

Sarah Ann Hyde (1804-1882)
Diaries, 1826-1882
Doc 480 and MSA 316

Introduction

The diaries of Sarah Ann Hyde (1804-1882) a lifelong resident of East Georgia, Vermont, span a period of 56 years, 1826-1882, from age twenty-two until her death at 78. The diaries are remarkable not only because she made daily entries, but also because she wrote frankly about her family, reading, travel and spirituality. She was instrumental in the founding of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in East Georgia.

The diaries were a gift to the Vermont Historical Society by Constance E. Stone, great-grandniece of Sarah Ann Hyde (ms. acc. no. 2002.21). The collection is housed in one document box and one archival flip-top box and consumes 1.5 linear feet of shelf space.

Biographical Sketch

Sarah Ann Hyde (May 15, 1804 – August 17, 1882) was born in St. Albans, Vermont, one of nine children of Asahel (August 12, 1764 – December 26, 1812) and Esther Robinson Hyde (December 16, 1771 – January 21, 1849). She spent her entire life on the family farm in East Georgia, Vermont, keeping house for her two bachelor brothers, Alvan (1794-1849) and Hiram (1806-1887). Although she was largely self-educated, she taught school briefly in the 1830s. Her diaries, which she calls her “journals,” reflect her desire to become a writer.

According to the donor of the collection, “On her first long trip to Boston by coach in 1826, she began her journal. From then until she died in 1882 her journal was kept almost daily. Her trips by carriage, by Lake Champlain boats, later by train to New York, Montreal, Bennington, Burlington for University commencements or to St. Albans for shopping and visiting, are all related. The high point ... came in 1876 when she went, at the age of seventy-two ... to the Great Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia”.

Always a devoted churchgoer and deeply spiritual person, Hyde’s vision and drive were instrumental in the establishment in 1871 of the Emmanuel Episcopal Church in East Georgia.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, East Georgia, Vermont

In his book *Bygone Churches of Franklin County, Vermont* (VHS 280.743 F854h), Ralph Herrin states that a church Sarah Ann Hyde saw when visiting Scotland inspired the design of Emmanuel Church. There is no mention of a trip to Scotland in Hyde’s diaries; however, the Victorian gothic design is said to be an exact reproduction of a Scottish church. There is no doubt that the Emmanuel Church was established

largely due to Hyde's vision and her generous contributions of money and land for the project.

In an unsigned typescript history of the church, the author (perhaps donor Constance Stone) correlates Hyde's diary with the building of the church. Hyde first mentions the project in 1866, and her entries continue through the planning, construction, and the laying of the cornerstone. This typescript is located in MSA 316:14; a photograph of the church is in Size D F-CH-Georgia.

According to an essay in *Annual History of the Town of Georgia*, vol. 4, 1970 (VHS 974.31 G296t 1970),

In 1866, 128 people pledged varying amounts toward building an Episcopal Church in East Georgia. On December 20, 1869, William H. and Polly Smith, for \$150, deeded one-half acre north of the highway on the flat west of the Vermont and Canada R.R. to Miss Hyde and (A.) Hyde Grinnell as a site for the church. Largely through her efforts, the cornerstone was laid in June, 1871. The church was consecrated on June 20, 1872, by Bishop Bissell assisted by nine of the clergy and a large congregation.

Herrin, in *Bygone Churches*, continues the story:

The cost of the church altogether was between \$5,000 and \$6,000, contributed mostly by Miss Hyde, aided by contributions of friends. The costly chancel window was in loving memory of the Rev. Dr. Hicks, who died in Nov., 1869. The large opposite window was put in as a gift from and in behalf of the children. This beautiful and commodious church with its Sunday School annex was, in itself, a memorial to its illustrious founder.

After Miss Hyde died in 1882, the church showed a steady decline. Only summer services were held after 1920, and finally the church became extinct in 1937, and was torn down in the early 1940's.

Scope and Content

Sarah Ann Hyde began her diaries, or "journals" as she called them, in 1826 and she continued writing until the year of her death in 1882. She writes personally and frankly as if speaking to a friend, about many facets of her life on an East Georgia, Vermont, farm. The diaries are accounts of her work, news of friends and relatives, her handwork, commentaries on books and newspaper articles, and travel. As a devoted churchgoer she writes many prayers and in later years, she records the progress of her project to establish the Emmanuel Episcopal Church in East Georgia.

