

Hovey Family Records

Cambridge Historical Commission
831 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Provenance: In 1997, the bulk of the collection was found in a house in Worcester, MA by Shirley Piermarini and these items were donated to the CHC that same year. In 2001, Ms. Piermarini donated five Hovey family photographs.

Collection ID: N/A

Dates: c. 1870s-2001, bulk 1870s-1890s

Extent: 1 document box

Research and collection processing by: Gavin W. Kleespies

Finding aid by: Meta Partenheimer, June 2017

Access: Collection is available for research under the CHC rules of use

Historical Note:

“Information Regarding Hovey Collection” by Gavin W. Kleespies, CHC Archival Assistant



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Information Regarding Hovey Collection

The Hovey Collection consists of 22 manuscripts and booklets which once belonged to the Hovey family. The documents and manuscripts, which are dated from the second half of the nineteenth century to the very beginning of the twentieth century, have been divided into eight files and organized by subject.

With the intention of putting the collection into a historical context, research has been done on the people whose names appear in the collection. These people include a father whose name was William H. Hovey, his wife who was named Susan A. Gerry Hovey and the daughter who was also named Susan Hovey.

The vital records give a couple of interesting hints about the collection. First they tell that William H. Hovey and a Susan A. Gerry were married in 1846. Secondly, there are records of the birth of 2 daughters to the family. This is a confusing piece of information as the collection only references one daughter, this will be discussed below. Through the vital statistics there is also a probable family link one generation back. In the vital statistics, there is a listing for the death of a Susan L. Hovey who was married to a William B. Hovey and was 53 years old at the time of her death in 1848. At no point is there an explicit link between William H. and Susan L. and William B. and Susan A., what follows is the inferred connection.

William B. Hovey begins being listed in the Cambridge Directories in 1849. He is listed as living on Williams Street and having a store located at 32 Faneuil Hall Market Place. He remains at that business address until the 1870's when William H. Hovey assumes the address. The first listings for William H. Hovey does not appear in the directories until 1869. Prior to the 1874 directory his business is simply listed as Faneuil Hall, however in 1874 he begins to have his business listed as 32 Faneuil hall and in the same year his house begins to be listed as 67 Pleasant Street in Cambridge.

A reasonable explanation for the business addresses would be that William B. was older and more established in Boston and therefore had a store front at Faneuil hall. William H., the younger of the two may have been either

working at William B.'s store or selling his goods in the open market. It is a safe assumption that William H. Hovey took over the store of William B. Hovey when William B. retired. Based on the common practice of passing businesses down within a family, this business connection makes the assumption of a family relation between them reasonable.

It is safe to assume that William H. Hovey was living in the area, if not in Cambridge, before he is listed in the directories for the first time. This assumption is based on the fact that it is known through the records of his marriage and the birth of his children that he was born and married in Cambridge. Being born and raised in Cambridge the idea that he was not related to other Cambridge Hovey's seems questionable. William H. and Susan A. G. Hovey lived in Cambridge at least until 1889. In 1889 Susan A. G. Hovey died and left William H. who continued to be listed at 67 Pleasant until 1899. Although William H. ceases to be listed in 1899, there is no record of his death in 1899 so it seems reasonable that he simply moved to a different city for his retirement years.

Taking the family history one step in the other direction, the vital records list the birth of a Susan H. Hovey, of William H. and Susan A. Hovey. This is the first daughter mentioned above. However, "Susan H, daughter of William H. Hovey," is listed as dying in 1848. This young Susan, who died of a bowel complaint, obviously is not the Susan whose handwriting books exist in the Hovey collection. The only clue as to the origin of the Susan of the Collection is found in the vital records for 1868. These records show the birth of a female child, with no first name, whose parents were William H. and Susan A. Hovey. This child must have been Susan A. Hovey and must have been the younger Susan of the collection.

