

Sturgis Library Archives

Town and Local History Collection

Samuel D. Hannah (1867-1945), papers, 1924-1952

MS. 29

Extent: 7 boxes

Biographical Note: Samuel D. Hannah was born July 4, 1865 in Columbus Ohio. His grandfather was a veteran of the Civil War (an aid to General Ulysses S. Grant, according to family history) and his father was a druggist and founder of an anti-saloon league in Ohio. Hannah studied real estate law at Ohio University and went into the real estate business in 1893. Before he went into real estate in Boston he started an ad agency in New York City with his brother, Henry K. Hannah. Then when his brother left the business he started his real estate career in Boston. While there he purchased a home in Bourne on Buttermilk Bay. He also started Homestead Trust as part of his real estate business.

What makes Samuel D. Hannah important in Cape Cod history was his interest in “owners unknown” property. He discovered that there was a wealth of land on the Cape that no one claimed title to. With his knowledge of real estate law he studied the legal nature of early New England towns and the proprietorships that essentially created the town by being the agency that would grant out land to settlers. One monograph he found instructive was *The Town Proprietors of the New England Colonies, a Study of their Development, Organization, Activities, and Controversies, 1620-1770* by Roy H. Akagi. Hannah’s assertion was that these proprietorships (even though they may have been considered defunct) still had control of the land in their respective towns. So, therefore, all he had to do to clear title was to find the descendants of the proprietors and have them deed their inherited “ownership” to a trust that would then clear the title and sell it. It is not clear how many of these cases went to Land Court for adjudication, but none of his petitions seem to have been granted. Although the proprietorship concept wasn’t successful, Homestead Trust was busy buying and selling property on Cape Cod. Hannah bought 745 acres in Truro, MA that would later become part of the National Seashore. This land would later be taken legally by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from the Hannah family before federal legislation for the Seashore was enacted.

Samuel Hannah married Junia Hanson and had three children. During WWI he enlisted and was commissioned a lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps. He also wrote a number of publications that have been reproduced in the Cape Cod Library of History and Genealogy including, *The Proprietary Lands of Plymouth Colony and Cape Cod*, by Samuel D. Hannah, edited by Stephen Connolly, which was published posthumously in 1980.

For additional biographical information, see *Sandwich, A Cape Cod Town*, By R. A. Lovell.

Scope and Contents note: Collection consists mainly of Samuel Hannah's correspondence, 1924-1944, research notes and copies compiled on land proprietorships on Cape Cod. Research is handwritten, in files as loose notes or entered into ledgers. Includes land and other legal documents collected, transcribed or photocopied by Hannah. Also included in the collection is Hannah family correspondence created after his death in 1945. Although most of Hannah's activities were aimed at Cape Cod land titles there is evidence that he tried the same process in Sudbury MA. Consult the following website for more information:

http://www.town.sudbury.ma.us/services/news_story.asp?id=277

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Processed by: Stephen Robert Lovell Farrar, 2005

Box # Folder #**Series I: Personal and business correspondence, 1924-1944**

1	1	Correspondence, 1924
	2	“ 1925
	3	“ 1926
	4	“ 1927
	5	“ 1928
	6	“ 1929
	7	“ 1930
	8	“ 1931-1936
	9	“ 1937
	10	“ 1938
	11	“ 1940-1943
	12	“ 1944
	13	“ not dated

Series II: Biographical and other information on Hannah

1	14	Biographical publication on Samuel D. Hannah
6		Declaration of Trust, Homestead Trust
1	15	Scrapbook of newspaper articles on Samuel Hannah
	16	Newspaper clippings on Hannah and Truro land-taking
	17	Photographs

Series III: Writings of Samuel D. Hannah (published and unpublished)

2	18-20	Research files and manuscript for <i>The Proprietary Lands of Plymouth Colony and Cape Cod</i> , 1980
	21-23	Pamphlets published for <i>Library of Cape Cod History and Genealogy</i> , written by Hannah”
		“Permissive used of the Common Lands of Proprietary Plantations”
		“Cast up Lands”
		“Plymouth Corporation, A Trading Company”

Series IV: Family history and post-1945 family correspondence

	24	Hannah Genealogy, handwritten
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Box # Folder #

Family of Samuel Hannah, Post-1945 correspondence:

- 2 25 From various correspondents to Junia Curtis, Elizabeth Hannah,
 Edwin Hannah
- 26-31 Regarding "dune shack" rentals in Truro, 1952
- 32 From Washington, DC regarding Truro land-taking
- 33 House Bill #513 and related information and correspondence
- 34 Truro rentals (lease, legal documents)

Series V: Samuel Hannah research notes on proprietorships

- 3 35 Legal documents from Homestead Trust
- 36 Notes on present day location of proprietorships
- 37 Proprietorship deeds
- 38-41 Research on Plymouth Colony law and records (handwritten transcription
 and photocopies)
- 42-65 "New Trust"
 -Handwritten notes and copies of Plymouth Colony laws, records, court
 orders

Revived Proprietorship trusts:

- 4 66 Composition book of notes on various proprietorships
- 67 Barnstable proprietors, handwritten research notes
- 68 Legal documents 1925-1926
- 69 Bourne – Butterworth Bay quitclaim
- 70 Dennis legal documents
- 71 Monomoyet Proprietors legal documents
- 72-75 Sandwich proprietor, land research, Scussett/Sandwich research
- 76 Santuckett proprietors: legal documents, correspondence, handwritten
 notes
- 77 Succonesett proprietors: legal documents, research
- 78 Truro/Eastern Harbors: Quitclaim
- 79-83 Yarmouth Proprietors

Box # Folder #

Land court cases involving Hannah (Homestead Trust):

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 4 | 84 | Land Court, research and receipts |
| | 85 | Noyes v Wetherbee, land court case no. 9875 |
| | 86 | Adams v Hanah et al, case no. 6098 |
| | 87 | Lorenzo D. Baker et al v Nauset Proprietors, case no. 10669 |
| | 88 | Julia A. Rote v Samuel Hannah, case no. 10711 |
| | 89-102 | Town of Orleans, Eastham, Wellfleet v Samuel Hannah, case no. 10859 |
| 5 | 103 | Raymond M. Adams c Mary Francis Weatherbee et al, case no. 11503 |
| | 104-118 | Adams v Hannah et al, case no. 12909 |

Minutes of meetings of (revived) proprietors:

- | | | |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|
| | 119 | Vol. 1 Barnstable |
| | 120 | Vol. 2 Buzzards Bay |
| | 121 | Vol. 3 Monomoyet |
| | 122 | Vol. 4 Nauset |
| 6 | | Vol. 5 Nauset Proprietor's ledger |

Box 6 (oversize)

Maps, annotated Sandwich and Truro
Voters list