

Sturgis Library Archives

Town and Local History Collection

Priscilla Dean research notes on Fieldstone Hall
and "Tawasentha," the Crosby Mansion
(Brewster MA)

MS. 24

Extent: 1 box

Biographical note: As a young girl, Priscilla Dean grew up with the memory of two grand mansions named Tawasentha and Fieldstone Hall in Brewster, MA. Together with Roland Nickerson Sears she accumulated photos and personal reminiscences and published a pamphlet entitled, *Roland Nickerson's "Fieldstone Hall" and "Tawasentha" Crosby Mansion* (1997).

Tawasentha, located on Crosby road in Brewster, MA, was built by Albert and Matilda Crosby in 1888 and was, at the time, the largest and most lavish house on Cape Cod. Local lore tells us that the house was named for a character in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Hiawatha". Albert Crosby was born to Nathan Crosby and Catherine Nickerson in Chatham on January 14, 1823. First trying his hand in the Mercantile Marine Service, he later moved to Chicago, where by 1851 he made fortune in dry goods and had the largest distillery of medicinal alcohol in the country. When the Civil War broke out, he became even richer from supplying the government with alcohol. As a patron of the arts, Albert took over the Chicago Opera house, which was next to his art gallery. Unfortunately the Chicago fire destroyed both, and Albert Crosby lost 1.5 million dollars in art. After the fire Albert divorced his first wife and soon remarried Matilda Sourbeck. Building Tawasentha, the Crosby's spent many years entertaining guests and would often engage the train for a private charter to ferry guests to their house. Built by John Hinckley and Sons, the mansion boasted 13 fireplaces, many guest rooms, a library, billiard room and an art gallery. Sadly, through the years the mansion fell into dis-repair and was heavily damaged by vandals. Today it is part of the Nickerson State Park and is managed and maintained by the Friends of the Crosby Mansion Inc.

Fieldstone Hall

Situated on the North side of Rt 6A in Brewster with a commanding view of the bay, Fieldstone Hall sits on a hill. Once owned by the Nickerson family, it was in the hands of the LaSalette Monastery for a number of years and is now the Ocean Edge Resort. There was a building that preceded the present structure. It was built by Samuel Mayo Nickerson for his son Roland Nickerson as a summer retreat. An early family photo album shows this as an impressive wooden Victorian building with four brick chimneys, a wide veranda and extensively manicured lawns.

Although Roland made his money in Chicago banking and later in New York City as a partner in a brokerage firm, he always considered Brewster his home. He and his wife Addie stocked their 1,955 acre estate as a game preserve with deer, elk and other wild animals they hunted with their friends. There was also a pond, a golf course with a wind mill that had been converted into a clubhouse. Specially chartered trains would often bring guests to the Nickerson's home in the summertime to enjoy the amenities of the estate. The home was built in 1888 and burned down in 1906. Apparently heartbroken, Roland died two weeks later. Addie, however, built another mansion where she lived until she died in 1938. Before her death in 1934 she donated 1,500 acres to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who turned it into Nickerson State Park.

Scope and Contents note: Collection consists of photographs, photocopies and research notes compiled by Priscilla Dean in the course of her research on the Brewster properties.

Access: Unrestricted. Credit Sturgis Library Archives for publication purposes.

Acquisition: Donated by Priscilla Dean, May 2002; accession # 04-07

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Folder list

Box # Folder #

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| 1 | 1 | Articles used for background research |
| | 2 | Correspondence of Priscilla Dean |
| | 3 | Nickerson photographs |
| | 4 | Nickerson cars |
| | 5 | Nickerson estate, hand-drawn layout of estate as remembered by
R.N. Sears |
| | 6 | Nickerson line of descent |
| | 7 | Nickerson Marble Palace, Chicago, IL |
| | 8 | Pamphlets, Ocean Edge |
| | 9 | Nickerson Estate, photographs |
| | 10 | Priscilla Dean's research notes |
| | 11 | Tawasentha (Crosby Mansion, Brewster), photographs of estate,
pamphlet by Tawasentha Friends, Article on Joseph Ball Estate
giving list of potential heirs. |