Hyde was a frustrated writer; this is apparent in the longer essay she wrote about her trip to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876. Although she writes previously of shorter trips to St. Albans, Burlington and Bennington, Vermont, describing

the means of transportation and overnight stops, she circulated her lengthy account of her Philadelphia trip to friends.

As a housekeeper, she was adept at sewing her clothes, spinning and quilting, as well as making butter and cheese. One senses her dissatisfaction with life as a homemaker when, in May 14, 1861, after repairing a carpet, she writes: "To make housekeeping interesting one needs to be making improvements – some different arrangements of old things or some new things to displace the old".

Gossip with her neighbors held little interest for Hyde; she was eager to discuss ideas. After hearing a lecture on "the proper sphere or station of women", she wrote on February 11, 1844, quoting the speaker, women "were not designed born for preachers or statesmen or warriors, but for the domestic circle, to contribute to the comforts of man; woman was made for man – bah!"

Although Hyde had her share of illnesses she maintained a high level of energy throughout her life. She began her life work, the founding of the Emmanuel Episcopal Church in East Georgia, in 1866 and did not see the church completed until she was in her mid-sixties. At age 72 she undertook her lengthy journey to Philadelphia and on her 75th birthday she writes: "I walk yet 3 or 4 miles."

Her diaries were important to her. Hyde sewed individual sheets together by month and often bound the months together by year. She wrapped each year in rough paper that she neatly labeled and tied with string. A sample of this rough wrapping is located in the miscellaneous folder (MSA 316:15). In her late years she comments on the pleasure she has from re-reading what she had written as a young woman.

The donor of the diaries has enhanced the collection by the following:

- Made notes on the content of the diaries which have been transferred onto the front of each folder;
- Made a typescript of the "cast of characters" for the 1855 diary that is useful to establish family relationships and full names of her friends for all the diaries;
- Written a biography of Sarah Ann Hyde that accompanies Hyde's account of her visit to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition; and,
- Made transcripts of selected diaries.

Related Collections

The wooden tea box in which the diaries were stored is part of the VHS museum collection (acc. no. 2003.71).

Organization

The collection is organized in five series:

- I. Genealogy
- II. Diaries
- III. Transcriptions of the diaries
- IV. Other writing (prayers, sermons, essays, notes)
- V. Miscellaneous

Inventory

I. Genealogy

Doc 480: 1 Descendants of Asahel and Esther Hyde

II. Diaries

- 2 August 1826-1827
- 3 1828
- 3A 1829
- 4 Jan. – June 1830 (2 Januaries)
- 5 July – Dec. 1830
- 6 1831
- 7 1832
- 8 1833
- 9 1834
- 10 1835
- 11 1836
- 12 1837
- 13 1838
- 14 1839
- 15 1840
- 16 1841
- 17 1842
- 18 1843
- 19 1844
- 20 1845
- 21 April – Dec. 1846
- 22 Jan. 1847 – Nov. 1849
- 23 May – Dec. 1850
- 24 Jan. – Aug. 1851
- 25 Jan. – July 1852
- 26 Jan. – Oct. 1854
- 27 Jan. – Aug. 1855
- 28 March – Dec. 1856 (Jan. – Feb. missing)
- 29 1857
- 30 1858

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	32	1860
	33	1861
	34	1862
	35	1863
	36	1864
	37	1865
	38	1866
	39	1867
	40	1868
	41	1869
	42	1870
	43	1871
	44	1872
	45	1873
	46	1874
	47	1875
	48	1876
	49	1877
MSA 316: 1		1878
	2	1879
	3	1880
	4	1881
	5	Jan. – April 1882

III. Diary Transcriptions

6	1826, 1827, Jan. 1828, 1828, 1833 and 1860, excerpts
7	Jan. – Aug. 1855
8	March – Dec. 1856
9	1857
10	1858
11	Oct. – Nov. 1876, Philadelphia Centennial Exposition visit

IV. Other writing

12	Prayers; 1831-57
13	Sermons, essays, notes, most undated

V. Miscellaneous

14	Emmanuel Church (Episcopal), East Georgia, Vt., 1872-1946
15	Miscellaneous

Priscilla Page
January 2003
filename: hyde.doc
10/2/07