

Guide to the Benjamin H. Foster and Samuel Hunt family papers 1977.198

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Brooklyn Historical Society
Creator	Foster, Benjamin H.
Creator	Hunt, Richard
Creator	Hunt, Samuel, 1810-1878
Title	Benjamin H. Foster and Samuel Hunt family papers
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1827-1870
Date [inclusive]	1774-1870
Extent	0.2 Linear feet in 1 manuscript box
Language	English
Language of Materials	Materials in English.
Text [Box]	1 (A0158)
Container	4 folders
Abstract	<p>This collection contains two principal sets of documents, one centered on attorney Benjamin H. Foster (1808-circa 1880s) of Southampton, Long Island, N.Y., and the other on Foster's brother-in-law, Samuel Hunt (1810-1878) of Massachusetts. Many of the documents, such as bills of sale, receipts and indentures, pertain to Benjamin Foster and his family's involvement in the whaling and steam ship industry in the mid-1800s. Other documents relate to Foster's legal work for various estates, and some concern the building of a branch of the Long Island Rail Road</p>

from Riverhead to Sag Harbor. The Hunt material consists primarily of correspondence from Reverend Richard Hunt to his son, Samuel. Subjects of the Hunt correspondence include family matters, family deaths, fatherly advice, and religion, especially concerning the father's encouragement of his son toward a life and career rooted in spirituality. Correspondence from Samuel's ill brother describes an experience of searching for a cure through "animal magnetism." The material also includes notes most likely taken by Samuel at a speech given by Carl Schurz at the Harvard College Alumni Dinner in 1877 concerning the federal government's policies toward the U.S. South.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item, date (if known); Benjamin H. Foster and Samuel Hunt family papers, 1977.198, Box and Folder number; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Biographical/Historical note

The collection revolves primarily around the family of Benjamin H. Foster of Southampton, Long Island, and Foster's brother-in-law, Samuel Hunt. Benjamin Foster (1808-circa 1880s) was an attorney and community leader in Southampton, N.Y.. He was also deeply involved in the whaling industry during its peak from the 1830s through the mid-nineteenth century. During that time, Foster was entitled to a share of the Union Whaling Company at Sag Harbor, and purchased various whaling and steam ships, including the "Hudson," "Ann," and "Crescent." During the 1860s, Foster invested in a trust for whaling pioneer Thomas Welcome Roys (circa 1816-1877). Foster also helped in commissioning the Long Island Rail Road to build a right of way line between Riverhead and Sag Harbor between 1868 and 1870.

Reverend Samuel Hunt (1810-1878), son of the Reverend Richard and Ann (Humphrey) Hunt, was ordained as pastor for the Natick Congregational Church in Natick, Massachusetts in 1839, and continued his pastoral work at various congregations until 1864. Hunt was educated at Wrentham Academy, and graduated from Amherst College in 1832. He taught at Southampton Academy in Long Island, where he met and married Amy Foster (1810-1849), daughter of Major Josiah and Abigail Foster of Southampton (and sister of Benjamin), in 1838, and had 5 children. During his pastorate in Natick, Hunt became close companions with political leader and abolitionist Henry Wilson. Both Hunt and Wilson were advocates of human freedom and racial equality; in 1868, Hunt rejoined with Wilson when he became Secretary for the U.S. Senate Committee on Military Affairs, of which Senator Wilson was the chairman. Further, Hunt served as Wilson's private secretary during his time in office as vice president of the United States (1873-1875). In addition to his publications pertaining to his congregational work, Hunt aided in the preparation and editing of Wilson's *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America* (1872-1877).

Scope and Contents

This collection contains two principal sets of documents: financial records and correspondence pertaining to Benjamin H. Foster's legal affairs and business interests, and correspondence from Reverend Richard Hunt to his son, Samuel Hunt, from 1826 to 1850.

Many of the documents pertaining to Benjamin Foster and his mother, Abigail, concern their involvement in the whaling and steam ship industry in the mid-1800s and include bills of sale, receipts, and correspondence. The bills of sale for ships in the collection are for the "Ann," "Hudson," and "Crescent." Many of the receipts document the sale of shares of ships to and from Abigail and Benjamin; there are also general receipts of loans and payments to the Fosters. A receipt documenting Benjamin Foster's investment in a trust for the whaling innovator Thomas Welcome Roys (circa 1816-1877) is also included

herein. Correspondence pertains to payments made for ships and ship expenses. Specific companies referenced are the Crescent Whaling Company and Union Whaling Company.

Other documents related to Benjamin Foster concern his legal work for, among other matters, the estates of J. B. Rogers and David Chapman of Southampton. Also included are documents regarding the building of a branch of the Long Island Rail Road from Riverhead to Sag Harbor (1868), including financial agreements, correspondence, and a newspaper clipping. One letter regarding the railroad line mentions potential agreements to be made with local Native Americans. Other documents include genealogical notes on the May and Foster families, and the rules for 1857 of Southampton Academy. The earliest document in the collection is a 1774 land indenture to Benjamin Foster's father, Josiah.

Subjects of the correspondence from Richard Hunt to his son Samuel include family matters, fatherly advice, travel and visit plans, and religion, especially concerning the father's encouragement of his son toward a life and career rooted in spirituality. The father's letters are particularly poignant in their wishes for his son and in descriptions of the personal loss felt at the deaths of family members. Also, in an 1843 letter, Richard recalls his earliest memory, that of watching with his father the Battle of Bunker Hill during the Revolutionary War. Correspondence from Samuel's ill brother describes an experience of searching for a cure through "animal magnetism." The Hunt material also includes notes most likely taken by Samuel at a speech given by Carl Schurz at the Harvard College Alumni Dinner in 1877 entitled "The Scholar in Politics," which concerned the federal government's policies toward the U.S. South.

The collection includes four cartes-de-visite, including one of Samuel Hunt, and one tintype of unidentified individuals.

Arrangement note

The collection consists of four folders of material. Two folders include Foster family documents, followed by a folder of Hunt documents, then closing with a folder of five photographs.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Brooklyn Historical Society June 2011

Conditions Governing Access

Open to researchers without restriction.

Conditions Governing Use note

Material in this collection is in the public domain.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

This collection was donated to the Brooklyn Historical Society (formerly the Long Island Historical Society) by Brown University in 1956.

Processing Information note

The collection was processed by Robyn Hjermsstad and Larry Weimer in May-June 2011.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

A typescript of some of the Foster genealogy notes in the collection, perhaps originally written by Benjamin Foster, are available on the library shelves under the title *Family record of Josiah Foster and Samuel Hunt* (call number CS71.F678.1900z).

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Long Island Railroad Company.

Genre(s)

- Bills of sale
- Cartes-de-visite (card photographs)
- Correspondence

- indentures
- Receipts (financial records)
- Tintypes (prints)

Geographic Name(s)

- Sag Harbor (N.Y.)
- Southampton (N.Y.)
- Southampton (N.Y.) |x Genealogy
- Suffolk County (N.Y.)

Personal Name(s)

- Foster, Abigail
- Foster, Benjamin H.
- Hunt, Richard
- Hunt, Samuel, 1810-1878

Subject(s)

- Animal magnetism
- Clergy |z Massachusetts
- Decedents' estates |z New York (State) |z Suffolk County
- Family life
- Religion
- Whaling ships