

# CAPE ANN Museum

## Library & Archives

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### SAMUEL D. HANSCOMB, LETTERS AND PAPERS OF A CIVIL WAR SOLDIER, 1861-1865 COLLECTION

- Creator:** Samuel D. Hanscomb
- Dates:** 1861-1865
- Quantity:** 1.5 linear feet: 1 manuscript container  
15 photographs  
1 large unframed "Map of Abraham Lincoln's Visit to  
Massachusetts September 11-23, 1848, - 19" x 26"
- Acquisition:** Donated by: Caroline S. Wheeler. This collection was handed  
down to Mrs. Wheeler's husband, who is the grandson of  
Samuel D. Hanscomb.
- Identification:** A14; Archive Collection #14
- Citation:** [Document Title]. The Samuel D. Hanscomb Collection, [Box #,  
Folder #, Item #], Cape Ann Museum Library & Archives,  
Gloucester, MA.
- Copyright:** Requests for permission to publish material from this  
collection should be addressed to the Librarian/Archivist.
- Language:** English
- Finding Aid:** Processed by: Mary Heather Stipp, July, 1995;  
Supervising Archivist: Ellen Nelson

## Biographical Note

### Hanscomb Family:

#### Military Service of **Samuel D. Hanscomb:**

Samuel D. Hanscomb of the Annisquam section of Gloucester, Massachusetts saw military service during the Civil War. He was a private in Company C, 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Massachusetts Infantry.

Samuel D. Hanscomb was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts on September 3, 1840, the son of Samuel C. and Abigail Doyle Millet. Samuel C. Hanscomb was of Lyman, Maine and Abigail Doyle Millet was of Gloucester, Massachusetts.

The military service discharge papers list the occupation of Samuel D. Hanscomb at the time of enrollment as that of mariner. Additional sources show his service on the *M.N. Doyle*. In two of the letters in this collection, numbers 13 and 14, Samuel expresses an interest in transferring to the Navy.

Samuel D. Married Adelia P. Jones of Gloucester while he was on active duty during the Civil War. They had one child, a daughter, named Mary Abbie Hanscomb, born on March 4, 1865. There is no reliable information regarding subsequent children, other than the recording of the death of a second child which appears on the Samuel D. Hanscomb monument at Mount Adnah Cemetery in Gloucester (Annisquam), Massachusetts.

After the Civil War, Samuel lived with his family in Gloucester in the areas of Annisquam and Bay View. Numerous City of Gloucester directories record his occupations during this period first as “stone worker” in 1869-1871, 1873, 1875, 1879 and in 1880 as “engineer.” (In the granite work, drilling, sanding and polishing of granite was done by steam.)

Samuel D. Hanscomb died on July 31, 1884 at age forty-three, of stomach cancer. The condition was later determined by the U.S. Bureau of Pensions to be service connected. He had ague and fever while serving in the military. He is buried in lot number 72 in Mount Adnah Cemetery in the Annisquam section of Gloucester.

Samuel's wife, Adelia P., died in 1918 in Newburyport, Massachusetts at the home of her daughter, Eva Idella Hanscomb Wheeler. She was seventy-three years of age. The 1900 Gloucester City Directory lists her as being a housekeeper at 304 Main Street. Entries in her notebook indicate that after her husband's death, she lived with relatives in various communities, mostly Amesbury, Haverhill, and Newburyport. On June 2, 1916, she was struck by a train in Gloucester and hospitalized for several months with leg injuries. She received her last State Aid in Amesbury, August 3, 1917.

Samuel D. Hanscomb was mustered in November 6, 1861, for three years, in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment,

Company C. He reenlisted May 2, 1864 for three years in the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps, Company H. He was discharged November 27, 1865. (Company D, 32<sup>nd</sup> Regiment is also referred to as Massachusetts Volunteers.) The collection contains a handwritten envelope, undated, with the notation “From Samuel D. Hanscomb, Co. C 1<sup>st</sup> Batt. Infantry, Fort Warren, Boston Harbor.”

