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New York Diaries

Collection Summary

Title:	New York Diaries
Call Number:	MS 94-03
Size:	2.0 linear feet
Acquisition:	Purchased from Cohasco, Inc., 1992
Processed by:	AG, 1993; JEF, 11-12-1998; MN, 11-24-2014
Restrictions:	None

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Content Note

The collection includes 41 diaries written from 1876 to 1916, inclusive. The identity of the writer is unknown, however, it is believed to have been a single woman who remained in the family home and cared for her parents, then inherited some farm land from which her income was derived. The town in which she lived is not revealed, but it was in southwestern New York, probably near Chautauqua. Other towns mentioned in the diaries include Dunkirk, Fredonia, Silver Creek, Ellington, Cherry Creek, Buffalo, and South Dayton. Daily chores, social and church activities and weather data are described in the daily entries. In 41 years of diary writing, there is no mention of an extended trip or vacation, and almost no references to events of national or international significance. The chief value of this collection is found in the economics of the years from 1876 to 1916, the prices of grains, fruits, garden and dairy products. The diaries portray the narrow dimensions of one woman's life in the 40 years preceding and extending into World War I.

Detailed Description: [Box and Folder Listing](#)

- Box 1 FF 1 1876. The writer apparently began the new year with good health, but developed a “dizzy head” January 8. A few days later, she had a sore throat and neuralgia. She wrote of baking and sewing, but remained weak and ill until mid-March. It appears that she was living in a cold climate. She canned fruit, berries, and vegetables during the summer months. Butchering, probably by someone other than herself, was done in November.
- Box 1 FF 2 1877. The writer relates that she made some calls with her mother the afternoon of January 4, 1877. She mentions her mother’s activities on January 13. January 31--“Our barn fell in tonight. Caused by a pressure of snow on the roof.” April 26--Planted garden seeds. May 7--The writer’s mother made soap. Nothing is recorded between November 15 and December 13. She wrote later that she had been ill with “remittent fever and congestion of the lungs.”
- Box 1 FF 3 1878. The writer cut out a dress for her mother April 22. Flakes of snow were falling May 10. She traveled to Fredonia July 6. The writer “stayed to home and read speeches” on December 8, a Sunday. Many complaints regarding her health were recorded throughout the year.
- Box 1 FF 4 1879. Raspberry bushes were staked April 16 by the writer. She “planted some cucumbers and turnips and milked the heifer” May 6. Fredonia was her destination July 29.
- Box 1 FF 5 1880. The writer seemed to spend considerable time sewing carpet rags. She baked bread often. Her complaints of feeling bad physically continued. She mentioned that people were returning from Kansas. Her “barn chores” and chasing after chickens, a cow and a calf are also recorded in this year’s entries.
- Box 1 FF 6 1881. The writer had a “wood house,” apparently for firewood, which she “cleaned out.” She wrote on March 11 that she “saw a buggy on the street for the first time since last fall.” In June, Enas Warner, probably a neighbor, killed a calf for her and her mother. Food was stored in a cellar. On July 2, the writer mentioned that President Garfield had been shot that day. On July 28, she commented “John Smith drew us one load of wood today.” A few days later, on August 2, she had a load of hay “drawed.” A “Temperance Lecture” was presented at a church in the month of August. On August 9, she wrote “Mother has just fell down sellar (sic).” A camp meeting was in progress on August 27. On September 20 she comments “President Garfield died tonight.”
- Box 1 FF 7 1882. The writer commented on February 22 that “teams [were] out drawing wood, logs, and hay.” A literary society was to meet March 24.
- Box 1 FF 8 1883. The writer finished making a sunbonnet after churning on April 14. She canned molasses on April 16. Potatoes were planted on May 7, 8, and 9. On May 11 she “split stakes for kindling wood.” She planted several vegetables in her garden on May 15. Some of her neighbors went to a “Spiritualist Camp Meeting” on August 19.
- Box 1 FF 9 1884. The writer “had the first maple sugar for this spring” on March 21. She “set out fifty-five cabbage plants” on May 27.

