

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Manuscript Collections

<p>Name of collection:</p> <p>Convict (unidentified). Diary, 1862-1864</p>	<p>Location:</p> <p>Misc. mss. boxes "C"</p>
<p>Size of collection:</p> <p>1 folder, 1 item (48 pp.)</p>	<p>N.U.C.M.C. number:</p> <p>N.A.</p>
<p>Finding aids:</p> <p>None</p>	
<p>Source of collection:</p> <p>Source unknown</p>	
<p>Collection description:</p> <p>An unidentified prisoner kept a diary while incarcerated in the Massachusetts State Prison in Charlestown, Massachusetts, following his trial in January 1862. He apparently copied selected portions, 1862-1864, titled them "Promiscuous Leaves from My Diary," and inscribed them to the "honorable Anthony S. Morse, one of the inspectors of the Mass. State Prison." The author claimed that he was innocent and had been arrested in Boston for forgery perpetrated by another person, namely George A. Tirrell (-), a Boston artist and entrepreneur who had once defrauded the author while they were engaged in mining in California. The author was a native of New York and had also worked as a stonecutter and a produce merchant, the latter in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.</p> <p>The Convict's Diary describes prison rules, the kindnesses of the warden and guards, the distrust of the resident minister, and visits paid to the institution by reformist speakers. The author renders an emotional assessment of his life, his regrets, and his bitterness against Tirrell. Included are poems on his arrest and imprisonment, and an open letter to the prison authorities detailing the story of his alleged crime. There is an appendix to that letter containing copies of depositions made in court by several witnesses. While in prison, the author fashioned a miniature stone monument to the Civil War dead, and several times volunteered himself as a replacement for fallen soldiers.</p>	
<p>21 June 1978</p>	