

Alden E. Johnson (1847-1911)
Diaries, 1862-1911
MSA 229

Introduction

This collection contains the diaries of Alden E. Johnson (1847-1911), of Plymouth, Vermont, for the period 1899-1911, excluding 1902 and 1905, with a more general diary covering the years 1862-1902. The diaries consist of a line per day giving an account of the work he did, or the places he visited, and the second half of each diary contains a very detailed accounting of his income and expenditures. The collection came to the Vermont Historical Society from the Dartmouth College Library in 2000 (ms. acc. no. 2000.3); it occupies .25 linear feet of shelf space.

Biographical Note

Alden E. Johnson was born in Plymouth, Vermont, in 1847, and died in the same town on the 14th of May, 1911. He was a single man, son of Cyrus Johnson and Eurydice Boynton Johnson, both born in Plymouth. At his death his profession was listed as artist and bookbinder, though from the account books he seemed to have derived his living from bookbinding, photography, farming, odd jobs, and work for the town as auditor and school director.

Scope & Content

His diaries contain a printed calendar pasted into each book, where he has added information about the temperature, in some cases diagramming the monthly temperature range. There also are shadings and marks that seem to refer to the weather. After the yearly calendar section there is a daily summary limited to one line per day, where he has noted the work he was doing, places visited, people seen, etc. Much of this refers to splitting wood, working on books, developing photos, sugaring, plowing and planting, mowing, shearing sheep, or going to Sunday meeting and choir. He also notes his days of ill health.

The accounting section of each diary is very detailed, often dealing in very small amounts. He broke the accounts into sections, dealing with Sugar Income, Poultry, Produce (potato, corn, oats, apples, etc), Bookbinding, Labor (auditor, court, school, chores), Groceries and Provisions, Fuel and Light, Taxes and Interest, Clothing, Repairs to Fixtures, Utensils, Papers and Stationary, Photography, and Entertainment. The sections changed over the years, evidently with a shift towards bookbinding and photography and away from farming activities. Towards the end he added a Doctor's Fees section.

The 1910 diary is very spotty, the 1911 diary goes back to great detail, but it stops in May, a week before his death on the 14th.

There is also a strange diary, with a single page devoted to a single year, starting in 1862 when he was 15, ending in 1902 when he was 55. In this the entries consist of dots, stars, single letters, circles with a dot in the middle, dotted lines, with a few identifiable names or places.

Inventory

MSA 229:1	Diaries of 1899, 1900, and the brief general diary
2	Diaries of 1901, 1903, 1904
3	Diaries of 1906, 1907, 1908
4	Diaries of 1901, 1910, 1911

Robert M. Murphy
July 2000