

S0786 Rannells Family Papers, 1838-1914

176 Folders, 10 Oversized Items, 1 CD Of Digital Images

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Elise Rannells Todd, Gregg Rannells, and Alice Rannells Meyers donated papers to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection in May 2007. Mary McKillop added papers related to David Watson Rannells in August 2008. Maplewood historian Doug Houser contributed invaluable background information and introduced WHMC to the Rannells family.

Attorney Charles Samuel Rannells, who arrived in St. Louis in 1841, was a prominent participant in local business and political communities during a period of exponential growth for the region. He found friends among the city's elite, shared in its prosperity, served in public office and constructed a network of legal connections that extended across the country.

Rannells was born in 1814 in Mason County, Kentucky, where his father published a newspaper, the Washington Union. He practiced law in Kentucky and Mississippi before settling in St. Louis, where he quickly made a place for himself in the city's legal community. He moved in elite social and political circles as well, with memberships in the influential 2nd Presbyterian Church, Mercantile Library and the founding board of Bellefontaine Cemetery. He won election to the Missouri Senate on the Whig ticket in 1850 and was reelected in 1854.

By 1846, Rannells had also begun to invest in real estate, purchasing large tracts of land across St. Louis County. He had married Mary Warder, member of a prominent Springfield, Ohio, family in 1842. They built the house they named Woodside around 1850 on a 320-acre farm in what is now the St. Louis suburb of Maplewood. They had three children who survived to adulthood: Elizabeth, Edward, and John. In the 1860 census Rannells claimed ownership of roughly 2200 acres of land valued at \$410,000. He also had substantial personal wealth in farm products and livestock; his household included six slaves and six farmhands.

Health problems cut this successful career short in the mid 1860s. A court-appointed trustee handled his financial affairs on behalf of Mary Rannells and their children for the rest of Charles' life. An 1866 assessment of the family's holdings listed nearly 2500 acres and outstanding mortgages of over \$80,000. The trustee auctioned livestock and 1385 acres of the land to pay the family's debts and provide for their support. Five years later, he subdivided the farm in Maplewood into 85 lots to be sold in another auction. The family retained the house and a number of the lots.

After Charles Rannells' death in 1877, his son Edward (then in his early twenties) daughter Elizabeth and her husband Howard Brown lived at Woodside with their mother. Mary Warder Rannells died in 1896. Edward, like his father, dealt in real estate and practiced law; he also served as an associate judge of the St. Louis County Court. He lived at Woodside with his wife and two sons until his death in 1920.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Rannells Family Papers include approximately 3.5 cubic feet of correspondence, legal documents and household receipts. They have been organized into four series.

Series 1: Business and personal papers of Charles S. Rannells

The earliest and largest of these groups spans much of Rannells' working life, 1838 - 1865. It includes records of basic legal services he performed: drawing up wills, deeds, and powers of attorney, and managing estates. Extensive files of letters verify or disclaim debts owed to several large estates, notably those of fellow attorneys Beverly Allen, Augustus Kerr and Josiah Spalding. There are also indentures, promissory notes and other records representing innumerable real estate transactions for clients and on his own behalf.

This series also holds personal correspondence from his father, his Brother David Watson Rannells and other siblings, cousins and several members of his wife's family, the Warders, as well as from friends in his previous cities of residence.

Series 2: Business and personal papers for Mary Rannells and family

A second and considerably smaller set contains documents created by the trustee, some personal correspondence and records of property transactions by Mary Rannells and her children. These are dated from 1863 ' 1896. There is also personal correspondence that discusses disagreements among the children over the value of jointly owned property and the settlement of their mother's estate.

Series 3: Financial papers of Edward Warder Rannells

Receipts of household expenditures and records of real estate transactions make up the bulk of this series. These are not comprehensive records for the period covered (1890-1914), but do provide significant information on the Maplewood property and on the family.

Series 4: Oversized

Real estate surveys, maps and posters advertising land auctions.

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SERIES FOUR: Oversized maps, property surveys and/or auctions of real estate offerings (stored in WHMC director's office)

a) Survey 1897, Auguste Chouteau and Louis courtois Son, T.43NR3E

b) Copy of Survey 359, Prairie du Pont Village by W.W. on 2 May 1851. Original by W. Elias Rector, 23 July 1808 (in map case)

c) Copy of Land Survey, Commons Field Tract, Village of Cahokia, 31 Dec. 1809

d) Copy of Land Survey, Village of Prairie du Pont, 31 Dec. 1809. Copy by W Warder May 1851

e) Highland ' A Western Addition to the City of St. Louis

f) Plat of Prairie DuPont Common Fields

g) Webster Groves ' subdivision at auction, October 2, 1847, by Robert Renick

h) Murdoch Farm (Shrewsbury) 350 acres at auction, May 10, 1869, McKenzie's subdivision

i) Hutchinson & Wylie's subdivision (along the Rock Road west of the city) by John A. Watson

j) North St. Louis, auction, May 25, 1875. Carr & Haynes, Real Estate Agents

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