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| Box 1 | FF 10 | 1885 . On January 16, the writer “knit on a stocking.” She “braided on a rug” on February 21. She “heard the first Robin” on March 29. Apples were “cut for drying” on September 19. On October 12 she “sawed limbs off from an apple tree.” |
| Box 2 | FF 1 | 1886. The writer “ripped old close” to pieces for carpet rags on March 11. On one occasion she “took banking away from the house.” She started picking strawberries from her yard in mid-June and was still picking berries of some kind in late July. On August 19 she “took a ride up to our farm.” It appears that numerous lectures on temperance are being presented in the area of her home. |
| Box 2 | FF 2 | 1887. A resident of Pine Valley was killed “by the falling of a tree in the woods” on January 21. The writer “had a race after the cow” on April 19. The apple, pear, and cherry trees were blooming in mid-May. She dug potatoes and made a dress for her mother in July. Canning fruit occupied some time in the fall. |
| Box 2 | FF 3 | 1888. The writer refers to the Ladies Christian Temperance Union. She had “taken banking away from the house” on April 15. During May she worked in her garden. |
| Box 2 | FF 4 | 1889. The writer’s mother apparently became ill early in January. She took care of her on January 7, no improvement in her condition on the next days--and her mother died at 5:00 a.m. on January 13, 1889. The funeral was conducted at the home on January 15 by a pastor from Forestville. She “took banking away from the house” on April 17. A heavy freeze the night of May 28-29 killed garden crops. The writer sold “a piece of land” on May 31. |
| Box 2 | FF 5 | 1890. March 7, 1890 was the coldest day of the winter. In June, neighbors were maintaining the garden, apparently because the writer was having some problems with her back. |
| Box 2 | FF 6 | 1891. The weather was beautiful on March 18. It was “a good time to make sugar.” The writer made soap on May 16. She “blackened” (polished) a stove in October. |
| Box 2 | FF 7 | 1892. The writer sowed grass seed on April 27, in dry weather. She papered the walls of her parlor on May 3. Her entries contain many complaints of headaches and other physical problems. She planted garden seeds May 13. A few days later, she cleaned a stovepipe and “blackened” a stove. The Grange appears to have been significant in the area. The “Political Equality Club” met June 15. The W.C.T.U. (Women’s Christian Temperance Union) met July 15. |
| Box 2 | FF 8 | 1893. Ex-President Rutherford B. Hayes was buried January 20. It was so cold at times in February that the stoves did not keep the house warm enough. After “having a race” after her cow, the writer was very tired the evening of March 2. She was building fires to heat her house in September. |
| Box 2 | FF 9 | 1894. On January 3, the writer “went over to the store today for the first time this winter.” She finished making a sunbonnet in April. She sold her cow in November. |

- Box 3 FF 1 1895. On February 23 the writer went to the post office for the first time since January 25. She churned 5¼ pounds of butter on April 8. July 4 was her fourth day at home canning raspberries and picking currants. In August, a church was conducting camp meetings in a neighbor's woods.
- Box 3 FF 2 1896. On April 13 the writer took some butter to Warner's store and sold it for 15 cents per pound. (She apparently had acquired another cow.) She canned peaches on September 11. In November a neighbor "has picked up several bushels of my apples and taken limbs (sic) of from the trees that were split down with the weight of apples."
- Box 3 FF 3 1897. A neighbor woman gave birth to a 13½ pound boy. On January 26 the writer shoveled a path to her barn three times. She could not leave her home without shoveling a road to the street. On October 19 she "churned two hours to get a little butter." In December she sold her cow for \$37.50.
- Box 3 FF 4 1898. In April a church conducted a play, "Aunt Hannah's Quilting Party." The writer took butter to Warner's store and received 11 cents per pound for it. In late September and early October some men dug a well to a minimum depth of 85 feet for her.
- Box 3 FF 5 1899. The writer purchased a cow on March 16. She was ill in August and neighbors were milking and churning for her.
- Box 3 FF 6 1900. In August, the Ladies Aid Society of a church cleared \$5.03 by conducting an ice cream social. Six young women and a janitor were burned to death when a building at the Normal School, Fredonia, caught fire.
- Box 4 FF 1 1901. January 8 was the first time of the writer's "going up town this year." She has a problem with a foot which prevents wearing a shoe on it. She spent part of January 23 in her "chamber emptying featherbed." On March 6 she noted that she had "not taken a ride since the 10th of October." She spent March 11 "piecing a bed quilt." The farmers were making sugar March 30.
- Box 4 FF 2 1902. Since January the writer has complained about her feet being so sore and painful that she could not wear shoes in addition to other health problems including sore eyes.
- Box 4 FF 3 1903. The writer took a ride on the "stage" in October. She also bought three bushels of potatoes at 50 cents per bushel. A lecture on "Travels and Adventures in Darkest Africa" was presented at a church on December 7.
- Box 4 FF 4 1904. The thermometer registered 14 below zero the morning of January 4. The writer could not keep warm by the fire the following day. Water was coming into her house and into the cellar on January 22. She wrote on February 19, "Many are movling (sic) into new homes." In March she still was not wearing shoes due to sore feet. In August she paid a neighbor 18 cents a pound for butter.

