

Lawrence Family Papers, 1840-2004



Portrait of Katherine (right) and Dorothea Dix Lawrence (left) Lawrence, circa 1910

Overview of the Collection

- Title:** Lawrence Family Papers, 1840-2004
- Creator:** Lawrence Family
- Accession:** PPL-MSS-2005-005
PPL-2025-009
- Size:** 13.5 linear feet, comprised of:
One (1) records storage box
Two (2) document boxes
Five (5) oversize boxes
Five (5) small boxes
- Repository:** Plainfield Public Library, Local History Department, 800 Park Avenue, Plainfield, NJ 07060
- Abstract:** The Lawrence Family Papers document the daily affairs of three generations of the Lawrence family. These papers provide documentation of the family home located at 512 Stelle Avenue, Plainfield, NJ, from the first contracts with the builders in 1894 to its insurance coverage in 1947. The papers also include letters to and from family members such as Katharine Morgan Lawrence, Reina A. Lawrence, and Dorothea Dix Lawrence. A significant portion of the collection comprises receipts kept by family members from 1885-1960. Material types include: handwritten and typed letters, poems and other manuscripts, legal documents, receipts, booklets, photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings, a scrapbook, and a large certificate.
- Language:** The records are in English.

Biographical Information

The Lawrence family lived in Plainfield, N.J. at [512 Stelle Avenue](#). In this collection, the key figures are Dorothea Dix Lawrence, Reina Andrade Lawrence, and Katharine Morgan Lawrence, although other family members are also represented in the papers. The family is closely related to Major General John Adams Dix (see below), for whom New Jersey's Fort Dix is named. Dix was brother to Roger Sherman Dix, father of Katharine Morgan Dix.



Dorothea Dix Lawrence, 1899-1979

Dorothea Dix Lawrence may be best known for being an opera singer, but she also created *The Folklore Music Map of the United States from the Primer of American Music*, held by the Library of Congress in their Geography and Map Division. (View [here](#) - this is an external link to the Library of Congress website). After becoming a folklorist, she traveled the world lecturing and introducing American folk music to listeners during the 1940s and 1950s. She also was an avid collector of antique Christmas cards. Dorothea created the scrapbook in the collection. Her [obituary](#) appeared in the *Courier News* on May 26, 1979, page A-4.

Photograph of Dorothea from her 1943 Christmas card.

[Reina Andrade Lawrence, 1869-1948](#)

Reina was Dorothea Dix Lawrence's aunt by way of Dorothea's father, [Edwin Lawrence](#) (also known as "Ted" in this collection). Reina was a photographer of local Plainfield life. Her photographs can be viewed online through the Library's online catalog (see below). Reina was a vocal anti-suffragist whose views were published in the *Plainfield Daily Press* and *The New York Times*. The collection includes a letter between Reina and New Jersey Representative Thomas Scully regarding her protest of the Equal Suffrage Bill. Her [obituary](#) appeared in the *Courier News* on June 3, 1948, page 26.



Katherine Morgan Dix Lawrence, 1836-1923

Katharine Morgan Lawrence was the mother of Reina (and Edwin) Lawrence, and the grandmother of Dorothea Dix Lawrence. Married to Phineas Lawrence of London, she was the matriarch of the family during its time at 512 Stelle Avenue. The papers show that she was the driving force during the construction of the home. The early receipts in the collection show that the family had considerable wealth. She died in her home on April 26, 1923. Her [funeral notice](#) appeared in the *Courier News* on April 30, 1923, page 11.

Photograph of Katherine Lawrence taken by her daughter Reina. More photos [here](#).

Scope and Contents

The Lawrence Family Papers, the bulk of which was donated by John A. Grady, include a variety of material, spanning from the 1880s through the 1950s, with a small number of documents dating as far back as 1840 and one as recent as 2004. There also are undated records, manuscripts, and drawings. Material types include: letters and correspondence, manuscripts, legal documents, receipts, newspaper clippings, booklets, objects, drawings, a scrapbook, and photographs. Also included in the collection are announcements and programs of Dorothea Dix Lawrence's many

vocal performances. The collection is divided primarily among receipts for goods and services, ephemera, letters, and legal documents kept by different family members.

Within the letters is a typed note from New Jersey Representative Thomas Scully to Reina Andrade Lawrence regarding her protest of the passage of the Equal Suffrage Bill. The personal letters of Dorothea Dix Lawrence show one of her Christmas cards as well as a colorful Halloween postcard from her father. There also is an undated group of letters to "Ted" (Edwin Lawrence) from "Mother" (Katharine Morgan Lawrence).

