

McLean County Museum of History

Diaries Collection

Processed by
Jim Hall, Fall 2015 – Fall 2016

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1872 - 1960
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	From multiple donors.

Brief History

Diaries, from the Latin *dies* (day), are records of daily life and opinions organized by date. The art of personal diary-keeping became popular in the 18th century, reaching its pinnacle during the Victorian era. While diaries, often also called journals, were usually meant to record the private thoughts of the diarist, they now give us important insights into historical events and the everyday life of the culture in which the diarist lived. People have been creating daily records for business purposes for hundreds of years, but the concept of a diary or journal in which the writer also records their thoughts took longer to develop.

One of the earliest examples of a diary belongs to Marcus Aurelius, a Roman Emperor who lived in the 2nd century AD. Other early diaries come from Middle Eastern and East Asian cultures. In the Medieval era, diaries were used by mystics to record spiritual interpretations of daily events. During the Renaissance, people began keeping diaries as a way to express opinions without any intention of one day publishing their writings.

Until the 18th century, most diaries were kept by men and were usually daily notes about business or farming. Others kept spiritual diaries of sorts, in which they counted their blessings and confessed their sins. Literacy rates rose and the cost of paper dropped about the same time as people became more aware of the self in the 18th century; consequently, diarising became more popular. By mid-19th century, diaries were far more popular with women than with men, and diarising was often considered by men to be silly and frivolous. However, diarising or journaling has continued to be a popular past time. Personal diaries and journals offer historians invaluable information regarding firsthand accounts of historical and events, as well as minutiae of everyday life.

[from *The History of the Diary, the Original Blog* by Colleen Welsch, July 5, 2017.
<http://theoldtimey.com/history-of-the-diary>]

Scope

Diaries, information on diarists, and miscellany from 1872 – 1960.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Edward Lee Flesher

- 1.1 Obituary, *Pantagraph*, 23 May 1954
- 1.2 Information from Ancestry: Keifer Family Tree (12 Mar 2012)
- 1.3 Journal from 1945 containing weather observations, farming tasks

Folder 2: Mary “Polly” Duke Wight Fleming

- 2.1 Obituary with biographical sketch from funeral home
- 2.2 Description of donation by Hope N. Pinkerton
- 2.3 Diary from 1 Jan 1920 – 23 Jan 1920

Folder 3: Jennie Bowen – Diary/Ledger, 1872 – Contains general information on 1872, Jennie Bowen’s comments on certain days, bills payable and receivable

Folder 4: Book handwritten in German – Hardback

Appears to be an individual’s reflections on various literary, historical, philosophical, etc. materials. No date or writer’s name identified.

Folder 5: Christina Rich Correll – Diary, 1958; Diary, 1959-1960

- 5.1 Obituary, *Pantagraph*, 5 November 1973
- 5.2 Information from findagrave.com
- 5.3 Diary from 1 Jan 1958
- 5.4 Diary

Folder 6: Cornelia B. “Nellie” Daniels (1830-1902)

Journal and letter, c 1848-1857.

Maiden Name: Cornelia B. Sleeper

Folder 7: Farmer’s Journal, 1899-1901

Unnamed farmer, who also was a musician. Several references to Wolcott, IL.