



Guide to the Walter Lee Sutton Papers, 1811-1947

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Summary

Collection Title:

Walter Lee Sutton papers, 1811-1947

Creator:

Sutton, Walter Lee, 1863-1947

Extent:

5.8 Linear Feet

1,409 Items

Physical Location:

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Language:

English

Language:

English.

Collection ID:

RL.01271

Permalink:

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/sutton/>

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Background

Scope and Content

The Walter Lee Sutton Papers span the period 1811 to 1947 with the bulk dating from 1883 to 1939. Three generations of the interrelated Anderson, Danforth, Sutton, and Wynn families are represented in the collection. While the collection primarily focuses on Sutton, many of the earlier papers relate to his wife's family, the Wynns and Danforths, her paternal and maternal relatives respectively.

The majority of the collection consists of courtship letters between Walter Sutton and Harriet (Hattie) L. Wynn (1883-1886), and ledgers and daybooks of the general merchandising businesses Heard and Sutton and W. L. Sutton. Therefore, the major strengths of the collection include its delineation of courtship customs in the 1880s and its depiction over a thirty-five period of a

small general merchandising firm. While the correspondence spans the period 1811 to 1936, there are very few letters that date between 1814 and 1830, thereby leaving several years virtually uncovered in the collection.

The general merchandising businesses of Heard and Sutton and W. L. Sutton sold a variety of items including farm implements, wagons, buggies, hardware, groceries, dynamite, oil, gas, clothing, and dry goods. Because of the time period covered by these accounting records, one can readily see the transition from "horse and buggy days" to the increasing influence of the automobile. Besides business records, the account books also contain a few domestic accounting records for the Sutton family. Regular customers include members of the Anderson, Sutton, and Heard families. In some there are details about employees, including the number of days they have worked or days missed. Other volumes include an estimate of the amount of lumber sold, the amount of hay cut, or which fields were used for cotton picking.

Sutton's cashbook, 1907-1909, not only delineates the cash received and paid out, but also identifies several products Sutton sold. Some of these entries also include names of companies or persons from whom he received products. While there are separate account books for ice (1909 June-1910 Oct.) and cotton ginning (1908 Oct.-Feb. 1912), ice and cotton ginning accounts are also included in some of the other W. L. Sutton Company ledger and daybooks for other years.

The daybooks commonly itemize lists of goods received. Volume 17 includes a list of bank deposits for the years 1922 to 1927, while in later years 1932 to 1939, bank deposits are typically recorded in the daybooks for the period covered by the daybooks. Also in volume 17, for the years 1923 and 1924, deposits are listed for merchandisers' accounts.

In one instance, the ledger for the W. L. Sutton Company had been used earlier for another purpose. Volume 34 contains a list of debts and credits for merchandisers' accounts for the period January 1, 1936 to March 31, 1937, while at the front of the volume there are records for the Danburg Baptist Church Women's Missionary Society, 1910 to 1921.

Volume 37, "Cotton Accounting Book" (1920-1927) includes Sutton's accounting records for his work as a cotton merchant. The accounting records indicate that Sutton shipped cotton to various companies including: Barnett and Company, Athens, Ga.; Georgia Cotton Growers Co-op Association; Rowland Company, Athens, Ga.; Washington Warehouse Company, Washington, Ga.; and George W. Wright, Augusta, Ga.

Loose materials, chiefly business receipts, were laid into several accounting books. Included are receipts from merchandisers who provided goods to the W. L. Sutton Company and from various warehouses and companies where cotton was shipped. There is also a contract for ice between W. L. Sutton and Pope

Manufacturing Company indicating that Pope will sell ice to the W. L. Sutton Company.

Other Sutton accounting records indicate that he sold lumber, kept accounts for the Dansburg School District Board of Education, maintained records for the buying and use of livestock, and kept a record of personal expenses.