The discharge paper of November 27, 1865 (general order) has Samuel D. Hanscomb as “Private of Captain George B. Carse Company H” and “re-enlisted in Captain Emel Sturmfels Company H.” The discharge took place in Washington, D.C. by reason of General Order No. 155 dated October 26, 1865. The identity is given as “Samuel D. Hanscomb born in Gloucester, Mass., is 22 years of age, 5 feet, 6 1/2 inches high, light complexion, hazel eyes, brown hair, and a mariner.”

There is another discharge paper dated August 18, 1876. This gives Samuel Hanscomb as a Private of Captain Richard C. Lawrence Jr., Company G, 8<sup>th</sup> regiment of Infantry, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia, as enrolled on August 18, 1873 for three years and discharged on August 18, 1876 at Gloucester, expiration of term of service.

Adelia P. Hanscomb had extensive correspondence seeking a widow's pension from the U.S. Pension Agency from November 24, 1886 to April 24, 1891. Her request was rejected on March 5, 1890 because the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions (U.S.) found that Samuel D. Hanscomb's death was not due to service. On April 10, 1890 Adelia P. Hanscomb submitted additional medical evidence. As a result, on April 24, 1891 the pension was allowed.

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## Acquisition Note

Of the fifteen photographs in the collection, eight have been identified by Caroline S. Wheeler, whose husband was the grandson of Samuel D. Hanscomb.

Caroline S. Wheeler had worked on the collection before donating it to the Association providing abstracts and chronological listings of the letters and an index of names. These papers are included in the Appendices.

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## Scope and Content of the Collection

The collection contains letters, military service records, miscellaneous papers, artifacts, and photographs. Transcriptions and an abstract of the letters are contained in the Appendices.

The bulk of this collection consists of 40 letters from Samuel D. Hanscomb of the Annisquam section of Gloucester, Massachusetts to his wife, Adelia P. Hanscomb, covering the period of Samuel D. Hanscomb's Civil War military service, May 19, 1861 to May 12, 1865. Matters addressed in the letters include financial difficulties, family planning issues, dissatisfaction with Lincoln, racial attitudes and general domestic affairs. There are two letters to Samuel, one from

his wife dated October 9, 1864 and one from a niece, Lizzie G. Winn, dated August 6, 1863. One letter written by Samuel on May 19, 1861, is in “mirror writing” because of a non combat wound incurred when he was loading his pistol. He had injured his right hand and, therefore, wrote this letter with his left hand, back-hand.

Of great importance are the papers of Adelia P. Hanscomb pertaining to her application to the U.S. Government for a widow's pension as the wife of a deceased veteran.

Some items mentioned in the letters are included in the artifacts collection, such as the locket and mat hook. Many of the artifacts provide an insight into the lives of Samuel D. and Adelia P. Hanscomb as well as into the Civil War era in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The notebook of Adelia P. Hanscomb is important in this respect. A partial transcription of the notebook is in the Appendices.

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## Series Description

- I. Letters
- II. Papers of Samuel D. Hanscomb
  - A. Discharge papers
  - B. Military Service Records
- III. Papers and effects of Adelia P. Hanscomb (Mrs. Samuel D. Hanscomb)
  - A. Widow's pension claim - documents and letters
  - B. Notebook/diary, autograph book of 1891, and miscellany
  - C. News clippings
  - D. Advertising cards
- IV. Artifacts
- V. Photographs

### I. Letters

There is a total of forty-two letters which have been abstracted to reflect the general content. The abstract is contained in Appendix B. The general content of the letters is concern for the health of Samuel and his wife and for other family members. Money and finances were of great importance and discussed frequently. There were also entrepreneurial efforts. Family planning is an underlying thought though it is carefully expressed. Transcripts have been made of all letters which are contained in Appendix A. The letters are fragile and faded.

