

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

Repository Identifier

mawelhs

Local Identifier

2017.16

Name and Location of Repository

The Wellesley Historical Society
229 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02481
(781) 235-6690
www.wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org

Title

Clapp Family Collection, 1865 – 1959

Date

1856 – 1959, undated

Extent

12.5 linear feet, 20 boxes

Name of Creator

Clapp Family

Biographical Note

Albion Robert Clapp, 1843-1928

Albion Robert Clapp was a pioneer Wellesley realtor and property developer, and a noted leader in bringing public services and civic infrastructure to the area. He was influential in the process which led to the incorporation of Wellesley as a town when it separated from Needham in 1881. At the time of his death, the *Townsmen* reported that “no single individual has contributed more to the healthy development of Wellesley, especially Wellesley Hills, than the late Albion R. Clapp... who succeeded magnificently in making Wellesley a desirable town in which to live” (March 30, 1928, 2).

Clapp was born July 29, 1843 in Everett, Massachusetts. Commonwealth of Massachusetts Probate Court records in the collection show that he was the child of James Dunn, and carried the name Robert Dunn until February 1861, when he was adopted by Isaac and Elizabeth R. Clapp; he then took the name Albion Robert Clapp.

In 1867 he married Mary W. (Underhill) Clapp, and the couple moved to what was then known as the Grantville section of Needham. At the time, this area was rural and undeveloped, with few roads and no infrastructure. By 1872 Clapp had purchased over 100 acres near what is now Cliff Road north of Route 9 (Young 1980).

Clapp was a chemist by trade, and in 1872 he formed a partnership and opened a chemical

Clapp Family Collection Wellesley Historical Society

manufacturing business in Wellesley Lower Falls. His company, Billings, Clapp & Co., was located at 18 Mica Lane, in a stone building (Urann 1956). By 1896, his successes in property development led him to sell his interest in the company; from that point forward Clapp focused solely on real estate ventures. It is estimated that over the years he had acquired up to 400 acres in Wellesley (Urann 1956).

Clapp's holdings, with a few exceptions, were predominantly in an area north Worcester Road, east of Weston Road, and west of Woodlawn Avenue, including an area known as "The Hundreds." By the time the town of Wellesley was incorporated in 1881, he had a vision of what he wanted his real estate development, as well as the town, to be like.

In 1885 Clapp purchased several houses in Wellesley; until then he had simply bought undeveloped land. These forays into real estate ventures were successful, and by 1890 he was purchasing existing structures as well as building houses on land he had purchased. He built three houses on Chestnut Street in 1889 alone. By the mid-1890s, he had started to divide land around the intersection of Cliff and Chestnut into building lots. He continued to build roads as the area developed; these roads included Cliff, Cypress, Garden, and Bradford Roads.

His use of standards and restrictions in his development – which included minimum home prices, large lot sizes, standard setbacks from the roads, and standard road widths – allowed Clapp to develop in such a manner that his properties were more profitable and upscale. Planning and landscaping were hallmarks of their development; the 1914 Wellesley Town Building Law and the later 1926 zoning laws reflect Clapp's vision of community (Young 1980, 47).

In addition to his extensive property interests, Clapp was influential in bringing early public services to Wellesley, including water, gas, and trolley service. He was one of the 25 citizens in charge of the incorporation in 1881 (*Townsmen* May 24, 1956), and took charge in much civic infrastructure, including bringing gas into Wellesley, as well as participation on the early Electric Light Commission. He was also instrumental in establishing the Water Department in 1883, which led to the construction of the water works; he was elected Water commissioner in early 1884. Clapp "thought that the extension of water mains on Cliff Road or any other thoroughfare a necessity instead of a luxury and, as usual, he good-naturedly brought the voters around to his view of the matter" (*Townsmen* November 8, 1907, 1). Clapp served as a town selectman in 1897-1898. He was also active in establishing the Fire Department in 1886, and the fire alarm system in 1893. He also played a role in the construction of Wellesley area street car lines, and served on the Boston & Worcester Street Railway Company board of directors (*The Commercial and Financial Chronicle* October 5, 1901, 1111). He also served on the board of James F. Shaw & Company, a prominent street car construction firm (*Street Railway Journal* February 22, 1902, vol. 19, no. 8, 225).

