

Munn, Philo (1813-1895)

Diaries, 1834-1835; 1835-1844; 1848-1849 Deerfield, MA

3 vol. manuscript

Sheldon II:246

1. Diary, May 14, 1834-May 7, 1835.

Diary written while Munn was apprenticed as a shoemaker to Lemuel Henry Russell, then while employed by Nathaniel Hitchcock. Rich description of Deerfield social life from the perspective of a young cobbler – church, tavern life, library society, fire companies, “romantic walks” on Pocumtuck, etc.

2. Diary, Jan. 1, 1835-Feb. 1, 1844.

Concludes with account book; household goods, personal expenses, shoes and shoe repair. [Deerfield, Mass., May 15, 1835-Sept23, 1852] PVMA 12909

Note: An excellent source for Deerfield life of the period. Munn describes, often in great detail, the social, cultural, and economic life of Deerfield during a period about which secondary accounts are slender. Virtually everyone on the street seems to be discussed; personalities such as Zenas Hawks, Col. John Wilson, Christopher T. Arms, Parson Dickenson, and Munn’s employers – Lemuel H. Russell and Nathaniel Hitchcock. An example of his entries: “J.G. Pratt was on another of his drunken frolics yesterday, he ought to be shut up.” Munn was active in the temperance movement, church affairs (where he once played the viol), and other cultural activities. On June 3, 1835: “attended Doc Wms. lecture last eve on the history of this beautiful town hall crowded very interesting.” Munn worked as a shoemaker and shopkeeper, and for a period in a tannery. Describes Lawrence’s tavern as a sort of social center and mentions a “Bark and grist mill” owned by Lemuel H. Russell between the old burial ground and Martin’s Hill. Munn was a young man with social aspirations whose lowly status barred him from equal footing with the local gentry. After a Lyceum meeting in Wapping he wrote, “could not but wish to myself that I knew something and was somebody.” Diary also details clothing fashions and diet (pancakes, hasty pudding, codfish, etc.)

3. Diary, Apr. 15, 1848-Feb. 25, 1849.

Munn had just moved to a small cottage at Bijah’s Brook when the diary commences. Interesting description of beginning a garden and making initial “home improvements.” A man of despondent and sardonic humor whose subsistence is marginal, who sees little hope for the future, dislikes working at his shop (shoemaker), and feels betrayed by his friends. Munn mentions the leveling of the Old Indian House. Includes some vivid characterizations of his contemporaries.

Shelved in the Diary Collection