The key figures who kept these items are Dorothea Dix Lawrence, Reina Andrade Lawrence, and Katharine Morgan Lawrence, although there also are items in the collection originating with Roger Dix Lawrence, Edwin Lawrence, Phineas Lawrence, and Emma Sherman.

Arrangement

The Lawrence Family Papers are arranged into eight series:

Series 1: Letters

Series 2: Poems and Other Manuscripts

Series 3: Legal

Series 4: Receipts

Series 5: Ephemera and Artifacts

Series 6: Visual Materials (non-photographic)

Series 7: Clippings and Secondary Sources

Series 8: Photographs* and Scrapbook

**The Library owns a large collection of Reina Lawrence photographs; please refer to "Related Items" below.*

Index Terms

People:

Dix, John Adams, Major General, 1798-1879.

Lawrence, Dorothea Dix, 1899-1979.

Lawrence, Edwin.

Lawrence, Katharine Morgan, 1837-1923.

Lawrence, Reina Andrade, 1869-1949.

Genres:

Clippings.

Correspondence.

Drawings.

Manuscripts.

Photographic prints.

Programs.

Scrapbooks.

Places:

Plainfield (N.J.)

Subjects:

Folk music--United States--History and criticism.
 Folk songs, English--United States.
 Home construction.
 Plainfield, N.J. – History.
 Receipts.
 Songs, English--United States.
 Sopranos (Singers)--United States--Correspondence.

Related Items

[Reina Lawrence Photograph Collection](#), 1890-1933

[Plainfield Porches, 1900-1950](#) (online exhibit)

[Chronicles of Plainfield, 1870-1970](#) (online exhibit)

Images of [512 Stelle Avenue](#) in Plainfield

Lawrence, Dorothea Dix. *Folklore Music Map of the United States from the Primer of American Music*. New York: Hegstrom Co., 1946. (See Collection Inventory, Series 6)

Lawrence, Dorothea Dix. *Folklore-Songs of the United States*. Plainfield, N.J.: Dorothea Dix Lawrence Folklore Society, [1959]. (See Collection Inventory, Series 7)

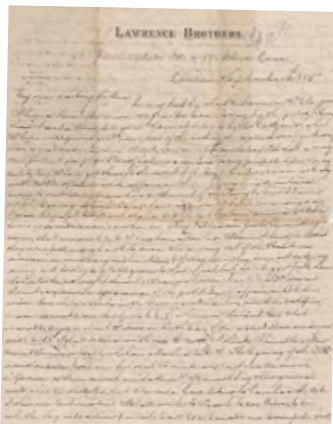
[Dorothea Dix Lawrence Collection, 1856-1980](#). Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

This collection consists of paper documents that do not require any additional technology for access.

Series Description

Series 1: Letters [1868-1959, 1980, undated]



Series Description

Series 1 contains handwritten personal letters, postcards, calling cards, note cards, and typed correspondence. The majority of the letters are to, from, and/or about Dorothea Dix Lawrence and Reina Andrade Lawrence, although there also are mentions of Phineas, Edwin “Ted”, and Katharine Lawrence. This series also includes a collection of postcards, which were not sent to the Lawrence family; they may have been collected for aesthetic purposes. This series is composed solely of paper documents.

Pictured: Letter from the Lawrence brothers, 1885. Click to enlarge.

Arrangement

Series 1 is arranged alphabetically by personal name and subject, and fills four folders. Chronological order has been imposed on the documents due to the collection's original condition. Reina Andrade Lawrence's calling cards are housed in Box 6 and the postcard collection is housed in Box 7.

Series 2: Poems and Other Manuscripts [undated]

Series Description

Series 2 contains manuscripts written by Dorothea Dix Lawrence and poems written by an unidentified author. Works are handwritten and typed in ink on paper.

Arrangement

Series 2 is arranged by author, and fills one folder.

Series 3: Legal [1894-1959]

Series Description

Series 3 contains wills, contracts, insurance policies, and other legal documents kept by the Lawrence family. The legal documents include a substantial amount of documentation regarding the construction and insurance of the family's 512 Stelle Avenue, Plainfield, New Jersey residence. This series also includes a bill of sale, warranty deed, and estate inventory for properties in New York; the connection to the Lawrence family is unknown. Documents are typed and handwritten.

Arrangement

Series 3 is arranged by subject and fills three folders.

Series 4: Receipts [1895-1960]

Series Description

Series 4 contains handwritten and typed receipts for goods and services purchased by the Lawrence family. There are records of apothecary shopping trips, cab service, dry cleaning, and other shopping and services. The receipts cover multiple generations of the Lawrence family. They range from an 1894 tax assessment to a 1901 bill from the Plainfield Exchange for Women's Work to steam cleaning bills that occur throughout the records. There is also a folder of account books (image on left) for various companies.