Additional financial records include a blacksmith account book kept by Samuel Danforth (1836-1838) and one for a boarding house in Washington, Ga. maintained by Harriet Brown Danforth (1857-1860). Promissory notes and a statement of receipts and disbursements for the estates of Samuel K. Wynn (Hattie's father) and Walter L. Sutton are among the other financial papers.

Among the earliest letters is a series that begins during the War of 1812 and continues to 1814 between George Reab in New York and others concerning his military service. (Reab married Almira S. Brown in 1816 and is a great aunt of Hattie Wynn.) Letters concern whether Reab could be asked to bear arms against the British again since he had been held as a prisoner of war by them and had later been released on parole. Reab stated that he should not be asked to bear arms, invoking the French parole d'honneur as the reason, which is a pledge or oath under which a prisoner of war is released with the understanding that he will not again bear arms until exchanged. It is unclear from the correspondence whether Reab was successful. By April 1813 he had been appointed 3rd lieutenant in the United States 13th Infantry Regiment and by 1816 he had retired from military service. The collection contains a list of officers, including George Reab, Jr. in the 13th Infantry Regiment of the United States Army, which is dated July 31, 1812.

Correspondence from Almira B. Reab during the 1840s to family and friends in New York and Vermont describe how she adjusted to life in the south. Originally from New York, she lived with her sister Harriet B. Danforth and her family in Danburg, Ga. at the time these letters were written.

The collection contains three diaries, one kept by Harriet Brown Danforth and her daughter Emma. Harriet's entries (1858, Jan. 3-1859, Nov. 30) primarily denote when she attended church and in some instances the Biblical scriptures which were read, while Emma's entries (1860? Aug. 26-Dec. 13) concern teaching school. The other two diaries were kept by Walter (1885, Aug. 15-Dec. 23). Several entries relate to Hattie Sutton, while others concern the "liquor issue." Miscellaneous financial information is found in them as well.

Other items in the collection include minutes and bylaws of debating societies, 1853-1855, including the Pine Grove Polemic Society, Philomathian Society, and the Sandtown (Sandtown was formerly known as Hyde) Polemic Society; an undated handwritten arithmetic book; miscellaneous poetry (1816, 1846 and undated); school notes; minutes of the Willis A. Sutton P.T.A. in Danburg, Ga.; Walter Sutton's Sunday School superintendent record book for 1891; obituaries for various Sutton and Wynn family members; several printed graduation

exercise programs from Danburg High School; other miscellaneous writings; and a few photographs.

Papers in the collection indicate that Walter Sutton was having financial difficulties in the late 1890s and early 1900s. In 1897 and later in the 1920s, he was reminded by his creditors that he had outstanding debts. Legal papers from the 1930s also indicate he was suffering from monetary adversities. A petition filed by the American Agricultural Chemical Society for non-payment of debts (1934, Jan. 12) was apparently paid off later that year by selling some of Sutton's land. The agricultural depression during this period was probably a factor in his economic downturn.

Biographical/Historical

Walter Lee Sutton was born in 1863 in Wilkes County, Georgia. In 1886, he married Harriet (Hattie) Louise Wynn, also from Wilkes County, and they had ten children, two of whom died at an early age.

Sutton attended school in Danburg, Ga., and in the early 1880s went to business college in Atlanta. Before he ran his own business he worked in the general merchandising business Sutton and Anderson, which was run by his father and uncle, and delivered the Atlanta Constitution to families in the area. From about 1888 to 1907, he was a partner with his brother-in-law, Thomas V. Heard, in the general merchandising business, Heard and Sutton, in Danburg. When this firm was dissolved about 1907, Sutton maintained the firm which continued as a general merchandising business under the name W. L. Sutton Company. Sutton was also a planter, cotton merchant, director of the National Banks of Wilkes, and a director of Pope Manufacturing Company of Washington, Ga.

