

GUIDE TO THE SAXTON FAMILY PAPERS

The Saxton Family Papers, received as gifts to the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association from various sources, consist of approximately 120 items. These are papers of, or relating to, the descendants of Joseph Saxon, born in Windsor, Connecticut, in 1666 and who settled in Enfield in that state; and his wife Hannah, daughter of Abel Wright. The numbers in superscript that follow some of the names in this guide are those by which George Sheldon identified the individuals in the second volume of his *History of Deerfield* (1895). Much of the biographical information is taken from the same source.

Biographical Notes and Description of Series:

Gershom Saxton², son of Joseph² and Hannah (Wright) Saxton, was born in 1691. He married the widow Hannah Miller in 1716.

He is represented by one item, an undated account for fabrics, buttons and related materials owed by Williams & Field.

David Saxton⁴, son of Joseph³ and Sarah (Parsons) Saxton and grandson of Joseph Saxton², was born in 1734. In 1759, he married Rebecca, daughter of Ebenezer Barnard; the couple had four children, three of whom are named below. David was a shoemaker and tavern keeper, his tavern acting as headquarters for Whigs during the Revolutionary War. He served in the Massachusetts legislature as representative for two years (1780-81) and senator for twelve years beginning in 1786. He died in office in 1800, his widow in 1805.

A writ of attachment, summoning Ebenezer Tolman to answer to David (January 1788) is in the collection.

David Saxton⁶, son of David⁴ and Rebecca (Barnard) Saxton, was born in 1763. He, like his father, was a shoemaker. He moved to New Salem, Mass., for a short period but returned to Deerfield and occupied part of Lot 35. He married Bathsheba, daughter of Thomas Faxon, in 1783. He died in 1824, his widow in 1832.

He is represented by a paper, signed by John Williams, justice of the peace (January 1810), asking David, if he chose, to be present to hear a complaint against Elijah Williams, sadler.

Ebenezer Saxton⁷, son of David⁴ and Rebecca (Barnard) Saxton, was born in 1766. Like his father and brother, David, Ebenezer was a shoemaker. He died in 1847.

A writ of attachment against Calvin Goff Ross, in Ebenezer's favor (July 1811), is in the collection.

Rufus Saxton⁸, another son of David⁴ and Rebecca (Barnard) Saxton, was born in 1769. He lived on Lot 20 and was prominent in town and county affairs. In 1791, he married Tirzah, daughter of Jonathan Ashley; they had seven children. Rufus died in 1857, his wife in 1842.

His papers consist of attachments and other legal papers, dated between 1796 and 1824.

Jonathan Ashley Saxton¹³, son of Rufus⁸ and Tirzah (Ashley) Saxton, was born in 1795. He graduated from Harvard in 1813, and was admitted to the Franklin County bar in 1817. He gave little attention to his profession, and turned to writing and editing. In 1821 he married Miranda, daughter of Ashahel Wright. He died in 1874, his wife in 1844.

His papers consist of a series of letters from George Dickinson; and a series of addresses and articles which were received as a gift from his son, Samuel Willard Saxton [See below, in the Container List, for a description of his writings].

Samuel Willard Saxton²⁴, son of Jonathan Ashley and Miranda (Wright) Saxton, was born in 1829. He trained as a printer; after living for three years at Brook Farm in Roxbury, Mass., he read proof in the office of the State Printer in Boston. He served in a Black regiment during the Civil War. Later he served in the offices of the Treasurer and Comptroller, and was sent on missions of financial trust to Mexico and Europe. He married Mary Wells Grant of Amesbury, New Hampshire, in 1861. Saxton died in 1933.

He is represented by a letter written by George Sheldon congratulating him and his wife on their 50th anniversary (Jan. 1911); a typed "Autobiography," and reminiscence of Brook Farm from his diary in the Yale University library. [Folder 10, below, contains many of his letters to George Sheldon, including his note thanking Sheldon for this congratulatory letter of 1911.]

Joel Saxton⁹, born in 1767, was a son of John⁵ and Lydia (Munn) Saxton and a grandson of Joseph Saxton³. Like his uncle David and other members of the family, he was a shoemaker. He married Moriah, daughter of Hugh Quinn, in 1792; they had one daughter. Joel died in 1859, his wife in 1854.

His papers consist of a writ of attachment, a complaint by Arad Munn against Saxton for threatened assault, and one by Saxton for assault he suffered at the hands of Leven Starkweather and others. These are accompanied by supporting papers.

John Saxton¹⁰, born in 1776, was a son of John Saxton⁵ and a brother of Joel⁹. In 1805 he married Tirza Hawks and the couple had seven children.

