

A Guide to the Diary of Louisa H. A. Minor

Diary of Louisa H. A. Minor 1855-1866
1855-1866

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Mrs. Everett W. Evans

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Use Restrictions

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Scope and Content

Louisa H.A. Minor, born April 13, 1833, was the youngest child of Samuel Overton Minor (-August 30, 1838) and Lydia Laurie (Lewis) Minor (February 15, 1795-August 8, 1833). After her parents' deaths, Louisa Minor was raised by her mother's sister, Mary Walker (Lewis) Leitch Anderson (March 25, 1793-June 21, 1872) of "Pant-Ops," Albemarle County. Throughout the diary, Mary Walker Anderson and David Anderson are referred to as "Ma" and "Daddy."

Louisa Minor's diary, ca. 350 pages, kept from September 1, 1855 to December 29, 1866, reveals her personal feelings as well as both routine and extraordinary events in the lives of herself and her family and friends. She often writes about her weekly activities, especially church attendance and social interactions with relatives and friends. References to her family and friends often concern marriages, births, illnesses, deaths, visits, and Louisa Minor's impressions about individuals and the events in their lives. She also writes her own poetry, quotes verses of others, and records her thoughts on books she read and church sermons she heard.

There are frequent references to members of the Minor family, especially Louisa Minor's brothers and sisters and their families. While Louisa Minor was still a small child, her father and several offspring migrated to Missouri, while others, including Louisa Minor, remained in Virginia. During the period of the diary, the following siblings were living: Mary Overton Minor (December 4, 1812-), Garritt Minor (November 15, 1815-), William Woolfolk Minor (March 10, 1817-May 3, 1885), James Hunter Minor (November 15, 1818-April 12, 1862), Samuel Overton Minor (May 12, 1820-March 24, 1880), Nicholas Peter Minor (August 25, 1822-), Bettie Lewis Minor (September 12, 1825-), and Sallie Watson Minor (January 3, 1829-March 1873). There are also references to more distant relatives as well as friends of the Anderson family, Carr family, Davis family, Gilmer family, Leitch family, Lewis family, Macmurdo family, Meriwether family, Minor family, Randolph family and Terrell family.

Louisa Minor was quite religious, often attending church several times a week, and visiting churches of different denominations, including Grace Church, the " Brick Church, " the University "Chapel" (held at this time in a room in the wing of the Rotunda), St. Paul's Church, the "Monumental" Church, and an "African" Church in Richmond. She heard some of the prominent clergymen of the time such as Ebenezer Boyden, John Albert Broadus, Dabney Carr Davis, Richard Terrell Davis, Richard Kidder Meade, Bishop William Meade, Liberian Bishop John S. Payne, and Joseph Pere Bell Wilmer.

There are references to and some descriptions of places visited and events attended, including the Virginia State Fair in Richmond in 1857 and again in 1860. Louisa Minor often visited the nearby estates of family and friends-- Castalia, Cloverfields, Kinloch, Locust Hill, Music Hall, Orange Dale--relating occurrences at them. There are mentions of the funeral of the artist John Toole (March 1860), the annual celebrations of the

Jefferson Society and the Washington [Literary] Society at the University of Virginia as well as other events at the University. Information on Charlottesville is found throughout the diary.

Prior to the beginning of the Civil War references to blacks included news of freed servants sailing from Norfolk to Africa (December 1856), and later accounts of many of their deaths while en route (April 1857). Also during this time there was much political discussion and talk of insurrections generally (December 1856) and of insubordination among the servants at Music Hall (August 1857). Louisa Minor's feelings toward the uprisings was probably indicative of the way the Southerners felt during this time. She often referred to the closeness of the family and the servants, and seemed to have no understanding of any rebelliousness. This lack of understanding seems evident in December 1865 when she wrote that the "freedmen seem to be having all the fun and goodies." She wrote of their changing status, their unwillingness to attend to the family's wants, and their still receiving daily allowances--all with the belief that they had been treated fairly (December 1865).

During the Civil War, Louisa Minor wrote about occurrences in more detail, although much of the news was indirect, through hearsay or letters. In late 1860, Louisa Minor wrote about the realization of war, and the companies of infantry "drawn out in all the pomp and circumstance of war." Throughout the war she often expressed the typical feelings of Southerners toward the Northerners, the victories and losses of the Confederate Army, heroes such as "Stonewall" Jackson, destruction of land and transportation modes, and the changing status of blacks. From January 1861 through April 1865, Louisa Minor reported on the progress of the war. She mentions that when Stonewall Jackson's troops marched through in June 1862, she spent the whole day feeding soldiers, gave up her bed at night, and was paid a visit in the parlor by General Richard Ewell, "a funny old fellow...[with] the simplicity and heart of a child...". She also reports on a Christmas dinner given to over 1200 soldiers at the Delevan Hospital, Charlottesville, and Custer's diversionary raid on Rio Hill on February 29, 1864. As time progressed, the effects of the war became personally evident to Louisa Minor as more and more of her family and friends and the surrounding area were affected. During late 1864, and early 1865, Charlottesville was more involved in the war, with Yankee raids and destruction of property. Louisa Minor gives a fairly full account of Federal troops passing through Albemarle County in March 1865, and describes the hardships of the first year of Reconstruction.

Also included is a bequest, April 23, 1871, of Mary Walker (Lewis) Anderson leaving her table furniture, two feather beds and a trundle bed with bed clothes, "wearing clothes," tin ware, and all personal property and money due her to Louisa Minor.