In addition, Sutton was a member of the Danburg Baptist Church, where he served on the Board of Deacons and as Superintendent of the Sunday school. He donated land for the consolidated school built in Danburg in the early 1920s, served as a trustee of the school, and chairman of the Board of Education of Wilkes County. He was active in the Democratic Party, member of the Woodmen of the World, and the Wilkes County Farmers Club. Sutton died in 1947.

Information relating to the Anderson, Danforth, Sutton, and Wynn families is in an information folder filed at the beginning of the collection.

Biographical/Historical

Sutton Family

(Moses Sutton m. Sarah Rhodes) & John A. Sutton

(Edward R. Anderson m. Julia A. McLendon) & Martha U. Anderson

John A. Sutton - m. 1862 - Martha U. Anderson && Walter L. Sutton
1863-1947

Walter L. Sutton m. Harriet (Hattie) Louise Wynn in 1886.

Wynn Family

(John L. Wynn m. Minirea A. Thornton) && Samuel K. Wynn

(Samuel Danforth m. *Harriet Brown) && Emma Almira Danforth

Samuel K. Wynn - m. 1864 - Emma Almira Danforth && Harriet Louise
Wynn, 1867-1923

(*Harriet Brown had a sister Almira Brown Reab.)

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Use Restrictions

copyright interests in these papers have not been transferred to Duke University.

Acquisition Information

The papers of Walter Lee Sutton were given to Duke University Library in 1988 and 1989 by Dr. Charles Danforth Saggus and Mr. Walter L. Currie.

Processing Information

Processed by: Janie C. Morris

Completed May 15, 1990

Encoded by Stephen Douglas Miller

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Names and Subjects

- Cotton gins and ginning -- Georgia -- Danburg
- Diaries
- Georgia -- Danburg -- Social life and customs
- Mercantile business -- Georgia -- Danburg
- Courtship -- Georgia -- Danburg
- Ice trade -- Georgia -- Danburg
- Lumber trade
- Debating societies
- Agricultural labor -- Georgia -- Danburg
- Blacksmiths and blacksmithing -- Georgia
- Lodging houses -- Georgia
- War of 1812 -- Muster rolls
- Agricultural implements
- Cotton -- Prices -- Georgia
- Cotton trade -- Georgia
- Agricultural accounts -- Georgia -- Danburg
- Anderson family
- Danburg High School (Danburg, Ga.)
- Danforth family
- Heard and Sutton Company
- Sutton family
- Sutton, Walter Lee, 1863-1947

- W. L. Sutton Company
- Wynn family

Collection Inventory

Diaries

Scope and Contents note

Includes one diary maintained by Harriet T. Danforth (1858 Jan.3-1859 Nov. 30?) and her daughter Emma Danforth Wynn (1860? Aug. 26-Dec. 13), and two of Walter Sutton's. Sutton's notations include financial information.

Harriet B. Danforth and Emma Danforth, 1858-1861?	Box 1
W. L. Sutton, 1885(2 volumes)	Box 1

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Correspondence Series

Scope and Contents note

Chiefly personal letters from members of the Danforth, Wynn, and Sutton families, primarily containing news about family members, friends, and social activities. A series of letters from 1812 to 1814 concern George Reab, Jr. The bulk of the correspondence (1883-1886) is courtship letters between Walter L. Sutton and Hattie L. Wynn before their marriage in 1886.

1811-1858	Box 1
Physical Description: 4 folders	
1861-1885, Mar.	Box 2
Physical Description: 6 folders	
1885, April-Dec.	Box 3
Physical Description: 5 folders	
ca. 1885-1886, June	Box 4
Physical Description: 6 folders	
1886, July-1948 and undated	Box 5
Physical Description: 4 folders	

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Legal papers

Scope and Contents note

Contracts, bonds, indentures, and deeds primarily relating to members of the Wynn and Danforth families. Papers dating about 1926 to 1936 pertain chiefly to to Walter L. Sutton.