His papers consist of a writ of attachment against John Butler of Heath (1802), accompanied by two supporting papers.

William Penn Saxton²⁶, was born in 1847, was a son of William H.¹⁵ and Hannah Briggs Saxton, and a grandson of John Saxton¹⁰. A painter, he was mustered into company C of the 27th Massachusetts volunteers in 1862. He was wounded at Cold Harbor in 1864 and discharged the following year. In 1867 he married Viola M. Newton of Montague. For many years he was sexton of Laurel Hill Cemetery, town constable and police officer. William died in 1923, and his wife in 1918.

He is represented by a recent copy of a message said to have been sent to his father while he was in hospital after being wounded; and by clippings relating to his death and the dedication of a bronze tablet in his memory. Accompanying this material is a deed for land purchased by his wife in 1889; a certificate of merit in scholarship presented to his oldest daughter Lillian; and a marriage certificate of his second daughter, Julia, and Harry K. Briggs in 1895.

Container List:

- | | | |
|----------|--|------------------|
| Folder 1 | Paper of Gershom Sexton, undated | (1 item) |
| Folder 2 | Papers of David Saxton ⁴ , 1788; David Saxton ⁶ , 1810;
and Ebenezer Saxton ⁷ , 1811. | (3 items in all) |
| Folder 3 | Papers of Rufus Saxton ⁸ , 1796-1824. | (19 items) |
| Folder 4 | Papers of Jonathan Ashley Saxton, letters from George Dickinson,
1821-1872. | (47 items) |
| Folder 5 | Writings of Jonathan Ashley Saxton:
a) 1815 or 1816: "To observe the progress of Literature, Science & the Arts ..."
Address before the Society of Adelphi.
b) 1832: <i>Ode to Washington</i> . Manuscript and printed copy [formerly M-s
4731 in the PVMA library]
c) 1837 (Dec.): Lecture relating to the First Continental Congress, delivered to
the Deerfield Lyceum.
d) 1838 (April): "Women's Rights," delivered to the Deerfield Lyceum; printed
in the <i>Boston Quarterly Review</i> , July 1839.
e) 1838 (Aug.): "Freedom of Slave in Antigua"
f) 1840 (Dec.): "Would God, that all the Lord's People were Prophets,"
delivered before the Deerfield Lyceum; published in the <i>Dial</i> , July 1841. | |

- g) 1841 (March): "He who Maketh Two Blades of Grass Grow," delivered to the Deerfield Lyceum
- h) 1841 (Dec.): "The Temperance Movement," delivered to the Deerfield Lyceum; sent to the *Dial* but not accepted for publication.
- i) 1843 (Feb.): "Hymn at the Table," sung at the Washington's birthday temperance celebration [formerly M-s 4734]
- j) 1844: "How Much Land and Property, and I have None!" Printed in the *Democratic Review*.
- k) 1849 (Dec.): "The Old and the New," delivered to the Deerfield Lyceum.
- l) 1849/50: "Inequalities of the Human Condition," prepared as a lecture to deliver to the Deerfield Lyceum.
- m) 1850: "Resolved that the Militia System ought to be Abolished," delivered to the Deerfield Lyceum.
- n) 1898 (Feb.): "Ode to Washington" (composed in 1832); sung during the 28th annual meeting of the PVMA, Feb. 22, 1898. [formerly M-s 4734]
- o) Undated: "The Boy's Dream of the World" [formerly M-s 4733]
- p) Undated: "Humbug, a Definitive and Historical Essay."
- q) Undated: "The Romance of Agriculture." Endorsed, "sent to Geo. Ripley, N.Y., who pronounced it 'too radical'! Probably a delicate method of expressing his opinion of its literary merit."
- r) Undated: "The Earnestness of Life."
- s) Undated: "The Literature of Fiction."
- t) Undated: "You'd Scarce Expect one of my Age to Speak Public on this Stage."

Folder 6 Papers of Samuel Willard Saxton²⁴, letter from George Sheldon; photocopy typescript of "Autobiography of Samuel Willard Saxton" and "A Few Reminiscences of Brook Farm" (originals at Yale); photocopies of news clipping and photograph (6 items)

Folder 7 Papers of Joel Saxton⁹, 1803-1824 (12 items)

Folder 8 Papers of John Saxton¹⁰, 1802 (5 items)

Folder 9 Papers relating to William Penn Saxton²⁶ and his wife, Viola, and daughters Lillian and Julia, 1823, 1824, 1889, 1891, 1895 (11 items)

Folder 10 Correspondence of George Sheldon and others relating to the Saxton Family, 1875-2000, plus genealogical material