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| Box 4 | FF 5 | 1905. The writer commented January 5, "My neighbours have had telephones put in their houses." She spends much time lying on her couch, and complains of heart trouble. On April 15 a neighbor delivered 50 pounds of granulated sugar to her for 7 cents a pound. Twenty-five pounds of coffee at 6 cents a pound were also delivered. |
| Box 4 | FF 6 | 1906. A neighbor broke the writer's meadow on May 11. A camp meeting was in progress on July 25. On October 24, the writer, despite her many infir-mities, cleaned a stovepipe, chimney and eaves. |
| Box 4 | FF 7 | 1907. January 24 was the coldest night of the winter--6 below zero at 9:00 a.m. People were out with sleighs in this season of the year. The writer apparently had a milk cow. She wrote often of "getting" her milk. In mid-March people were "topping their sugar bushes." On March 10 the writer bought butter from a neighbor at 20 cents a pound. In June eggs were selling at 16 cents per dozen. |
| Box 4 | FF 8 | 1908. On September 9 the writer paid her school tax in the amount of \$14.99. A few days later she picked ripe black raspberries in her yard and canned peaches. It appears that she was continually struggling with health problems. |
| Box 5 | FF 1 | 1909. On February 2 the writer bought some beef at eight cents per pound. She killed a rabbit in July. She does not state how she did it, but she "caught" the second one two days later. The writer made tomato hash and pear pickles. |
| Box 5 | FF 2 | 1910. Part of the roof of the writer's barn was blown off in a strong wind on January 5. Plum, pear, and cherry trees were in bloom on April 15, a month earlier than the previous year. In April she wrote that she was note reading due to weak eyes, and she had no one with whom to visit so she was lonely. |
| Box 5 | FF 3 | 1911. The writer worked in her woodhouse on May 26. She mentions no travel or unusual activities throughout the year. |
| Box 5 | FF 4 | 1912. On May 15 the writer sold some hay to a neighbor for \$15.00 a ton. This is the first year in which she writes about an "Improvement Society." On September 14, someone was "cutting his corn" on the writer's "place." Apparently he was renting land she owned. In December she received a box of gifts from her nieces in Ohio. |
| Box 5 | FF 5 | 1913. The writer was suffering from heart trouble early in January. A renter came to her home on January 9 and "finished paying for use of the ground last year." |
| Box 5 | FF 6 | 1914. The diary begins with a printed description and history of the Panama Canal, by the publisher. A street fair was in progress at Dunkirk on September 17. |
| Box 5 | FF 7 | 1915. The first mention of "automobiles on the road" is found in the entry of November 21, 1915. The writer appears to have had an uneventful year, with the usual bad weather and health problems. |

Box 5

FF 8

1916. On January 21, the writer's neighbor "had a bad spell caused by inhaling coal gas." The women had a quilting party at a church on October 18.

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