

Collection #
SC 3416

**AUSTIN SEWARD
DOCUMENT, 1839–1841**

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript folder

COLLECTION DATES: 1839–1841

PROVENANCE: Gift of Austin Seward, Bloomington, Indiana, December 1948

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 1948.1219

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Austin Seward was born on 22 November 1797 in Middlesex County, Virginia. When he was a small child, his family moved to Richmond, Kentucky, and upon the death of his father in 1805 he was made an apprentice to a blacksmith. In 1817, he married Janette “Jane” Irvine (1800–1865) in Madison, Kentucky, and together they had eleven children, nine of whom lived to adulthood.

In September 1821, Seward moved to Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, with his family and quickly established a reputation as a skilled blacksmith and edge-tool maker. He was widely renowned in southern Indiana for his proficiency in making axes, and his business became so successful that he had to increase the size of his shop several times over the course of his life. Each of Seward’s surviving sons supplemented his business by becoming blacksmiths, manufacturers, or machinists of some type.

Seward was a pillar of the Bloomington community. He was friends with Dr. Andrew Wylie, president of Indiana College, who often talked theology, philosophy, and “shop” with him. When it was feared that Seward was close to death, Wylie said of him, “This community can better spare any man in it, or the college every professor than it can spare Mr. Seward. We can get other citizens and college professors to take their place without any trouble, but no man can take his place.”

Seward died on 27 October 1872. His sons continued his business after his death.

Andrew Wylie was born on 12 April 1789 in Washington, Pennsylvania. A man of letters, he was president of Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, from 1810 to 1816. That same year, he became the president of the nearby Washington College. The two colleges have since merged to become Washington & Jefferson College.

Wylie married Margaret Ritchie in 1813 and together they had 12 children. In 1828, the trustees of Indiana College (later Indiana University) offered the position of president to Wylie. After a long deliberation, he accepted the position and became the college’s first president in October 1829.

Wylie is credited with the college’s survival under difficult circumstances. He was never able to win substantial financial support from the Indiana state government or to keep up with the curricular innovations displayed at other Midwestern state universities. Still, enrollment increased under his leadership, particularly after the college added a law department. He served as Indiana University’s president until his death from pneumonia in Bloomington on 11 November 1851.

Sources:

“Austin Seward.” *Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History*, Vol. 4 No. 3, September 1908, pgs. 103-116

Dictionary of National Biography, Andrew Wylie.

Kentucky, County Marriages, 1783-1965, via Ancestry.com

1820, 1840, 1850, and 1860 U.S. Federal Census, via Ancestry.com

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains one positive photostat copy of an account of goods and services owed by Andrew Wylie to Austin Seward. Totaling \$46.00, the account runs from March 1839 to June 1840, and includes goods such as one iron wedge and new shoes (presumably for horses) and services such as "putting nut on coffeemill" and "putting hinges on stove doors." The bottom of the account is signed by Austin Steward and includes a notation that payment was received in full on 18 December 1841.

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CONTAINER

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