

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Sayward, Jonathan, Diaries, 1760-1799

LOCATION(S):

Octavo vols. "S"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

40 octavo volumes

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

For a history of York, Me., and biographical information on Sayward, see: Charles Edward Banks, *History of York, Maine* (Boston: Calkins Press, 1931). A biographical sketch can be found in Vol. 1, pp. 389-401.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gift of Leonard Wheeler, 1933

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Jonathan Sayward (1713-1797) of York, Me., rose from uneducated, working-class origins to assume social and political leadership in his town prior to the Revolution. He became a wealthy mariner, trader, and property owner, and served as town clerk, 1736; constable, 1741; representative to the General Court, 1766-1768; Justice of the Peace, 1761; Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, 1772; Judge of Probate for York County. He took an active role in his church and corresponded with and entertained numerous notable public men, including Thomas Hutchinson (1711-1780) and John Hancock (1732-1793). A Tory, Sayward's political status and wealth declined during and after the Revolution.

Sayward's diaries are interleaved in various almanacs published in Boston and Maine. He routinely commenced the diaries with a list of the property he owned, brief financial statements, and mortgages he held. They also contain shipping records and local and family news of births, marriages, and deaths.

From 1765 through the years of the Revolution, Sayward's diaries are particularly substantive. He openly condemned unconstitutional acts and despaired over the "mad-men and hot-heads" in Boston who mobbed Gov. Hutchinson's home, enacted the Boston Tea Party, etc. He suffered threats of mob violence, was ousted from political offices, and confined to town limits; he was examined by committees, forced to disclose correspondence with Hutchinson, and compelled to sign the Test Act in 1776 (disclaiming loyalty to the king). The diaries contain comments concerning several of these developments as well as news of events of the war, observations of naval activity from York and political evaluations reflecting his pessimism over the future of American independence.

Sayward suffered financial and political losses due to his Tory convictions, though he remained active in town affairs. He continued to enter in his diaries business statements and local and family news. In 1779 he remarried (his first wife died in 1775) and often commented on his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He became increasingly preoccupied with his health and local deaths, and from 1785 he annually listed York residents who were seventy years of age and older.

The 1798 and 1799 diaries were recorded after Sayward's death, probably by a family member. They contain brief entries that reported numerous ship departures and records of men hired, presumably to work on the ships.

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American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT

JONATHAN SAYWARD, DIARIES, 1760-1799
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