Albion Robert Clapp died on March 26, 1928. He was noted as having a "kindly, genial, ingratiating manner" (*Townsmen* March 30, 1928, 3), and is considered one of Wellesley's "pioneer builders" (*Townsmen* April 3, 1931, 8) and a "real town father" (*Townsmen* March 30, 1928, 3). His property interests and estate passed down to his son, Albion Billings Clapp.

Clapp Family Collection Wellesley Historical Society

Albion Billings Clapp, 1874-1961

Albion Billings Clapp, son of Albion Robert and Mary Clapp, was born May 21, 1874 at the family's 11 Cliff Road home (Urann 1956). He attended Harvard University, graduating in 1896. By 1904 he had been brought into his father's property development and real estate business ventures.

He was a charter member of both the Maugus Club and the Wellesley Advisory Committee, serving 1912-1914. The committee was organized to oversee the “processes of Town Government” (*Townsman* August 5, 1916, 1), for at the time Wellesley and its infrastructure were developing rapidly.

Albion Billings Clapp took over his father's development plans after his death in 1928. He was responsible for much development on Clapp-owned lands. In 1930, he opened Albion and Lowell Roads, and in 1934 opened Oakcliff and Woodchester Roads; development of these areas followed. Whereas his father developed most of the lands he owned himself, his son often dealt with other developers. In 1929, he sold the land which became the Cliff Estates to developer Harold S. Green. Like his father, however, the younger Clapp was concerned with the character of development in the area; when selling land to developers, it was with strict stipulations that the high standards his father had set in minimum lot sizes and setbacks, as well as minimum prices, be observed. His intention was to develop “exclusive neighborhoods” in the town (*Townsman*, April 2, 1981, 106).

Clapp continued the standards in property development set by his father, and can be said to be a contributor to Wellesley's character. He died on March 3, 1961.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains materials related to the life and work of the Clapp family. Materials related and created by Albion R. and Albion B. Clapp make up the bulk of the collection. Materials found in the collection include correspondence, photographs, ledgers & notebooks.

Index Terms

Clapp, Albion Billings
Clapp, Albion Robert
Clapp, Juliet Marcella
Clippings
Correspondence
Dwellings — Massachusetts — Wellesley
Genealogy
Journals (Diaries)
Massachusetts — Wellesley
Photographs
Real Estate
Real Estate Development — Wellesley, Mass.
Transportation
Wellesley (Mass.)
Wellesley (Mass.) — Buildings, structures, etc.

Clapp Family Collection Wellesley Historical Society

Wellesley (Mass.) — Family and personal papers
Wellesley (Mass.) — History
Wellesley (Mass.) — Politics and government
Wellesley (Mass.) — Social life and customs
Wellesley Historical Society (Wellesley, Mass.)
Women

System of Arrangement

This collection is organized into nine series arranged by subject:

- I. Correspondence; 1856, 1861 1881, 1882, 1911 – 1921, 1956, undated
- II. Clapp Family Papers; 1861, 1865, 1879, 1883 – 1916, 1919 – 1942, undated
- III. Albion B. Clapp Notebooks & Planner; 1928 – 1942, 1959
- IV. Albion R. Clapp Notebooks; 1903 – 1922
- V. Bibles; 1858, 1867, 1875, 1883
- VI. Car Account Books; 1929 – 1954
- VII. Photographs & Scrapbooks; undated
- VIII. Properties; 1876 – 1960
- IX. Clapp Estate & Business Records; 1887 – 1957, undated

Conditions Governing Access

The papers are open for research purposes by appointment only. Please contact the Wellesley Historical Society for more information.
info@wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org
(781) 235-6690

Physical Access

Some of the materials are fragile.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Copyright restrictions may apply.

