

Mead, Sarah M. Diary

Sarah M. Mead Diary

1850

Title Statement

Mead, Sarah M. DiaryGuide to the Sarah M. Mead Diary SC 00835

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1850

Language

English

Creator

Mead, Sarah M.

Extent

0.01 Linear Feet

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Preferred Citation:

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Scope and Contents

Sarah M. Mead's journal is a small, leather bound book, approximately 4" X 6.5" (10 cm X 16 cm) in size. It consists of 138 unnumbered pages. According to the first page, she began it on July 15, 1850, when she was "Age - 12 years," living in Penn Yan, New York.¹ She notes very early her attendance at "Mrs. N. M. Hubbell's school." Later, she says she is going to "Miss Mary Drakes [sic] school."

Like many journals or diaries, there are gaps between her entries. It appears she kept this journal sporadically over a number of years, starting when she was 12 years old and continuing until after she became 18 years old, in 1856.

Before August 1856: These entries cover the period when Sarah was growing up in mid-19th century America. Most of her entries, written in a neat, practiced hand, describe her daily routine: starting at an early hour (sometimes noting it was 5 a.m. or 6 a.m.); doing her morning work at home; going to school; and learning her "lessons." One of these centered on a class "motto" for the week, "Aim at high and noble attainments." Her assignment was to report on what she had attained.

On some occasions she noted her mother's illness and the attendant need to help at home. She often included references to going to church and to "sabbath school." However, one of her entries did include a comment about one of the era's biggest news stories. On August 30, 1850, noting that it was the day set for the execution of Professor Webster for the murder of Dr. Parkman, she wrote "Oh! how sad his children must feel [.]" [George Parkman, a chemistry professor at Harvard University was tried, convicted and executed for the murder of John Webster, a prominent Boston physician. The trial attracted widespread interest; thousands attended the trial. Parkman was hanged on August 30, 1850.]

During these formative years, she devoted one journal entry to five personal resolutions for self-development, beginning with "I will not make no unkind remarks about any other person or that I will speak no evil of any one" and ending with "I will Read these Resolutions over ever [sic] evening and see if I have broken any of them or not." She often closed her daily entries with a cheerful assessment of a long day.

August 1856 and Later: On August 3, 1856, Sarah noted that "I am now 18th years old" She acknowledged it had been "some years since" she wrote in her journal, during which there had been some "sad times" as well as "happy." She then described some events during this interim period, like when she "went east;" took a "pleasher" [pleasure] ride on the steam boat" on the "Fourth of July in 1855;" "got a quanted" [acquainted] with "Mr. Acherson" and having "a pleasant slay [sleigh] ride together."

From this entry forward, her entries reflect more of the concerns of a young woman, one who no longer was learning lessons at school, but working at home (performing "daley duteys"), connecting socially with others through home visits and at church meetings, and striving to become - in her mind - the right kind of adult.

Additional item: One calling card, with the name "Sarah M Mead" on one side. On the other side is a handwritten inquiry addressed to a "Dear Frend [sic]."

Keywords

Young women--Diaries

Children--History--19th century

Teenage girls--Diaries

United States -- Religion -- 19th century
Women--Education--New York--History

Description of Subordinate Components

Diary

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Mixed Materials Small Collections Box 46 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Language English