

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Manuscript Collections

Name of collection:	Location:
Newcomb, Elmira Sexton, Diary, 1866-1867	Folio volumes "N"
Size of collection:	N.U.C.M.C. number:
1 folio volume, 128 pp.	N.A.
Finding aids:	
For biographical information concerning Elmira Newcomb, see Bethuel Merritt Newcomb, <u>Newcomb Genealogy</u> (Berkeley, California: n.p., 1923), p. 240	
Source of collection:	
Purchased from Manuscript Company of Springfield, Va., 1979	
Collection Description:	
<p>Elmira Sexton Newcomb (1848-1867) was born and reared on an estate outside of Hyde Park, New York. She was the daughter of John Hopper Newcomb (1796-1875) and Sarah Mills Newcomb (1810-1872). John Newcomb sold the mansion and lands in 1859 and moved his family to Hyde Park. Apparently ill with tuberculosis, Elmira Newcomb was sent in 1866 to live with her aunts at 11 Bethune Street in New York City. She died in Hyde Park on November 26, 1867.</p> <p>This diary was kept by Newcomb from October 5, 1866 to June 29, 1867 during her stay in New York City. There is a reference in the volume to the existence of an earlier diary. The entries refer to her new membership in the Presbyterian Church, attendance at religious meetings, preparations for church fairs, drives to Central Park, visits, occasional school work, private French classes, and riding lessons. The diarist included detailed accounts of dress purchases, bonnet trimmings, and her reactions to people she met in the course of a day.</p> <p>The bulk of the diary concerns Elmira Newcomb's constant struggle to achieve a religious awakening and her many doubts regarding Christianity. Due to her terminal illness, her aunts, especially Emma Moir (-), encouraged their niece to devote her time to Christianity and to attend the Communion table. However, she felt either unwilling or unworthy to participate regularly in religious observances, and fought against facing death. Elmira Newcomb spoke frequently of her confused feelings towards Dr. Paxton, the parish minister, and Mrs. Roberts, the leader of the religious meetings, both of whom took an active interest in her welfare. There are detailed accounts of those religious meetings and copies of several letters that Elmira Newcomb addressed to her aunt and Mrs. Roberts concerning her inner conflicts.</p>	