Languages and Scripts of the Material

English

Immediate Source of Acquisition

1968.72 – 1968.90
1981.85
C.1

Related Materials

Wellesley Historical Society: Photograph Collection: Businesses, A – D
Wellesley Historical Society: Photograph Collection: People, Clapp
Wellesley Historical Society: Estate of Albion B. Clapp Architectural Plans
Wellesley Historical Society: Wellesley Historical Society Maps and Plans

Clapp Family Collection

Wellesley Historical Society

Accruals

The Historical Society may add materials to the collection in the future; however, no further accruals are currently expected.

Description

Processing of this collection was made possible through a grant from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee.

DACS Finding Aid created by Taylor C. Kalloch and Alden Ludlow in June 2017.

Bibliography

- Clapp, Albion B. "Wellesley Had Near Lynching When Water System Was Built." *Townsman*. (Wellesley, MA). May 24, 1956: Section C, page 5.
- "General Investment News." *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle*. October 5, 1901: 1111.
- "Interurban Street Railways in Massachusetts." *Street Railway Journal* 19, no. 8. February 22, 1902: 225
- Hinchliffe, Beth. "The Cliff Estates, Where Modern Wellesley was Born." *Wellesley-Weston Online*. Spring, 2008. Retrieved from URL <http://www.wellesleywestonmagazine.com/spr08/cliff.htm>
- "Obituary: Albion Robert Clapp". *Townsman*. (Wellesley, MA). March 30, 1928.
- "A Real Town Father." *Townsman*. (Wellesley, MA). March 30, 1928.
- "Some of The Pioneer Builders of Wellesley." *Townsman*. (Wellesley, MA). April 3, 1931. Section 4, page 8.
- Urann, Margaret S. "Albion B. Clapp tells how his father helped develop town." *Townsman*. (Wellesley, MA). May 24, 1956; Section C, page 5.
- Young, George. *Isaac Sprague and Albion Robert Clapp: Developers of Wellesley, 1896 to 1934. A Survey of Their Efforts in Developing the Belvedere and the Cliff Estates into Areas of Affluence*. Boston: Boston State College. Master of Arts thesis, April 1980. Wellesley Historical Society accession copy number 1981-48.
- Young, George. "Early developers assured exclusiveness." *Townsman*. (Wellesley, MA). April 2, 1981: 99-102.

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

Container List

I. Correspondence; 1856, 1861, 1881, 1882, 1911 – 1921, 1956, undated

This series contains correspondence written to and from members of the Clapp Family.

Box 1

- Folder 1: A; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 2: B; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 3: C; 1911 – 1922
- Folder 4: D; 1910 – 1921
- Folder 5: E; 1911 – 1920
- Folder 6: F; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 7: G; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 8: H – I; 1910 – 1921
- Folder 9: J; 1910 – 1921
- Folder 10: K; 1911 – 1922
- Folder 11: L; 1912 – 1921
- Folder 12: M; 1911 – 1922
- Folder 13: N – O; 1910 – 1922
- Folder 14: P – Q; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 15: R; 1912 – 1921
- Folder 16: S; 1911 – 1921

Box 2

- Folder 1: T; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 2: U; 1894 – 1921
- Folder 3: V – Z; 1911 – 1921
- Folder 4: Correspondence from Billings to Albion R. Clapp with photo [glass]; undated
- Folder 5: Correspondence to & from Miss Juliet Marcella Clapp; 1911 – 1922
- Folder 6: Correspondence to Mrs. Albion B. Clapp from Albion B. Clapp; 1918 – 1919
- Folder 7: Correspondence to Mrs. Albion B. Clapp from Gus; 1918 – 1919
- Folder 8: Correspondence to Mrs. Albion B. Clapp from John W. Muldoon; 1918

Box 3

- Folder 1: Correspondence to Mrs. Albion B. Clapp from M.A. (Happy) Askew; 1918
- Folder 2: Correspondence to Mrs. Albion B. Clapp from W.F. Codgan; 1918 – 1919
- Folder 3: Correspondence to & from Albion B. Clapp; 1920, 1921, 1956, & undated
- Folder 4: Correspondence to & from Albion R. Clapp; 1856, 1861, 1881, 1882, 1915, & undated
- Folder 5: Correspondence to & from Mrs. Albion B. Clapp; 1917 – 1921, & undated

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

II. Clapp Family Papers; 1861, 1865, 1879, 1883 – 1916, 1919 – 1942, undated

This series contains materials belonging to the Clapp family which address various topics. Of interest are materials related to the water and sewer systems in Wellesley.

