

# Guide to the Samuel Johnson Hitchcock Papers

MS 1184



compiled by Diane Kaplan

September 1983

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P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1184

**CREATOR:** Hitchcock, Samuel J. (Samuel Johnson), 1786-1845

**TITLE:** Samuel Johnson Hitchcock papers

**DATES:** 1762-1845

**BULK DATES:** 1805-1845

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 1 linear foot

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Correspondence and financial and legal papers relating to Samuel Johnson Hitchcock's education at Yale College, teaching at Fairfield Academy, legal practice with Seth P. Staples, and legal instruction at his and Staples' private law school which was incorporated into the Yale Law School.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1184>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1184>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Portions of the papers were transferred from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in 1980 and from the Yale Law School in 1983.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Samuel Johnson Hitchcock Papers. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Samuel Johnson Hitchcock, the eldest of twelve children of Benjamin and Mary (Johnson) Hitchcock, of Bethlehem, then part of Woodbury, Connecticut, and grandson of Benjamin and Elizabeth (Averett) Hitchcock, of Woodbury, was born in Bethlehem on February 4, 1786. His father being in straitened circumstances, this promising son, after having taught school for some winters, was gratuitously prepared for the Sophomore Class, by his pastor, the Rev. Azel Backus (Yale 1787). He was graduated with the highest honors, delivering with the Valedictory an Oration on the Wisdom of aiming at High Attainments.

He received his A.B. from Yale College in 1809. After graduation, he taught for two years at Fairfield Academy and then tutored at Yale. In the meantime, he also studied law under the firection of Seth P. Staples (Yale 1797). At Commencement in 1812 he gave a Master's Oration on Newspapers.

He resigned his office at Commencement in 1815, and was then admitted to the bar, and entered on practice in this city, where he soon attained distinction.

In 1820 he became associated with Mr. Staples as a teacher in his private Law School, which in 1824 was first recognized as a part of the College. To this School for the rest of his life he devoted much of his time and energy, with great success.

Although he preferred to avoid public office, he served as Judge of the New Haven County Court from 1838 to 1842, as Mayor of the City for three years from June, 1839, and as Chief Judge of the City Court from 1842 to 1844.

The honorary degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred on him by Yale in 1842.

He took an active interest in internal improvements and was a member of the first Board of Directors of the Hartford and New Haven Railroad Company, and its President from 1837 to 1840.

He was also concerned in securing the first surveys for a railroad from New Haven to New York, and spent the winter before his death in Albany, endeavoring to procure from the Legislature the necessary franchises.

He died in New Haven on August 31, 1845, in his 60th year.

Judge Hitchcock was distinguished in his profession for accurate legal knowledge and great power of application; of studious and methodical habits, and sound, discriminating judgment, he was probably more eminent as a teacher than as an advocate. He served as a Deacon in the Center Church from 1833 until his death.

His portrait, painted by Jared B. Flagg, about 1840, belongs to the University.

He was married by the Rev. Aaron Dutton, on May 18, 1818, to Laura, daughter of Simeon and Parnel (Fowler) Coan, of Guilford, who died of consumption on October 3, 1832, in her 35th year.

He next married, on December 25, 1834, in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Narcissa, daughter of Walter and Elizabeth Burr (Sturges) Perry, of Southport, Connecticut, and widow of Joseph Whittemore, of Fredericksburg, who died in Fairfield in July, 1831. She died while visiting Southport on November 3, 1854, in her 59th year.

By his first marriage he had two sons and three daughters, of whom all but one daughter survived him. The youngest daughter married Judge Thomas D. Sherwood (Yale 1846).

By his second marriage he had one son, who was for a time a member of the Class of 1861 in Yale.

(Taken from *Yale Biographies and Annals, 1805-1815*, pp. 257-259).

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## Scope and Contents

The Samuel Johnson Hitchcock Papers, 1762-(1806-45)-1860, contain correspondence, legal and financial papers, and personal memorabilia from Hitchcock's undergraduate years at Yale College, his teaching at Fairfield Academy, his law practice with Seth Staples, and his career as a legal educator, judge, and mayor of New Haven. The papers contain information on the development of the Yale Law School, particularly its library and students.

The bulk of the papers is correspondence, arranged chronologically, concerning legal cases, many relating to the collection of debts and the settlement of estates, and student affairs. Folders 17 and 18 contain legal instruments such as summonses, writs, deeds, indentures, and briefs which bear on Hitchcock's case load. Personal memorabilia includes diaries of Hitchcock's travels in New England and New York and orations given by him at Yale.

The Hitchcock Papers were transferred to Manuscripts and Archives, between 1979 and 1983, from the Beinecke Library and from the Law School Library. Many of the papers were purchased by the library between 1948 and 1954. Much additional Hitchcock material, including ledgers, journals, letterbooks, accounts of private expenses, and papers concerning the Farmington Canal Company and the Hartford and New Haven Railroad, are in the Beinecke Library.

## Collection Contents

b. 1, f. 1	Commissions, certificates and other personal memorabilia	1814-1821, 1840-1844
Correspondence		
b. 1, f. 2	1806-1808	
b. 1, f. 3	1809-1813	
b. 1, f. 4	1814-1817	
b. 1, f. 5	<a href="#">1818-1820</a>	
b. 1, f. 6	1821-1822	
b. 1, f. 7	1823-1825	
b. 1, f. 8	1826-1828	
b. 1, f. 9	1829 English	
b. 1, f. 10	1830-1831	
b. 1, f. 11	1832-1833	
b. 2, f. 12	1835 English	
b. 2, f. 13	1836-1840	
b. 2, f. 14	1841-1845	
b. 2, f. 15	Diaries, and student memorabilia	1805-1814
b. 2, f. 16	Financial and library records	[1825-1844]
Legal Papers		
b. 2, f. 17	1762-1831	
b. 2, f. 18	1832-1843, n.d.	
b. 2, f. 19	Correspondence of others	1846-1860

## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Law  
Law teachers  
Lawyers  
Legal instruments

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Names**

Hitchcock, Samuel J. (Samuel Johnson),  
1786-1845  
Staples, Seth Perkins, 1776-1861

### **Corporate Bodies**

Fairfield Academy (Fairfield, Conn.)  
Yale Law School  
Yale University -- Faculty  
Yale University -- Students