### II. Papers of Samuel D. Hanscomb

#### A. Discharge papers

The original papers of discharge of Samuel D. Hanscomb in the collection are as follows:

<u>Discharge Date</u>	<u>Date Signed</u>
May 1, 1864	March 9, 1865
November 27, 1865	November 27, 1865
August 18, 1876	August 18, 1876

#### B. Military Service Records

This series contains other miscellaneous papers concerning Samuel's military service. There is a handwritten envelope, undated, with the notation, "From Samuel D. Hanscomb, Co. C 1<sup>st</sup> Batt. Infantry, Fort Warren, Boston Harbor." Also included is a Testimonial of Gratitude from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for military service during the Rebellion, dated April 19, 1870 and issued to Charles Day, Co. C 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry. Charles Day died in Alexandria, Virginia of wounds received at Cold Harbor.

### III. Papers and effects of Adelia P. Hanscomb (Mrs. Samuel D. Hanscomb)

#### A. Widow's pension claim - documents and letters

There are four letters or forms from the Department of the Interior, two dated 1887, one in 1890 and one in 1891; one from the U.S. Pension Agency dated 1886; one dated 1885 in reply to Adelia's request for information; receipted letter to Commission of Pensions from Adelia dated 1890.

#### B. Notebook/diary, autograph book, miscellany

Adelia kept a notebook/diary with entries from 1907 to 1917. The book is 2 1/2 x 4 1/2 and is written in pencil which is fading badly. In it Adelia recorded her accident and recovery, some names with addresses, some lists of expenses, some of her various moves, recipes, etc. There is also an autograph book to "Exxx(?) Hanscomb from Adelia 1891," a copy of a play, and other miscellany.

#### C. News clippings

Includes eight clippings of obituaries, weddings, poems, etc.

#### D. Advertising cards

Includes eleven advertising cards pasted onto loose scrapbook pages.

### IV. Artifacts

Included in the collection are several small personal effects such as a mat hook made by Samuel, a gold locket, gold eyeglass frames, gold teardrop pendant, two gold hoops, two pearl bar pins, one gold bar mourning pin, homemade game, hair, sachet, and handkerchiefs.

### V. Photographs

Of the fifteen photographs in the collection, three are tintypes, two are carte-de-visites, four are 4 x 6 portraits affixed to cardboard, four are daguerreotypes in small frames measuring 2 x 2.5 inches, one is a commercial photo of a house with people and mounted on cardboard, and one is a photograph of the grave stone.

## Container List

### Box 1

#### Series I.

Folder 1      Letters

#### Series II.    Papers of Samuel D. Hanscomb

Folder 2      Discharge papers

Folder 3      Military Service Records

#### Series III.    Papers and effects of Adelia P. Hanscomb (Mrs. Samuel D. Hanscomb)

Folder 4      Widow's pension claim - documents and letters

Folder 5      Notebook/diary, autograph book of 1891, and miscellany

Folder 6      News clippings; Advertising cards

#### Series IV.

Folder 7      Artifacts

#### Series V.

Folder 8      Photographs

### Appendix A Transcript of Letters

The letters have been transcribed by various volunteers and are handwritten. As time permits, they will be entered into the computer.

### Appendix B Abstract of the Civil War Letters of Samuel D. Hanscomb

Caroline Wheeler abstracted Samuel's letters before donating them to the Cape Ann Historical Association.

### Appendix C Indices to Letters and Related Information

Caroline Wheeler made an alphabetical index of the letters including names, places, and subjects. She also made a cross reference of names to letter number and included other references.

### Appendix D Partial Transcription of Notebook

A partial transcription of Adelia P. Hanscomb's notebook was made by the processor, Mary Heather Stipp.

Appendix E  
Notes Concerning Artifacts

Appendix F  
Index to Photographs

Appendix G  
*An Island in the Storm*  
*Letters Home from a Union Soldier*  
*by*  
*Fred E. Oder*

Dr. Oder, physician and writer, helped in the research of the Hanscomb papers and wrote a “very rough draft” of a paper he was preparing. Three slightly different versions are included. An eight-page abstract is included.

Appendix H

Administrative Information and Processor's Notes