1856-1936

Box 5

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Financial Papers

Scope and Contents note

Account books, including ledgers, daybooks, and a cashbook; personal and business receipts; and promissory notes. The W. L. Sutton Company ledgers and daybooks spanning the years 1907 to 1939 comprise the bulk of the financial papers (40 volumes). There are also three volumes containing records for the Heard and Sutton Company in which Sutton was a partner with his brother-in-law Thomas V. Heard. Each of the 43 Heard and Sutton and W. L. Sutton Company account books has been arbitrarily numbered. Therefore volume numbers given below refer to those numbers. Loose materials laid into these volumes have been removed and placed in folders.

There are four miscellaneous account books, 1884-1919, in which Sutton maintained a variety of financial data for different products. For example, one of these which reads "Lumber Book, 1915" on the outside also contains accounting records for other products. Some of these account books include information pertaining to both business and personal expenses.

The series includes Samuel Danforth's ledger (1836-1838), one maintained by Harriet Brown Danforth (1857-1860), and one pertaining to the estate of Samuel K. Wynn (1907)

The unbound financial papers, with the exception of the laid in materials from the W. L. Sutton Company account books, have been placed in chronological order at the beginning of the Financial Papers series. The account books that do not relate to Heard and Sutton and the W. L. Sutton Company are filed next. The Heard and Sutton and W. L. Sutton Company account books that will fit into boxes have been arranged primarily in chronological order. Loose papers from several of these volumes have been placed in folders next to the boxed account

books. The volumes which would not fit into boxes are located at the end of the boxed papers.

1883-1947and undated	Box 6
Physical Description: 2 folders	
Miscellaneous, 1885-1919	Box 6
Account Books:	
Samuel Danforth, 1836-1838 (later maintained as a scrapbook)	Box 6
Harriet Brown Danforth, 1857-1860	Box 6
Samuel K. Wynn Estate,1907	Box 6
Account Books: W. L. Sutton: Miscellaneous	
1884-1885	Box 6
1885-1907[cover reads " W. L. Sutton 1885-1886"]	Box 6
1901-1906	Box 6
1915-1919[cover reads "Lumber Book, 1915"]	Box 6
Account Books: W. L. Sutton Company	
Cashbook, 1907-1909[vol. 4a]	Box 6
Cotton Ginning Ledger, 1908 Sept. 25-1909 May 8[vol. 4b]	Box 7
Cotton Ginning Ledger and Daybook, 1909 Oct. 2-1910 Nov. 10[vol. 4c]	Box 7
Cotton Ginning Daybook, 1911 Sept. 11-1912, Feb. 3[vol. 4d]	Box 7
Ice Daybook and Ledger,1909-June-Sept. [vol. 4e]	Box 7
Inventory List, 1919-1920[cover reads " 1919 and 1920 Invoice Book 1919 and 1920" [vol. 8]	Box 7
Daybook, 1920, Feb. 10-May 2[vol. 9]	Box 7
Daybook, 1920, June 10-July 15[vol. 10]	Box 7

