

Murdoch, Frances A., Journal

Frances A. Murdoch Journal

1861-1863



Title Statement

Murdoch, Frances A., Journal Frances A. Murdoch Journal, 1861-1863 Ms.2009.132

Author: John M. Jackson, Archivist

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2009.132

Unit Date

1861-1863

Language

The material in the collection is in English.

Abstract

The collection contains the journal of a young woman living on a Mississippi plantation during the American Civil War, relaying descriptions of a battle between the Natchez militia and a Union gunboat, the death of Colonel Stuart Wilkins Fisk at the Battle of Murfreesboro, the plundering of Bruinsburg by Union soldiers, and other war news.

Creator

Murdoch, Francis A., b.1847

Extent

0.1 Cubic Feet 1 folder

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Frances A. Murdoch Journal was donated to Special Collections in 2005.

Processing Information

The processing and description of the Frances A. Murdoch Journal commenced and was completed in October 2009.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Frances A. Murdoch Journal, Ms2009-132, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Frances A. "Fannie" Murdoch was born in Mississippi around 1847. Her father, John Murdoch (1813-1861) had been born in Louisiana, attended Yale University (class of 1834), and in 1840 married Frances Louisa Bristol (1819-1875), daughter of a New Haven, Connecticut family. The Murdochs later resided at Cane Mount, their cotton plantation near Rodney (Jefferson County), Mississippi. Fannie was one of eight children and was schooled by private tutors at home with her siblings before briefly attending Professor Baird's school from December 1862 until April 1863. No further information about Fannie Murdoch could be found.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of a journal maintained by Frances A. "Fannie" Murdoch, a young woman living on a Mississippi plantation during the American Civil War. Containing approximately 90 pages, the journal commences with an entry dated May 29, 1861. The journal is largely introspective in nature, as Murdoch dwells on personal feelings, focusing heavily on her religious beliefs. She often questions her worthiness and chastises herself for sins, frequently mentioning her quick temper. At the same time, Murdoch takes pride in the evening Bible studies she conducts with the people her family enslaved. Murdoch also describes the weather and often refers to siblings Willie, Jonnie and Sallie, as well as various relatives, servants and neighbors.

As the Civil War commences, Murdoch very briefly mentions reports from Harpers Ferry and Philippi, Virginia. After the Battle of Manassas, her entries focus more on war rumors and news. She mentions a personal telegram received by acquaintances from President Davis, relaying news of the Confederate victory at Manassas, and Davis' proclamation for a day of prayer and fasting.

On April 18, 1862, Murdoch expresses thanks for what she considers a Confederate victory at Shiloh, while at the same time disagreeing with those who believe the war's end may soon be drawing near. As the war progresses, she becomes ever less hopeful of victory and mentions a prophecy that the war will last four years and result in the reunification of the states. She relays secondhand but somewhat lengthy descriptions of a battle between the Natchez militia and a Union gunboat, the death of Colonel Stuart Wilkins Fisk at the Battle of Murfreesboro, and the plundering of Bruinsburg by Union soldiers. Elsewhere, she reports the surrenders of New Orleans and Vicksburg.

On a few occasions, Murdoch expresses her fear of a revolt by enslaved people but feels confident that Ben or Henry, people her family enslaved, would save her and brother Jonnie, "as they say they like us so much." Elsewhere, Murdoch deplores the torture used on Natchez enslaved people to elicit information about rumored plans for an uprising. On May 3, 1863, she notes that many of the people her family enslaved have departed, averring that they had forgotten how well they were treated by the family and comparing them to a fly being lured by a spider--the lure in this case being the promise of eleven dollars a month. Also on this date, Murdoch notes that the carriage horses are all gone, and she feels in danger of being "outraged and

insulted at any time." After intermittent entries made during the next several months, the journal ends on October 12, 1863.

Keywords

Civil War

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Diaries

Women -- History

Existence and Location of Copies

This collection has been digitized and is available online.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

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Description of Subordinate Components

Journal

Unit Date 1861-1863

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