Box 3

- Folder 6: Accounts of Trips; 1931 – 1946
- Folder 7: Agriculture 313 Book; undated
- Folder 8: Albion B. Clapp Boston Custom House Research; 1942 – 1943
- Folder 9: Albion R. Clapp Bills, Receipts, & Business Correspondence; 1899 – 1916

Box 4

- Folder 1: Albion R. Clapp Papers; 1861, 1882, 1897, & undated
- Folder 2: Central Roofing Company & Supplies Information, including samples; undated
- Folder 3: Clippings; 1928, 1950, 1961, 1967, 1971, & undated
- Folder 4: Juliet Marcella Clapp, Education; 1919 - 1921
- Folder 5: Materials Regarding Water & Sewers in Wellesley; 1883 – 1914
- Folder 6: Souvenirs; 1865, 1879, 1913, 1923, 1939, & undated

III. Albion B. Clapp Notebooks & Planners; 1928 – 1942, 1959

This series contains notebooks belonging to Albion B. Clapp, as well as a calendar.

Box 4

- Folder 7: Albion B. Clapp Notebook; 1928 – 1933
- Folder 8: Albion B. Clapp Notebook; 1933 – 1935

Box 5

- Folder 1: Albion B. Clapp Notebook; 1936 – 1942
- Folder 2: Albion B. Clapp Planners/Calendars; 1959

IV. Albion R. Clapp Notebooks; 1903 – 1922

This series contains notebooks belonging to Albion R. Clapp.

Box 5

- Folder 3: Albion R. Clapp Notebook; 1903 – 1906
- Folder 4: Albion R. Clapp Notebook; 1909 – 1915
- Folder 5: Albion R. Clapp Notebook; 1916 – 1919

Box 6

- Folder 1: Albion R. Clapp Notebook; 1922

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

V. Bibles; 1858, 1867, 1875 1883

This series contains bibles belonging to Albion R. and Albion B. Clapp.

Box 6

- Folder 2: “The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments; translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised”, New York American Bible Society, 1858; Albion R. Clapp, Grantville Congregational Church; 1861 or 1886
- Folder 3: “The New Sabbath Hymn and Tune Book, for The Service of Song in the House of the Lord”, Boston: Mason & Hamlin, Albion R. Clapp; 1867

Box 7

- Folder 1: “The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the original tongues: and with the former translations diligently compared and revised”, by his majesty’s special command: Oxford University Press, 1804, Albion R. Clapp; 1875
- Folder 2: “The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the Original Tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised”, New York American Bible Society, 1882, Gift From Wellesley Hills Congregational Church to Albion B. Clapp; Baptized January 4, 1880

VI. Car Account Books; 1929 – 1954

This series contains notebooks which the Clapp family used to document the upkeep of various vehicles they owned.

Box 8

- Folder 1: Buick Coupe; 1937 – 1950
- Folder 2: Buick Sedan; 1948 - 1954
- Folder 3: Oldsmobile; 1933 – 1937
- Folder 4: Studebaker; 1929 – 1935

VII. Photographs & Scrapbooks; undated

This series contains photographs and scrapbooks belonging to the Clapp family.

Box 9

- Folder 1: Photographs, Cased
- Folder 2: Photographs, Loose
- Folder 6: Silhouette, Frames; undated

Box 10

- Item 1: Unlabeled Photo Album
- Item 2: Unlabeled Scrapbook, #1

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

- Item 3: Unlabeled Scrapbook, #2
Item 4: Unlabeled Scrapbook, #3

Archives Oversize Box 1

- Folder 1: Photographs; undated
Item 1: Scrapbook; undated

VIII. Properties; 1876 – 1960

This series contains materials pertaining to properties owned by the Clapp family both personally and professionally.

