

INVENTORY OF THE
DAVID BATCHELDER KEMPTON PAPERS
IN THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WHALING MUSEUM LIBRARY

Content: Diaries of a New Bedford, Mass., businessman, 1878-1891.

Volume: 4 inches.

Provenance: Library purchase on 20 April 1985.

Restrictions: None.

Processed By: Judith M. Downey, 9 March 1990:5

INTRODUCTION

Papers in this collection were purchased by the Old Dartmouth Historical Society on 20 April 1985.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

David Batchelder Kempton was born in New Bedford, Mass., in 1818. His parents died when he was a child and he then lived with his uncle, Ephraim Kempton. David first learned the trade of a house carpenter from his uncle and operated his own business thru the mid 1840's. In 1846, he began investing in whaling vessels and by the early 1850's was an agent for the industry. He continued as an active agent into the mid 1870's. In 1877, Kempton went on a grand tour of Europe for a year. Upon his return to New Bedford, he resumed his business activities but his involvement in the whaling industry had virtually ceased. He served on the board of directors of several businesses, owned commercial rental property, built houses on speculation and served in city government including many years on the Water Board as well as serving two terms in state government as a member of the Legislature.

He first married Sarah Bates Lindsey (1824-1846) in 1842. They had one child, Francis Horatio (b. 1844). Sarah died of consumption at age 22. Kempton married again in 1879 to Susan H. Jennings Kempton (1836-1927). It was the second marriage for both of them. Susan had been married to Charles H. S. Kempton who died at sea. In 1882, David built a large house on County Street on property which had been in the Kempton family for over 200 years. He died in New Bedford in 1899 and his widow, Susan continued to occupy that house until her death in 1927.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Papers of David B. Kempton consist of five diaries, 1878-1891, describing daily activities both business and personal. The diaries record his daily routine including time spent in his counting room, his evening walks, his attendance at meetings of the Water Board and daily weather observations. He also records wedding and funeral notices and social events such as lectures, musical performances, plays and the circus. Celebrations of major holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and the 4th of July are also described in the diaries. Kempton comments on major events in New Bedford such as fires, city, state and national elections, auctions of properties and losses of vessels of this port. He also comments on the political climate of the city and the nation.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

Kempton describes much of his business activities in these diaries. He was a member of the Robeson Building Association and reported on their meetings and activities including the settlement for its construction in 1878 and the sale of one half of it in 1889. Kempton was also involved in other real estate properties including the North End Shoe Factory and built houses on speculation in the city with various partners. He was also involved in city government and served for twenty-five years on the New Bedford Water Board. In the diaries from 1880 on, Kempton describes the construction and management of the pumping station, laying in of pipes, visits to Quitticas Station and other water plants in the area, the 1889 decision to stop supplying mills with fresh water for their processes as well as other activities. He also describes his service as a juror for the Supreme Court, 1887-1888, as a delegate for voting in members of the State Legislature and his election and service as a Representative in the State Legislature and activities in Boston, 1888-1890. Kempton also records the activities of the committees he served on, actions taken by the House and his vote on the questions including women's suffrage.

Kempton also describes his personal activities in these diaries. These volumes begin with his return from an extended tour of Europe and references to this trip are found throughout his writings. He comments on his son, Francis Horatio, especially on his drinking problem. Kempton records events in his domestic life such as his second marriage in 1879 to Susan H. Jennings Kempton, the setting up of their home, the construction and furnishing of a new house on County Street in 1882 and the problems with domestic help. He also refers to the settlements of the Kempton heirs property and to his father-in-law's estate and the problems and court cases connected with them. He also comments on the various Lodges which he is a member of and their activities.

Kempton also describes the many excursions and trips taken including to Washington, D.C. in 1878, Saratoga and Lake George in 1886, Gettysburg and the South with comments on the Civil War in 1887 and New Hampshire to see Mt. Washington, the Flume and the Old Man in the Mountain in 1890. He also describes the numerous day trips including those to Westport, Martha's Vineyard, Providence, Newport and several clambakes in the summer months.

DESCRIPTION

Series A. Diaries, 1878-1891

Volume	1.	1878-1880
"	2.	1880-1883
"	3.	1883-1885
"	4.	1886-1888
"	5.	1888-1891

ADDED ENTRIES

Amusements--Mass.--New Bedford
 Buildings--Mass.--New Bedford
 Businessmen--Mass.--New Bedford
 Diaries--New Bedford, Mass.--1878-1891
 Domestic relations--Mass.--New Bedford
 Europe--Description and travel--1800-1918
 Kempton, Francis Horatio, b. 1844
 Kempton, Susan H Jennings Kempton, 1836-1927
 Landlord and tenant--Mass.--New Bedford
 Legislative bodies--Mass.--Boston
 Legislators--Mass.--Boston
 Local elections--Mass.--New Bedford
 Massachusetts--Politics and government--1865-1950
 Massachusetts. General Court. House of Representatives
 Merchants--Mass.--New Bedford
 Meteorology--Observations
 New Bedford, Mass.--Amusements
 New Bedford, Mass.--Commerce
 New Bedford, Mass.--Politics and government
 New Bedford, Mass.--Recreational activities
 New Bedford, Mass.--Social life and customs
 New Bedford, Mass. Water Board
 Obituaries--Mass.--New Bedford
 Recreation--Mass.--New Bedford
 Rent--Mass.--New Bedford
 Rent charges--Mass.--New Bedford
 Robeson Building Association, New Bedford, Mass.
 Servants--Mass.--New Bedford
 United States--Politics and government--1865-1900