The date is consistent with the collection and there is no other listing of a birth to those parents. This is supported by a booklet in the collection, published by the alumni of the Webster school. In this publication Susie Hovey is listed as a graduate in 1878. She would have been ten years old at this date and although this is young to graduate from grammar school, it is certainly possible. This is reinforced by a booklet from the Cambridge High School which lists Susan Hovey as a graduate of a three year program in 1882. This implies that she may have attended a middle school of some kind. As well, graduating from high school in 1882 would have made Susan about 14 which is young but probably not abnormal for that time period. Susan A. Hovey begins to be listed in the directories in 1900, she is listed at 67 Pleasant Street as soon as William Hovey stops being listed at that address. She continues to be listed in the directories until 1932 when she disappears from the records.

Within the collection there is also a list of members of the First Baptist Church in Cambridge that lists the baptism of a Susan A. Hovey in 1889. This adds the possibility of an entirely new Susan the identity of whose parents is not readily apparent. Although there is no listing of a marriage of Susan A. Hovey this baptism would make one believe that Susan A. had a child. However, that seems improbable. It seems far more likely she converted from a different religious belief and was baptized in a new church in 1889 or returned to a church she had left. This assumption is made more possible, if not probable, by the fact that Susan A. Hovey's mother had died earlier in the same year.

Based on the findings in the city records, city directories and the collection the following history is a summary of the work. Susan L. and William B. Hovey were married some time between 1812 and 1825 but they were not married in Cambridge. One of their children was named William H. and he married Susan A. Gerry. William H. and Susan A. G. Hovey had two children, both of which were named Susan. The first was named Susan H. Hovey, who died about one year after her birth and the second was named Susan A. Hovey who lived from 1868 to about 1932. Susan A. was never married and never had children. Working with incomplete information and a number of confusing facts the above theory seems the most probable.

Gavin W. Kleespies
Archival Assistant

Collection Description:

Collection of documents, booklets, and photographs which once belonged to the Hovey Family of Cambridge. The items have been divided into files according to subject.

Box list:

Item 1. Book: *Marion Berkley: A Story for Girls* by Laura Caxton (1870)

Item 2. Susan A. Hovey autograph book (1876)

Folder 1. Correspondence regarding the death of Susan Hovey (1889)

Items include documents, letters, and receipts

Folder 2. First Baptist Church (1 March 1902)

Directory of the First Baptist Church, Central Square, Cambridge

Folder 3. Webster School (1883)

Booklet: *One Decade (1873-1882): A Brief History of the Webster Graduates' Association* (1883)

Folder 4. Cambridge High School (1882)

Booklet: *The Cambridge High School History and Catalogue* by William F. Bradbury, A.M. (1882)

Folder 5. Hovey Penmanship (1871)

Book: *Penmanship Made Easy* by George N. Comer (1871)

Folder 6. Hovey Music Lessons (nd)

Music book of Susie A. Hovey, 67 Pleasant Street, Cambridgeport

Folder 7. Hovey Poetry (nd)

Two (2) handwritten poems titled “Angel Mamie” and “Our Little Ones”

Folder 8. Miscellaneous (c. 1880s)

One (1) handwritten prescription from pharmacist Elie H. La Pierre of 32 River Street “For fathers headache” (1 February 1886)

One (1) business card for James Douglas Robertson, M.D. of 166 Elm Street, North Cambridge (nd)

Two (2) Cambridge Public Library cards (nd)

One (1) document with handwritten notes and an unfinished letter (5 January 1889)

Folder 9. Correspondence Regarding Collection (1997)

Letters between donor Shirley Piermarini and CHC Executive Director Charles Sullivan (1997)

Folder 10. Research Notes Regarding Collection (c. 1997)

Typed and handwritten notes of research conducted by CHC Archives Assistant Gavin W. Kleespies regarding the Hovey Family. (c. 1997) “Information Regarding Hovey Collection” has been scanned and inserted above for reference.

Folder 11. Five Hovey Photographs (c. 1870s, 2001)

Five photographs of the Hovey Family (c. 1870s) and correspondence regarding said photographs (2001)