

Mary C. Brown diary

Ms. Coll. 1087

Finding aid prepared by Donna Brandolisio.

Last updated on November 25, 2015.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

November 2015

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Brown, Mary C., (Mary Cornelia), 1847-
Title	Mary C. Brown diary
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1087
Date	1877
Extent	1 volume
Language	English
Abstract	Diary kept by Mary C. Brown in 1877 with daily entries and eighteen leaves of recipes at the end of the volume.

Cite as:

Mary C. Brown diary, 1877, Ms. Coll. 1087, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Mary Cornelia was one of at least five children born to Mary Caroline Browning Brown (1830-1881) and

Charles Dennison Brown (born 1822) at Pharsalia, Chenango, New York. Siblings of Mary Cornelia included Orcelia Frances born in 1848, Charles L. born in 1851, Truman H. born in 1855, and Frank born in 1856. The family owned and worked on their farm in Pharsalia. Mary Cornelia is the aunt of Frank and Bessie Minerva Brown's daughter Grace Mae born in 1886 who died at the hands of Chester Gillette in 1906. Grace Mae was the murder victim fictionalized in Theodore Dreiser's novel *American Tragedy*.

Scope and Contents

A calendar entitled "Excelsior diary for 1877," with printed front matter bound in brown leather. Each page is ruled and divided into two days. Mary Cornelia Brown kept faithful daily entries and recorded the day-to-day life of the Brown family farm in Pharsalia, New York. In 1877 Mary was the only child still living at home with her parents, Charles and Mary. Each day begins with a record of the weather followed by the daily arrivals of family and friends from adjacent farms. Most of the visitors are her brothers and sisters, chiefly Truman referred to as True, Frank, and Orcelia. Frank sometimes arrives with the new baby and his wife Minerva. Mary's Uncle Rob and her grandmother are also frequent guests. Entries record the chores performed that day, trips to post office, and to Norwich. Mary noted her thirtieth birthday on June 18. She discussed the work her brothers perform with their father such as chopping wood, bagging potatoes, and drawing hay. Mary recorded her chores in the house, cooking, cleaning, and sewing and mentions her exhaustion in the evening. Mary often writes of loneliness and sometimes sadness. At the end of some days Mary writes "I wish I could see my boy," possibly referring to a boyfriend. At the end of the volume are eighteen leaves of recipes. A majority of them are for cakes. The back cover is lacking.

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

Sold by Michael Brown Rare Books (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), 2015.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Diaries
- Manuscripts, American--19th century
- Recipes

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Chenango County (N.Y.)--Social life and customs--19th century

SUBJECT(S)

- American diaries--19th century--Specimens
- American diaries--Women authors--19th century

Collection Inventory

	Volume
Mary C. Brown diary, 1877. 1 volume.	1