Daybook, 1920, July 16-Aug. 21[vol. 11]	Box 7
Daybook, 1920, Aug. 23-Nov. 13[vol. 12]	Box 7
Inventory List, 1920, Sept.[vol. 13]	Box 7
Daybook, 1920, Nov. 15-1921, May 9[vol. 15]	Box 8
Daybook, 1921, May 10-1923, June 1[vol. 16]	Box 8
Bank Deposits, 1922-1927and Merchandise Accounts, 1922-1923[vol. 17]	Box 8
Daybook, 1923, Nov. 7-1924, June 30[vol. 18]	Box 8
Daybook, 1924, July 1-1925, Mar. 21[vol. 19]	Box 8
Daybook, 1930, Sept. 26-Dec. 22 [vol. 20]	Box 8
Daybook, 1930, Dec. 23-1931, Mar. 26[vol. 21]	Box 8
Daybook, 1931, Mar. 27-June 9 [vol. 22]	Box 8
Daybook, 1931, June 10-Aug. 27 [vol. 23]	Box 8
Daybook, 1932, Jan. 28-April 12 [vol. 24]	Box 8
Daybook, 1932, April 13-June 14 [vol. 25]	Box 8
Daybook, 1932, June 14-Oct. 15and Bank Deposits, 1932, July 1-Oct. 27 [vol. 26]	Box 8
Daybook, 1932, Oct. 17-1933, June 20and Bank Deposits, 1932, Oct. 29-1933, June 30[vol. 27]	Box 9
Daybook, 1933, June 20-1934, Mar. 31and Bank Deposits, 1933, Aug. 31-1934, Mar. 31[vol. 28]	Box 9
Daybook, 1934, April 2-Oct.5and Bank Deposits, 1934, April 2-Oct. 13 [vol. 29]	Box 9
Daybook, 1934, Oct. 6-1935, Mar. 24and Bank Deposits, 1934, Oct. 15-1935, May 31[vol. 30]	Box 9
Daybook, 1935, May 25-Dec. 21and Bank Deposits, 1935, June 3-Dec. 24 [vol. 31]	Box 9

Daybook, 1935, Dec. 23-1936, Aug. 15and Bank Deposits, 1935, Dec. 27-1936, Aug. 31[vol. 32]	Box 9
Daybook, 1936, Aug. 17-1937, April 30and Bank Deposits, 1936, Sept. 1-1937, April 30[vol. 33]	Box 9
Merchandisers' Accounts, 1936, Jan. 1-1937, Mar. 31[vol. 34] (The first part of this volume contains the financial records of the Danburg Baptist Church Women's Missionary Society.)	Box 9
Daybook, 1937, May 1-1938, Mar. 31and Bank Deposits, 1937, May 1-1938, April 30[vol. 35]	Box 9
Daybook, 1938, April 1-1939, June 6and Bank Deposits, 1938, April 30-1939, July 12[vol. 36]	Box 9
Loose papers from the W. L. Sutton Company account books	Box 10
Vol. 5, 1913-1920and undated	Box 10
Vol. 13,1920and undated	Box 10
Vol. 14, 1920-1921	Box 10
Vols. 28-30, 1916-1933and undated	Box 10

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Miscellaneous

Scope and Contents note

A handwritten arithmetic book, debating society minutes and bylaws, poetry, school notes, minutes of the Willis A. Sutton P.T.A. in Danburg, Ga. (part of this volume also contains the receipts and disbursements to the W. L. Sutton estate), W. L. Sutton's Sunday school superintendent record book, and a few obituaries of Sutton family members.

Arithmetic Book, undated	Box 10
Debating Societies, 1853-1855	Box 10
Poetry,1816, 1846, 1885and undated	Box 10
School Notes, undated	Box 10

Volume: Minutes Willis A. Sutton P.T.A., Danburg, Ga., 1926-1927and Walter L. Sutton Estate,1947	Box 10
W. L. Sutton's Memoranda Book, 1878?	Box 10
W. L. Sutton's Sunday School superintendent record book,1891	Box 10
1826-1925, 1920s,and undated	Box 10

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Printed Material

Scope and Contents note

Chiefly closing exercise programs for Danburg High School. Includes information relating to events at Shorter College, Rome, Ga., and a pocket size almanac.

1883-1930and undated	Box 10
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Oversize Materials and Ledgers

Oversize Heard and Sutton and W. L. Sutton Company account books have been placed on the shelf at the end of the boxed portion of the collection. Each is described below.

Heard and Sutton Company: Ledger,1904	Volume 1
Ledger,1905	Volume 2
Ledger,1906	Volume 3
W. L. Sutton Company: Ledger, 1907-1909	Volume 4
Ledger,1918	Volume 5
Ledger,1919	Volume 6
Ledger,1920	Volume 14

Cotton Accounting Book, 1920-1927

Volume 37

Contains legal and financial papers, printed material, and miscellaneous items.

Oversize-box 38

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