

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Manuscript Collections

<p>Name of collection:</p> <p>Harlow, Etta R., Diary, 1860-1861</p>	<p>Location:</p> <p>Octavo volumes "H"</p>
<p>Size of collection:</p> <p>1 octavo volume, 128 pp.</p>	<p>N.U.C.M.C. number:</p> <p>N.A.</p>
<p>Finding aids:</p> <p>For biographical information, see C. Horace Hubbard and Justus Dartt, <u>History of the Town of Springfield, Vt.</u> (Boston: George H. Walker &amp; Co., 1895), p. 323.</p>	
<p>Source of collection:</p> <p>Purchased from the Manuscript Company of Springfield, Va., 1980</p>	
<p>Collection Description:</p> <p>Etta R. Harlow (1846-1926) was the only child of Lucius Harlow (1815-1889) and Esther Emery Harlow ( - ) of Holyoke, Mass. Lucius Harlow was an inventor and manufacturer of paper-making machinery in Holyoke. His daughter married Charles H. Richards ( - ), a partner in the mercantile firm of Richards and Thayer of Holyoke.</p> <p>Etta R. Harlow kept a diary, 1860-1861, when she was fourteen. It contains almost daily entries concerning the weather, her schoolwork and evening French lessons, singing school, Tract Society and Band of Hope meetings, and attendance at church and children's meetings. Etta Harlow also referred to fires in town, visits with friends and occasional trips to Springfield, Vt., to visit relatives, housework, piano-playing, attendance at lectures, parties, and Home Educational meetings (where moral instruction of children was discussed).</p> <p>When the Civil War began in April 1861, Etta Harlow wrote of her hopes and fears for the country and for her relatives who might be drafted to fight.</p>	
<p>3 June 1981</p>	

(Vermont - Diary)

The diary of Etta Harlow, September 12, 1860-May 27, 1861. Kept in a red leather, gilt-embossed volume, well-rubbed. 128pp of text, most of it in ink on blue lined paper. 19x12cm. Regular entries made almost daily, varying in length from a single line to several pages.

Etta R. Harlow was born on September 12, 1846, near Springfield, Vermont. She was the daughter of Lucius Harlow (her mother's name not known at this time). In subsequent years she married C. H. Richards and moved to Holyoke, Massachusetts, where she died on June 19, 1926, according to an undated note which accompanies the volume. Her husband was a partner in the mercantile firm of Richards & Thayers of Holyoke.

In this journal, commenced on her fourteenth birthday, Etta Harlow reveals herself to be a mature and thoughtful schoolgirl, cheerful in outlook and faithful and observant in her reporting. She writes eloquently of the outbreak of the Civil War and her reactions to its effects on even her own "little quiet village." On Saturday, April 13, she devotes a full page to reactions to the news "that they are fighting down South." On May 1, "Mr. Lincoln has ordered 75,000 men to prepare themselves for war. Even our 'Green Mountain Guards' are going." Later, word that 175,000 men are called up triggers another heartfelt passage: "I told Mother I shouldn't let father shave his whiskers off (they are very grey) until after all the troops had gone and all the drafting is done away with." News that the maximum age for soldiers is 45 relieves her worries somewhat, but succeeding entries portray continuing anxiety about soldiers southward bound and the costs of the war to the nation.

Earlier, Etta revealed some political awareness. On Wednesday, November 7, 1860, she writes of "the friends of Ole Abe having a gathering. Most of the Republicans had their houses illuminated. The bells were rung, cannons fired, &c., &c. Great times. Hurrah for Ole Abe."

Etta writes frequently on lectures and meetings she attends. On November 13, "went to 'Occupational Meeting' for this evening.... Mr. Gray thinks young people ought never to see a fox-and-geese board, checker board, or other kind of game. Mr. Swain (of course) pitched in upon him. Very good. The next question is, 'In our moral training of children should we aim more to keep them out of the way of temptation or teach them to overcome it.'"

In addition to noting topics of sermons and names of visiting clergymen - and as many as four services attended on a single Sunday - Etta also reports on special events, including hearing Miss Frederick, "the celebrated elocutionist and poetical reciter." She gives her own detailed opinion of the performance.

Daily activities center largely around school, Latin, composition, spelling, and algebra. There was also the engagement of a private tutor of French, who gave her lessons at home each evening. Etta also attended singing school and a sewing circle, went to a sugaring party and enjoyed countless games of "drop the handkerchief." She notes purchases of apparent significance to herself - a new bottle of ink, a slate pencil, and a fall bonnet trimmed in crimson and black. Fires, including one "deliberately set," are described with excitement, and visits and letters from friends and relatives are duly noted. On October 18, an earthquake at 6 in the morning was mentioned.

Spirited and able, Etta reports writing a composition on January 23 on "The North and South," saying she was teased in the schoolyard for asserting that girls, like everyone else, could have opinions to express.

Overall this is an interesting diary, giving a view of small town Vermont at the start of the Civil War as seen through the eyes of an intelligent young girl.

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Co. of Spring Hill, Vt.