Box 11

- Items 1: Property / Lot List Catalog By Street A – T

Box 12

- Items 2: Property / Lot List Catalog By Street S – Z

Box 9

- Folder 3: Clapp Properties, 1 Chestnut Street, 13 Cypress Street, 11 & 19 Cliff Road; 1924 – 1959
Folder 4: Clapp Properties, 20 & 22 Ledyard Street; 1929 – 1942
Folder 5: Clapp Properties, 8, 16, 21, & 37 Garden Road; 1925 – 1953

Box 13

- Folder 1: Record Book of Real Estate Deeds, Albion R. Clapp & Albion B. Clapp; 1876 – 1960
Folder 2: Rent Accounts of Albion R. Clapp; 1897

IX. Clapp Estate & Business Records; 1887 – 1957, undated

This series contains ledges used to records information related to the Clapp Estate and Clapp family business. “A” and “B” are the designations given by the Clapp family.

Box 13

- Folder 3: “A” Books; 1929 – 1930
Folder 4: “A” Books; 1931
Folder 5: “A” Books; 1932

Box 14

- Folder 1: “A” Books; 1933
Folder 2: “A” Books; 1934
Folder 3: “A” Books; 1935
Folder 4: “A” Books; 1936
Folder 5: “A” Books; 1937

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

Folder 6: "A" Books; 1938

Box 15

Folder 1: "A" Books; 1939 – 1940
Folder 2: "A" Books; 1941 – 1942
Folder 3: "A" Books; 1943 – 1944
Folder 4: "A" Books; 1945
Folder 5: "A" Books; 1946 – 1947
Folder 6: "A" Books; 1948 – 1950

Box 16

Folder 1: "A" Books; 1950
Folder 2: "A" Books; 1951
Folder 3: "A" Books; 1952 – 1953
Folder 4: "A" Books; 1955, 1957, & 1959
Folder 5: Albion B. Clapp Expense & Cash Ledgers; 1923 – 1928, 1952, & 1953
Folder 6: "B" Books; 1942 – 1946

Box 17

Folder 1: "B" Books; 1946 – 1950
Folder 2: "B" Books; 1951 – 1953
Folder 3: Check Register; 1887 – 1889
Folder 4: Estate of Albion B. Clapp; 1950 – 1957
Folder 5: Estate of Albion R. Clapp & Estate of Albion B. Clapp; 1942 – 1949

Box 18

Folder 1: Estate of Albion R. Clapp; 1929 – 1933
Folder 2: Estate of Albion R. Clapp; 1934 – 1941
Folder 3: Insurance Ledger; 1930 – 1940
Folder 4: Stocks[?]; 1929

Box 19

Item 1: Account Book / Ledger, Albion B. Clapp, Vol. 3; 1907-1957
Item 2: Account Book / Ledge, Albion B. Clapp, Vol. 5; Copy of Deeds;
November 1934
Item 3: Account Book / Ledger, Albion B. Clapp, Vol. 4; Land and Land Sales;
undated

Box 20

Item 1: Account Book; March 1925 – September 1926
Item 2: Payment Account Book; June 1929 – December 1931
Item 3: Payment Account Book; October 1926 – June 1929
Item 4: Receipt Account Book; January 1929 – October 1929
Item 5: Receipt Account Book; June 1927 – March 1928
Item 6: Receipt Account Book; June 1930 – March 1931
Item 7: Receipt Account Book; March 1928 – January 1929

Clapp Family Collection
Wellesley Historical Society

- Item 8: Receipt Account Book; November 1929 – May 1930
Item 9: Receipt Account Book; September 1926 – May 1927

Archives Oversize Box 2

- Item 1: Albion B. Clapp, Scrapbook V.1, Maps & Deeds; 1928