Account book, 1907. Click image to see inside book.

Arrangement

Series 4 is arranged by date, and fills ten folders.

Series 5: Ephemera and Artifacts [1869-1965]

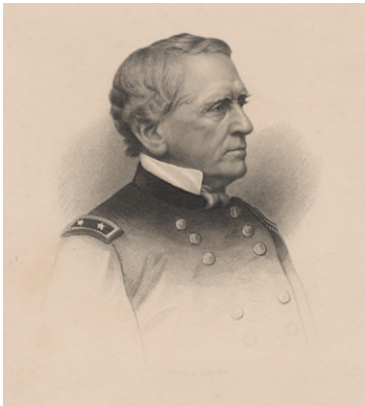
Series Description

Series 5 contains a variety of different objects kept by the Lawrence family. Specifically, this series includes a passport belonging to Emma Sherman, Dorothea Dix Lawrence's show programs, handmade booklets, and more. Objects include a Bamberger's charge plate token given to Dorothea Dix Lawrence, an embroidered needle case, paper clothing bags designed for travel, a charm bracelet awarded to Dorothea Dix Lawrence in 1937, and a wooden soap box that held glass plate negatives. The booklets comprise hand-crafted religious and patriotic texts created by Katharine Lawrence. Miscellaneous ephemera include stamps, printed poems from magazines, advertising pamphlets, and event programs.

Arrangement

Series 5 is arranged by personal name and subject, and fills three folders. Most of the artifacts and some ephemera, including a Daughters of 1812 certificate presented to Reina Andrade Lawrence, magazines with articles about Dorothea Dix Lawrence, a blank Plainfield High School scrapbook, a wooden glass plate negative stand, and an engraved stamp block are located in oversize boxes.

Series 6: Visual Materials [1840-1946]



Series Description

Series 6 contains drawings, prints, portraits, and other works on paper kept by the Lawrence family. The works on paper within the visual materials include original drawings from "grandfather" (presumed to be Phineas Lawrence) and prints of Dix ancestors. This series also includes the *Folklore Music Map of the United States*.

Portrait of Major General, John A. Dix, relative.

Arrangement

Series 6 is arranged chronologically, and fills one folder. Four copies of the map are housed in a map drawer.

Series 7: Clippings/Secondary Sources [1923-2004]

Series Description

Series 7 contains newspaper and magazine clippings, photocopied book pages, and other sources mentioning members of the Lawrence family (the bulk of the folder contains clippings related to Dorothea Dix Lawrence). This series also includes a photostatic copy of Dix family

genealogy revised by Morgan Lawrence in 1944. In addition, there are two copies of Dorothea Dix Lawrence's book *Folklore-Songs of the United States*.

Arrangement

Series 7 is arranged chronologically, and fills two folders and part of an oversize box.

Series 8: Photographs and Scrapbook [1903-1933, undated]



Series Description

Series 8 contains a scrapbook kept by Dorothea Dix Lawrence. It contains black and white photographs of her travels and relationships. There are handwritten notes on each page describing the content of the photographs. In addition, there are two intact photo albums kept by Dorothea Dix Lawrence and perhaps other family members, and a third photo album with the initials K.D.L. (Katherine Dix Lawrence) on the cover. This album is in fragile condition. While it is

known that Reina Andrade Lawrence was a photographer, the remaining photographs within the collection are neither signed nor credited to an individual. There is a folder (Box 2 Folder 10) of photographs where the photographer was likely to have been Reina Lawrence; these items may be incorporated into the rest of the Reina Lawrence Photograph Collection at a future date.

Pictured: Page from Dorothea Dix Lawrence's scrapbook, 1928

Arrangement

Series 8 is arranged by size and fills two document boxes, two oversize boxes, and four small boxes. The scrapbook is dismantled, but the pages are arranged in their original order.

Administrative Information

Access & Restrictions

The Lawrence Family Papers are available for research.

Access is restricted to materials prepared by the Local History department staff. All materials must be viewed in the Plainfield Room and may not be removed to another area of the library without permission of the Library Director or designee. Materials must be handled carefully and kept in order. Materials must not be leaned upon, altered, folded, ripped, or traced upon. Marks may not be added or erased from materials. Materials must be returned directly to Local History department staff and inspected before the researcher leaves the Plainfield Room.

One photocopy may be made (by Plainfield Public Library staff) of each document for the purpose of research; official Local History departmental reproduction fees may apply. Permission to publish must be obtained by the Plainfield Public Library Board of Trustees as delegated to the Library Director. Permission to publish does not constitute a copyright clearance. The researcher is responsible for further copyright restrictions. The Plainfield Public Library is not responsible for the misuse of copyrighted material.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item; Date (if noted); "Lawrence Family Papers", Box and Folder Number, Local History Department, Plainfield Public Library, Plainfield, New Jersey.

