

SWANTON FAMILY.

Swanton family papers, 1801-1957

Emory University
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Swanton family.
Title: Swanton family papers, 1801-1957
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 430
Extent: 1 microfilm reel (MF)
Abstract: Microfilm copy of the papers of the Swanton family of DeKalb County Georgia which include correspondence, house history, and a scrapbook.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

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Source

Loaned for microfilming, 1964.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Swanton family papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Processed by MRD, 1964.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Benjamin Franklin Swanton, (1807-February 18, 1890) was born in Bath, Maine and died in Decatur, Georgia. His great-great grandfather William Swanton 1st, who was born in England in

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1712 and died in America in 1811, was the first man to establish ship building in Bath, Maine. Benjamin Swanton came to Dahlonga, Georgia from Bath during the Gold Rush (1828) to sell mining machinery. He remained in Georgia and located in Decatur where he built and operated, by steam and water power, a Gin-Grist Mill, Machine Shop - Tanyard and Brick Kiln. (A sketch showing the location of his house and other buildings is included as part of the "History of the Swanton House - Decatur, Georgia.") Swanton bought the house from Ammi Williams, one of Dekalb County's earliest settlers.

The Swanton house is the oldest residence in Decatur, Georgia, having been built prior to 1842. It was used as headquarters by Brigadier General Thomas W. Sweeney, commanding the second division of Dodge's 16 Army Corps. U.S.A. The basement was a place of refuge during the bombardment of Decatur and the house was occupied during the Civil War by a widow and ten little girls while Mr. Benjamin Swanton, his wife, the former Sarah Fowle Hale, and his daughter, Sarah Elizabeth were in Maine; and his son, John Swanton, was fighting in the Confederate Army. His daughter Sarah Elizabeth who never married, died in Decatur at her brother's home in 1894. After the war (on October 27, 1868) John B. Swanton married Josephine F. Woodbury, daughter of Dr. Joseph F. Woodbury. Dr. Woodbury (the person to whom most of the letters in this collection were written) was born January 10, 1811 in Topsfield, Massachusetts. He apparently attended New Hampton Institute, 1833-1834, Ludlow Academy, Ludlow, Vermont in 1834-1835, Waterville College in 1835-1836. At some time before coming to Georgia he had taught school. He came on the schooner Harriet from Boston to Darien, Georgia in October, 1839, and moved to St. Simon's Island in 1840 where he was teaching in the Spring of 1841. He was attending "medical lectures" in January 1842, probably at the Southern Botanical Medical College at Forsythe, Monroe County, Georgia and in April 1842 was in the drug business and perhaps also in medical practice in Hamilton, Harris County, Georgia. In September of that year he had "a young man ... studying under" him. While in Hamilton, probably about 1845, he was married. His wife was probably a Miss Embry. She died in 1852, probably June, leaving two children, Josephine F. and William Albert Woodbury. In 1856 Joseph Woodbury moved to Atlanta and opened a drugstore and by 1857 he had remarried, his second wife's first name being Emma. By February 1859 he had sold his drugstore and the following year was selling some kind of "machines" and was raising and/or selling peaches and beeswax. Dr. Woodbury was active in the work of the Baptist Church, particularly in the distribution of religious literature. He died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. John B. Swanton, Decatur, Georgia on April 23, 1884.

After the death of his father, Benjamin Swanton, John became master of the various industries on Peavine Creek in Decatur. After John's death (July 18, 1897), his wife sold the machinery, used the lumber from the buildings to construct tenant houses and with the help of two able colored men cultivated the land. At her death August 7, 1909 the land was divided into City lots and sold. (A copy of the Plot is included.) Lot #87, the Swanton House, was retained by the fourth daughter, Mrs. Estelle Swanton Kerr. Upon the death of Mrs. Kerr (December 29, 1929) the Swanton house was willed to her only daughter Josephine Kerr Thompson (Mrs. Thurman Decatur Thompson), the present owner.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of a microfilm copy of Swanton family correspondence, house history, and scrapbook from 1801-1957. The collection includes family correspondence, most of which

is addressed to Dr. Joseph F. Woodbury; a history of the Swanton House; and a scrapbook (1803-1900) containing letters, clippings, obituaries, sketches, poems, and memorabilia of the Swanton-Woodbury family.

Container List

Box	Folder	Content
MF1	1	1 Sketch, 5 p.p. "History of the Swanton House"; ALS, 8 pp. Wilbur Kurtz to Mrs. Thurman D. Thompson; November 17, 1953. About Swanton House. 3 letters, 1954-1957. Correspondence between Mr. Kurtz and Mrs. Thompson about Swanton House; ALS, 1 p. Benjamin F. Swanton to his daughter, Sarah Elizabeth; February 23, 1829; ALS, 4 pp. C. W. Swanton to his cousin John Swanton; November 1, 1894. Concerned with the death of Sarah Elizabeth Swanton.
MF1	2	8 ALS, by B. Moses, to Miss Sarah Elizabeth Swanton; January 17, February 9, 1865 from Fort Warren Boston Harbor where he was in a Union prison, having been captured "on board a steamer." March 26, May 28, June 20, July 5, 1865 from Springfield, Massachusetts; August 13, 1865 from New York; September 18, 1865 from Macon, Georgia. Moses and Miss Swanton may have been engaged.
MF1	3	22 ALS, by John Walton Hurd (Dover N.H. and St. Paul, Minnesota) to his cousin, Sarah Elizabeth Swanton; May 1, 1849-November 29, 1859; 1 ALS, 4 p. by Climena H. Woodbury to Sarah Elizabeth; June 8, 1884.; 1 ALS, 4 p. by Mary A. Niles to Sarah Elizabeth; November 21, [1886].
MF1	4	105 ALS, by various persons to Joseph F. Woodbury (mainly); January 28, 1825-January 21, 1868. Many of the letters are concerned with family affairs, many being written by his relatives in New England, his brother William Woodbury and, after William's death on March 18, 1856 by his wife, Climena; his nephew, Urban Andrian Woodbury, his niece, Orissa M. Woodbury, his mother Lavinia, and his cousins, James P. and Joseph P. Woodbury. There are several letters by his daughter, Josephine F. Woodbury; Several New England friends, Harvey D. Brigham, L. J. Baker, Zebulon Jones, and Oldin C. Nichols wrote letters. Among his Georgia correspondents were: Col. M. W. Hazzard, Thomas F. Hazzard, Thomas J. Howard, J. M. Comings, J. C. Beckham, Hiram Clark, Thomas J. Niles, J. E. Sharpe, B. F. Gray, A. W. Owen, E. H. Beall, J. F. H. Anderson, B. F. Thorpe and J. N. Embry, his brother-in-law. Many of his letters are concerned with medical education and with the distribution of religious literature. 3 letters from J. J. M. Goss concerning medical education mention Dr.[J. G.] Westmoreland and Dr. [A. W.] Calhoun of the Atlanta Medical College. Goss was "filling the Chair of Practice" in the Philadelphia University of Medicine (March 28, 1867). Letters by J. S. Murrow, Micco Creek Nation, November 22, 1859 and May 10, July 4, 1860 are concerned with Missions to the Indians, probably Baptist missions.; A letter from W. G. Embry, November 21, 1858 from Waco, Texas discusses changes within a few years in a frontier town and mentions hearing Bishop George Pierce preach.
MF1	5	Scrapbook. Contains family papers of the Swanton-Woodbury family, dating between 1803-1900, letters, clippings, obituaries, photographs, invitations, visiting cards, poems, sketches, business papers, and other memorabilia.

