. Most of the letters congratulate Sinner on a great run and one of the letters is from Andrews, telling Sinner that he was a great opponent. There is a letter series that was written by Jane Sinner that is about their visit to the White House when President Clinton took office in 1993. The third folder is a letter that was sent to Sinner by the Spears family about a magazine article when he was governor. The last folder is different greeting cards that have pictures of the governor and his family that they would have sent out to people during the holidays.

The [Articles about Governor Sinner Series](#) are from magazines when he was governor and after he left office. There are three articles in this series that have to do with Sinner's influence in farming. Two of the articles were in *Sugar Beet Grower* and the other article was in *Howard Binford's Guide*. There is an article about Sinner in the *North Dakota Magazine* in this series as well. The *North Dakota Review* is about when Sinner was running for the U.S. House of Representatives seat in the early 1960s. There are also newspaper articles in this series when he was governor.

The [Speeches and Press Releases by Governor Sinner Series](#) has different speeches that Governor Sinner gave when governor. The first of these speeches was his inaugural address given to the legislative assembly in 1989. Two of these speeches were his State of the State Addresses. These were the addresses from 1989 and 1991. There is also a folder that includes remarks from Sinner's address, 1991. There is also a press release about the 1991 address in this series as well. The final press release is a statement from Governor Sinner indicating that he would not seek a third term as governor.

The [Topical Series](#) contains a variety of documents related to Sinner's political career, including articles and invitations to different things when he was an elected official as well as awards that he received when he was governor. There are some election certificates from the State of North Dakota showing that he was elected to the offices that he held. Included in this series is a schedule of what Governor Sinner did on the day that he took the oath of office to become governor. He received an award from his alma mater, St. Johns University, when he became governor. There are various flyers the Sinner used when he was campaigning for public office in North Dakota. When Sinner was governor, he was chairman of the Western Governors Association and there are two reports from this time. The first is the policy implications of his 1989 State of the State Address. The second is a report from the National Governors' conference that is held every year. He attended many important national political events. Some of these events include many presidential inaugurations, Democratic national conventions, and its Resolutions and Platform committee at the 1964 national convention, of which he was a member. There are also invitations from these events included in this series.

Sinner attended the US Pro in 1986 that promoted relations with the Republic of China. Sinner gave a speech here and in this series is the program from US Pro. There are several articles that feature Jane Sinner in this series, and it highlights different things that she did as the First Lady of North Dakota.

North Dakota had a Governor's Day in 1985 to celebrate the governor getting elected for which there is a pamphlet. There is also a "Salute to Sinner" celebrating what he did as governor and a "Salute to Sen. Quentin Burdick" that Sinner attended. While Sinner was governor, North Dakota celebrated its centennial and there is a program showing the events of "Constitution Day 1989." The final files of this series are pamphlets including what the Democratic-NPL discussed during their 1988 state convention. When Roger Maris, legendary player for the New York Yankees, died Sinner attended the service in Fargo. When Sinner had bypass surgery in Rapid City, he kept the pamphlets about the coronary wing of Rapid City Regional Hospital. The last is a pamphlet that shows the capital grounds in Bismarck.

The [Scrapbook Series](#) is the most extensive portion of the collection, containing newspaper articles spanning from 1962 to 1992. These are articles about George and Jane Sinner as well as important events that took place during this time period. There is nine scrapbooks in all and all are in good condition, except for one, which the binding on it are gone. The first three scrapbooks span from 1962 to 1968. These scrapbooks document politics in the national spotlight. These range from when President Johnson's daughter, Luci, came to Grand Forks to the Democratic National convention of 1968. This convention is significant because of the riots that happened during the convention in Chicago.

The scrapbooks have a gap from 1969 until 1984, when Sinner decided that he would run for governor. The fourth scrapbook covers the election coverage of the race between Sinner and Governor Allen Olson.

Olson was the incumbent and Sinner defeated him in the election. The next scrapbook covers the Sinner leading up to the death of his Lt. Governor, Ruth Meiers. The next scrapbook covers the election of 1988. By this time, Sinner picked Lloyd Omdahl to be his Lt. Governor. Sinner also won this election by a decent margin. The last three scrapbooks cover his second term as governor. These cover issues like farming practices and how the state was going through a drought. Included in these scrapbooks is the veto of an abortion bill that would have been the toughest in the nation. It would have only let women get abortions because of rape, incest, or harm to the mother. Sinner vetoed this legislation, not because he supported abortion, but because he believes that it was too harsh.

## **BOX AND FOLDER LIST**

<b>Box/Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>
-------------------	----------------

1/1	Finding aid
-----	-------------

### **Correspondence Series**

1/2	Correspondence 1964
1/3	Letter about White House visit, 6/93
1/4	Letter to Governor Sinner
1/5	Greeting Cards

### **Articles about Governor Sinner Series**

1/6	<i>Howard Binford's Guide</i> , April 1979
1/7	Newspaper Articles
1/8	<i>North Dakota Magazine</i> , Jan. 1987
1/9	<i>North Dakota Review</i>
1/10	<i>Sugar beet Grower</i> , February 1978
1/11	<i>Sugar beet Grower</i> , May/June 1993

### **Speeches and Press Releases by Governor Sinner Series**

1/12	Governors Inaugural Message to Legislative Assembly, 1/8/85
1/13	Press Release
1/14	State of the State Address, "Cherishing Our Past, Shaping Our Future" 1/4/89
1/15	State of the State Address, "North Dakota on the Grow," 1/7/91
1/16	State of the State Remarks, 1/7/91
1/17	Statement about not running for a third term, 10/31/91

### **Topical Series**

1/18	Article and award from St. John's University
------	----------------------------------------------

- 1/19 Campaign flyers
- 1/37 Certificates, awards, etc.
- 1/20 "Cherishing our Past, Shaping Our Future:" Policy Implications, 7/90
- 1/21 Committee on Resolutions and Platform at DNC 1964
- 1/22 Constitution Day, 1989
- 1/23 Election certificates from state of North Dakota
- 1/24 Funeral Mass for Roger Maris, 1985
- 1/25 Governors Day and "Ode to Bud and Jane," 1985
- 1/26 Jane Sinner Articles
- 1/27 National Governors conference report and invite
- 1/28 National Inaugural invitation and Booklet
- 1/29 National Democratic Convention Material, 1992
- 1/30 North Dakota state Democratic-NPL convention, 1998
- 1/31 Rapid City Regional Hospital pamphlets
- 1/32 Salute to Sen. Quentin Burdick invite
- 1/33 Schedule for 1/7/85
- 1/34 Sinner Salute
- 1/35 State Capital brochure
- 1/36 Trip to Republic of China, 1986

**Scrapbook Series**

- 2/1 March 3, 1962 to March 22, 1963
- 2/2 April 13, 1963 to October 16, 1964
- 2/3 June 30, 1964 to July 12, 1967
- 3/1 November 7, 1984 to December 22, 1985
- 3/2 January 1986 to March 19, 1987
- 4/1 January 1987 to December 1988
- 4/2 January 1, 1989 to June 30, 1990
- 5/1 July 14, 1990 to June 30, 1991
- 5/2 July 21, 1991 to February 4, 1992