

Finding Aid to the Andrew J. O'Shea Papers

O'Shea, Andrew J., 1869-1923

Andrew J. O'Shea Papers, 1905, 1914-1917

.2 linear feet

Collection number: Mss 330

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

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

Provenance: Donated by Richard Kloubec, 2003 (Acc. 2686)

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Citation: [Identification of item]. Andrew J. O'Shea Papers, MS 330, Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

BIOGRAPHY

Andrew J. O'Shea was born August 17, 1869, at Tralee, Ireland, at that time part of the United Kingdom. He came to Canada at the age of 15 and then to Fargo, North Dakota, in 1893. O'Shea married May Stanford on May 18, 1907. He was active in his career as architect, and designed many commercial and public buildings in Fargo and around North Dakota. He was apparently a rather feisty character and could be very confrontational in public controversies, most notably the debate over the condition of the Agassiz and Horace Mann schools in Fargo. He greatly enjoyed working with all manner of mechanical and electronic instruments and was avidly concerned with radio. He died in Fargo on April 28, 1923. He was survived by his wife, who died on July 17, 1937, in Mason City, Iowa.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

Almost all of the material in the Andrew J. O'Shea papers is centered on the school construction controversy. There is very, very little in these papers of the life of Andrew J. O'Shea outside of this problem. There were a number of newspaper articles about the school controversy, as well as a number of little flyers or handbills which O'Shea apparently had printed up for handing out to the public. The language of these flyers is quite shrill and strident, accusing local politicians of being crooks, and the judgment of safe school construction as "ridiculous." He appeared to regard his opponents in this controversy as knaves or fools or both. The principal disagreement was over the roof construction of the Agassiz School, which O'Shea deemed to be dangerously unsafe.

The papers contain drawings and diagrams of the roof in question, blueprints and other plans, and comments from outside architects and engineers. It is hard to learn from these papers, especially for non-engineers, who had the right of the argument over the schools. It is interesting that the president of the Fargo School Board at the time was Dr. Edwin F. Ladd, noted scientist and statesman, who was himself a crusader against bad products. This might seem to give credibility to the school board's position and put the burden of proof on O'Shea as to the judgment of history.

The [School Controversy Newspaper Clipping Series](#) contains clippings that appeared in a variety of Fargo newspapers and journals of the day, between September 4, 1914 and February 12, 1915.

The [Flyers Series](#) contains the flyers printed up by O'Shea. These are very repetitive of one another. They are all undated, and it cannot easily be ascertained what their chronological order might be. The file of papers as it came to the Institute contained large numbers of duplicates of these, indicating that O'Shea was determined to circulate his views as widely as possible. For the purposes of this file, only a single example of each is retained, or, if the original is of deteriorating paper, in photocopy form.

The [Correspondence Series](#) pertains to the school controversy, letters to and from O'Shea, between August 1, 1914, and August 16, 1917.

The [Plans and Blueprints Series](#) concerns the school construction debate.

The [Subject Files Series](#) contains a couple of items not related to the school dispute: an invoice for commercial items purchased by O'Shea in 1905, and an undated one sheet cardboard professional directory of local personages in the construction industry, including O'Shea, the only architect listed.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box/Folder	Contents
1/1	Finding aid, and Biographical material

School Controversy Newspaper Clippings Series

1/2 Items from September 4, 1914, to February 12, 1915.

Flyers Published by O'Shea Series

1/3 Eleven separate, but largely repetitive, undated handouts

Correspondence Series

1/4 Correspondence related to the school controversy, 1914-1917

Plans and Blueprints Series

1/5 Drawings concerning the school roof construction at issue

Subject Files Series

1/6 1905 invoice for construction materials / professional directory