

Taylor, James (1729-1785)
Diary; Deerfield, Mass., 1755

1 vol. manuscript 15.5 cm

Sheldon II:339.

Note: Diary of a schoolmaster in Deerfield. Originally from Norwalk, Conn., Taylor had graduated from Yale in 1754, and was now studying theology with Rev. Jonathan Ashley. Although the diary is quite introspective and views all events in the context of God's will, it does provide several glimpses into the Deerfield community in 1755. In addition to his teaching activities, which are described, Taylor also apparently worked in the store of his father-in-law, David Field. Consequently the Field family is discussed, particularly Taylor's very young (13-year-old) wife, Mary. Other figures from Deerfield include Ashley, Joseph Stebbins, "Sergeant Hoyt," Justin Bull, and Col. William Williams. One entry reads "After we had drank a Dish of Tea with ye Ladies Mrs. Hannah Dickinson in particular, wh being over they insisted upon my playing Button with em, wh I declined for some time but at last foolishly complied with...." Taylor also mentions military preparations in the town and briefly the reaction to the great Lisbon earthquake. He discusses Ashley's sermons at some length and writes about his predecessor at the school, Eleazer May. An excellent general portrait of a future minister during that period when he studies theology with an older minister and keeps the local school, (usually with great reluctance). A small portion of the diary includes a visit to Connecticut, preparatory to Taylor's settlement there in the ministry.