Acquisition Information

The bulk of the collection was donated by John A. Grady. Additional materials were donated by RH Reynolds and LL Dienes in 2025.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Debra Schiff in 2010. The finding aid was written by Debra Schiff and encoded by Sarah Hull in 2010 and updated by Sally Weiner in September 2024 and again in March 2025. Finding aid content follows the guidelines suggested by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

The processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission.

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Letters [1868-1959, 1980, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	1	Dorothea Dix Lawrence	1912-1956
	2	Reina Andrade Lawrence	1898-1940
	3	Family members	1868-1924
	4	Dorothea Dix Lawrence, professional correspondence	1912-1959
6		Calling cards, Reina Andrade Lawrence	undated
7		Postcards	1908-1926, 1980

Series 2: Poems and Other Manuscripts [undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	5	Poems and other manuscripts	undated

Series 3: Legal [1894-1959]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	6	Wills and other legal documents	1894-1959
	7	512 Stelle Avenue, construction	1894-1896
	8	512 Stelle Avenue, insurance	1896-1947

Series 4: Receipts [1895-1960]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	9	Receipts	1951-1960
	10	Receipts	1941-1950
	11	Receipts	1931-1940
	12	Receipts	1920-1930

13	Receipts	1911-1919
14	Receipts	1908-1910
15	Receipts	1906-1907
16	Receipts	1900-1905
17	Receipts	1865-1899
18	Account books	1903-1920

Series 5: Ephemera and Artifacts [1869-1965, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	19	Ephemera, Dorothea Dix Lawrence	1908-1956
	20	Ephemera, Reina Andrade Lawrence	1923-1927
	21	Ephemera, remaining family members	1869-1965
	24	Miscellaneous ephemera	1932-1962, undated
4		Paper clothing bags	undated
5		Daughters of 1812 certificate	1920
6		Engraved stamp block	undated
		Glass plate negative boxes (empty)	undated
		Wooden glass plate negative stand	undated
		Charm bracelet, Dorothea Dix Lawrence	1937
		Embroidered needle case	undated
7		Wooden box, Kirkman's Borax Soap	undated

Series 6: Visual Materials [1840-1946]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	22	Visual materials	1840-1941
*		<i>Folklore Music Map of the United States</i> (*located in Map Drawer C1)	1946

Series 7: Clippings/Secondary Sources [1923-2004]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
1	23	Clippings/secondary sources	1905-2004
	25	<i>Folklore-Songs of the United States</i>	[1959]
5		<i>Jersey Life</i> magazine	1938
		<i>Life</i> magazine	1938
		<i>International Who's Who</i>	1947
		Dix genealogy	1944

Series 8: Photographs and Scrapbook [1903-1933, undated]

Box	Folder	Title/Description	Date(s)
2	1	Photographs, family at 1231 Martine Avenue and 545 Belvidere Avenue	1896-1929, with gaps
	2	Photographs, 512 Stelle Avenue and other Plainfield houses	undated
	3	Photographs, family	1865-1949, with gaps
	4	Photographs, family	1865-1949, with gaps
	5	Photographs, family	undated

	6	Negatives, Madonna and child	undated
	7	Ephemera, from Madonna and child negatives	undated
	8	Negatives, cows	undated
	9	Souvenir photo folder, signed (empty)	1944
	10	Photographs, likely Reina A. Lawrence, glass plate prints to be incorporated into Lawrence Photograph Collection	undated
3	11	Photographs, Reina A. Lawrence, Life Saving Station	1899
	1	Photographs, Dorothea Dix Lawrence with family, friends	1948, 1953, undated
	2	Photographs, Dorothea Dix Lawrence, portraits	undated
	3	Photographs, Dorothea Dix Lawrence, scrapbook pages	1923-1933
	4	Photographs, from early family album	1866-1907, with gaps
	5	Negatives, New York City	undated
	6	Negative envelopes (empty)	undated
5	7	Photo papers (empty envelopes)	undated
		Photograph, G. Washington Coffee Co., Monty Lawrence	undated
8		Photograph album, Dorothea Dix Lawrence	1918-1925
		Photograph album, Lawrence family	1931-1933
		Photograph album, K.D.L.	undated
9		Photographs, likely Reina A. Lawrence	undated
10		Negatives, likely Reina A. Lawrence	undated
11		Glass plate negatives (not printed) & blank plates	undated
12		Negative ID sleeves	undated
13		Photographs, matted, some by Reina A. Lawrence	1903, undated