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John C. Saint papers

Title: John C. Saint papers
Collection No: MSS.113
Extent: 0.33 cubic feet
Inclusive Dates: 1846-1947

Abstract: The collection contains the personal papers and business records of Memphis cotton merchant and businessman John C. Saint (1820-1903).

Donor: West Tennessee Historical Society, Memphis, Tennessee.
Processed by: Robert D. Bohanan, 1978; Gerald Chaudron, 2020.
Access: Open to all researchers.
Language: English
Preferred Citation: John C. Saint papers, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: 2020 January

Biographical information

John C. Saint was born on March 7, 1820, in Winchester, Clark County, Kentucky. On November 21, 1844, he married Mary Harriet Kyser (also recorded as Kiser), who was born in Lincoln County, Tennessee, on September 5, 1827. She was the daughter of Rev. James Kyser, an intimate friend, neighbor, and co-worker with Rev. Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) in organizing the "Disciples of Christ", later called the "Christian Church". In 1845, the Saints moved to Memphis, Tennessee, but, after a short stay, removed to Texas where they remained until 1848, when they returned to Memphis and settled permanently. Saint began buying and selling real estate in which business he amassed a large fortune. During the Civil War, a thousand bales of his cotton were burned to prevent their being appropriated by the Federal Army. Being a large slave owner, he took refuge farther south for the better protection of his slaves. At the end of the war, he and his family returned to Memphis to successfully rebuild his lost fortune. He was a generous contributor and prominent factor in organizing and building the Linden Avenue Christian Church, of which he was an honored deacon for many years. Having to pay many security obligations and meeting other financial reverses, he sustained losses from which he was unable to recover. After his wife died on October 6, 1900, Saint made little effort to resume business. In October 1903 he was visiting Winchester, Kentucky, staying at the house of his cousin Floyd Day. He contracted a cold which became pneumonia and he died in December. Saint's remains were returned to Memphis and he was buried beside his wife in Elmwood Cemetery.

Source: Woodson, Henry Morton, *Historical Genealogy of the Woodsons and their Connections*, 2 vols., Memphis: Woodson. 1915, pp. 478-479
<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005785317>

Scope and contents

The collection contains correspondence, tax records, receipts, deeds, etc. pertaining to the business activities of wealthy Memphis entrepreneur John C. Saint, before and after the Civil War. The correspondence includes both business and personal letters concerning the operation of his cotton business and routine family and social matters. The business papers which follow include tax records, receipts, deeds, and blueprints to his property as well as several grocery orders for his family and a three-dimensional drawing of a washing machine, circa 1870. See folder 10 for genealogical information about the Saint family.

Provenance

The collection was donated by the West Tennessee Historical Society (WTHS) and formed part of its collection. Funds for processing the holdings of the WTHS came in part from a grant from the National Publications and Records Commission, which were matched by the WTHS.

These papers were at one time, apparently, part of the Woodson family collection. Saint was related to the Woodsons by marriage. From the evidence available, both collections were deposited with the WTHS in the early 1950s by Dr. Alice Woodson Cameron, granddaughter of John C. Saint. The Woodson family and Saint collections were later separated.

Related materials

MSS.114. Woodson family papers

Subject terms

Cotton trade—Tennessee—Memphis.

Saint, John C., 1820-1903.

Saint, Mary H., 1827-1900.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Correspondence and invitations, 1846-1885.
- 2 Tax records, 1856-1870.
- 3 Receipts, 1859-1877.
- 4 Deeds, 1861-1869.
- 5 Grocery orders, 1866.
- 6 Harrison Washing Machine, circa 1870.
- OS 1 Harrison Washing Machine: Drawing with specifications.
- 7 Photograph: John C. Saint, undated.
- 8 Business cards.
- 9 Recipe - Soda water without a fountain, undated.
- 10 Genealogical material - Saint family.
- 11 Newspaper clippings, 1947 and undated.
- OS 1 Plats of Saint properties, Memphis:
 1. Saint subdivision (part of country lot 517) on Bender Street bounded by Raleigh Road, Stanton Avenue, Marr Street. Surveyed by J. H. Humphreys, 1887 December.
 2. Saint subdivision (part of Block 35), Fort Pickering, bounded by Jackson Street to the south and Alabama Street to the north, undated.
- 12 Insurance premium receipts: Charles H. Morrison.