



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Maryland Farm Diary

NMAH.AC.1267

Franklin A. Robinson, Jr.

2012

Archives Center, National Museum of American History
P.O. Box 37012
Suite 1100, MRC 601
Washington, D.C. 20013-7012
Business Number: Phone: 202-633-3270
Fax Number: Fax: 202-786-2453
archivescenter@si.edu
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/archives>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	3
Names and Subjects	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Maryland Farm Diary
Date:	1879-1884
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1267
Source:	Valentino, Carmen D.
Extent:	0.15 Cubic feet (1 item)
Language:	English .
Summary:	A farm journal and account book for a farm located at Long Branch, Harford County, Maryland, covering the time period March 1879 to August 1884 (excepting 1880) and documenting all aspects of farm life and labor.
Container:	Box 1

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was purchased at auction from Carmen D. Valentino of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2012.

Related Materials

Materials in the Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Robinson and Via Family Papers, 1845-2010, (AC0475)

Southern Agriculture Oral History Project Records, 1986-1991, (AC0773)

John K. Parlett Collection of Agriculture Ephemera, (AC1225)

Processing Information

Processed by Franklin A. Robinson, Jr., archives specialist, September 2012; supervised by Vanessa Broussard-Simmons, archivist.

Preferred Citation

Maryland Farm Diary, 1879-1884, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

Collection is open for research but is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

This diary is a combined farm journal and account book for a farm located at or near Long Branch, Harford County, Maryland, covering the time period from March 1879 to August 1894, excepting the year 1880. This was a time when American agriculture was on the cusp of mechanization, and a time when increasing urbanization was changing the demographics of farm life. More and more youth were relocating to urban areas, challenging small family farms to continue to run with fewer people, and forcing them to bring on day laborers or other help.

Farms in the northern part of Maryland were quite distinct from those in the southern part, where tobacco dominated. The farm documented in this volume featured truck farming, orchards, small grain crops, dairying, and hogs. A possible German or Amish influence is indicated, probably due to its proximity to Pennsylvania, with such products as cider, sauerkraut, wheat and hay being produced, as well as by products from hogs including sausages, lard, and pudding (scrapple). Curing and preservation of meat is documented in the volume as well. The products (wheat, hay, cider, sauerkraut) being sold in nearby towns (as documented in the volume) indicates that the farm was not just self-sufficient but also a profitable participant in the market economy.

An interesting entry is found on page 95, for March 11, 1883, "A very perceptible earthquake was experienced here the house shook, & things on sideboard rattled. It lasted about 3 minutes." This is primary documentation of the Fallston, Maryland quake. Other entries mention the Maryland State Fair at Timonium, trips to Hanways' Mill, Ashland and other local destinations.

Scope and Contents

The diary bears numerous handwriting styles, denoting more than one author. The farm documented in this volume featured truck farming, orchards, small grain crops, dairying, and hogs. A possible German or Amish influence is indicated, probably due to its proximity to Pennsylvania, with such products as cider, sauerkraut, wheat and hay being produced, as well as by products from hogs including sausages, lard, and pudding (scrapple). Curing and preservation of meat is documented as well.

All tasks of day-to-day life on the farm, by whom they were performed and with what equipment as well as the weather were recorded. The compiler recorded other such detail as which fertilizers were used for which crops, variety names, how much was paid to each hand who worked on the farm (in the case of tenant farmers, with firewood or cow pasture), names given to animals, and such things as laborers' travel to nearby towns to purchase goods and supplies. Especially descriptive are the parts of the diary relating to livestock, with entries for births, sales, and activities such as butchering, sausage making, curing and preservation of meat.

The farm was comprised of fields, orchards, meadows and gardens, in addition to a number of outbuildings, sheds, smokehouses, a barn, a stable, and a blacksmith shop. Maintenance of these buildings is described in detail in the diary.

This volume is rich in detail about the functioning of a typical American farm during this time period. It also includes an entry for the Fallston, Maryland earthquake of March 11, 1883 (page 95).

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into one series.

Series 1, Farm diary, 1879-1884

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Agricultural Prices
- Agricultural laborers
- Agricultural products
- Agricultural supplies and equipment -- 1850-1870
- Agriculture
- Agriculture -- 1870-1940 -- Maryland
- Earthquakes -- Maryland
- Fairs -- 1880-1889 -- United States
- Family farms
- Farmers
- Farmers -- 19th century
- Farms -- Maryland
- Gardening
- Gardens -- Maryland
- Housewives -- United States
- Rural families
- Rural scenes
- Rural women
- Sausages
- Weather conditions
- Work and family

Types of Materials:

- Account books -- 19th century
- Daybooks -- 1870-1880
- Daybooks -- 1880-1910
- Financial records -- 19th century
- Record books

Names:

- Bond, William
- Brown, Annie
- Brown, Charles
- Brown, Edward
- Brown, Henry
- Campbell, William
- Gemmill, Benjamin B.
- Gemmill, Ephraim

Goodwater, Charles
Johnston, Thomas
Johnstone, Samuel
Jones, William
Klob, Ella
Lomax, Joseph
Morgan, John
Pugh, Edward
Schultz, William
Sewell, Rose
Spencer, George
Valentino, Carmen D.
West, William
Whitaker, James

Places:

Ashland
Bel Air, Harford County, Maryland
Fairs -- 1870-1879 -- United States
Fallston, Harford County, Maryland
Forest Hill, Harford County, Maryland
Hanways' Mill
Harford County, Maryland
Maryland
Maryland -- Family farms
Potspring, Maryland
Timonium, Maryland
Watervale, Harford County, Maryland