

JOHN GRAHAM WEIR

Creator: J. Graham Weir

Dates of Material: 1880-1925

Physical Description:

Diaries, 1880-1925, 15 inches.

Scope and Contents:

The diary of J. Graham Weir of Otonabee Township covers the 45 years 1880 to 1925 except for the 1922 diary which was not received. Weir lived on the location that is now known as Burnham Mansion, on Highway 7 at the Keene Road. The diaries contain entries for nearly every day and are written in an aide memoire style. He uses pre-printed journals that measure about 6.5 inches by 8 inches, and have a week per page. Interestingly there is no provision for Sunday entries. His calendars were printed for Brown Brothers in Toronto. Weir purchased his first diaries from John Carnegie at the Review office in downtown Peterborough, paying for 1881's with a load of dry pine on Christmas eve.

The diaries get better as they go along. Without doubt this is one of the finest farm diaries I have seen, and it is even more interesting because Weir lived so close to Peterborough.

The printed diaries are all printed for Brown Brothers of Toronto, but there are differences in format. The 1882 diary is 8" x 13". Some years have printed pages related to the almanac style, all have a calendar, some have postage rates, or lists of banks in Canada, or summaries of legislation related to Customs or business.

The books are generally in very good condition. The 1882 diary has wear and tear on the hinge. Most have some signs of wear at the corners, a sure sign that the diaries were well-used by Weir. The expenses are noted every month; the accounts payable, never.

The diaries are an excellent commentary on the day to day routines of a farmer's life. He had hired hands at different times, and had many ways to make cash. Someone in the house is a weaver, and there are woodlots, cows and horses that were sources of cash flow. Weir has many interests that bring him to Peterborough frequently, and we get some comments on city life. The entries are generally brief, legible and to the point. There are no diaries for the first thirteen years of married life, but the nearly complete run for 45 years is remarkable by any standard.

Access Conditions:

Open to researchers.

Finding Aids:

Available on site.

Accruals:

None expected.

Custodial History:

Pat Marchen was very alert in discovering this diary when she was working on the Sculley murder case which she shared with readers of the *Heritage Gazette* in 2004. She plans to write a book on this most fascinating murder case and we look forward to reading it. She has a keen eye for detail and has left no stone unturned in doing her thorough research. She has also volunteered to lead a team to transcribe the Weir diaries into the computer. We will keep our readers up to date on this project. And perhaps in future issues, we will have some more forays into one of our most fascinating treasures.

The diaries were transferred to the Trent Valley Archives by xxxx, through the good graces of Pat Marchen.

The diaries were the subject of part of a presentation at the NAAB Conference in October 2007 on the Future of Archival Monetary Appraisals in Canada.

Biographical Sketch/ Administrative History

The first page for January 1880, on the entry spaces Thursday 1 to Monday 5 reads:

We are thirteen years married today and just such a day as it was then that is warm and pleasant sunshine with just enough snow to make good sleighing and make every thing outside look clear.

The fresh warm air gentle breezes and pleasant sunshine inspires new intentions and desires in our minds and there are three things to admire and three times three to always keep in mind and the three things to admire are Intellectual power, Dignity and Gracefulness.

Three things to love: Courage, gentleness and affection.

Three things to hate: Cruelty, arrogance and ingratitude.

Three things to delight in: Frankness, freedom and beauty.

Three things to wish for: Health, friends and a cheerful spirit.

Three things to avoid: Idleness, loquacity and flippant jestings.

Three things to fight for: Honour, country and home.

Three things to govern: Temper, tongue and conduct.

Three things to think about: Life, death and eternity.

The next entry is for Tuesday 6: "Sleighing all gone this morning." Then the pages are blank until 29 March 1880. He is evidently getting his diary legs. This week's entries talk of farm tasks of cutting straw, threshing and sawing wood, but the entry for two days is devoted to a poem about "Home" which he copied from the Boston Transcript. The following week, the entries for four days contain only a poem titled "At Home To-day". Then until the middle of April it reads like a farm diary. We even get our first news about market prices. James Brickley sold 20 bushels of peas for seeds for 70 cents. Weir was building a barn and cradling oats and other farm jobs but the entries in the diary were hit-and-miss. By November, the entries are more frequent. He makes several trips to town to sell wood. He went hunting and canoeing. He made many trips to town to deliver wood and to make purchases. Willie Graham visited on Christmas and they spent much of the day shooting.

According to the 29 December 1880 entry:

I went to the annual school meeting today. Only five of us there, business not very brisk.

Lovina and I went to town this afternoon. I made my selections and paid for all my next year's newspapers, the chosen ones are the Montreal "Weekly Witness" Toronto "Globe" Peterboro "Review" and "Examiner."

Very cold to day, seven below zero.

On New Year's Eve, he "went to town to hear Sir Richard Cartwright address the electors on the Canada Pacific Railway swindle."

The back pages of the diary allow him to summarize his financial transactions on a daily basis, and he is using this from April onward. Here are some fascinating items giving insight into local businesses. He went to Belleghem to get pictures framed (\$3.56); he purchased this journal on 14 April for 60 cents; he bought 195 pounds of oats from Mr Flavelle; bought a barrel of salt from T. W. Robinson for one dollar; sold wool to James Stevenson for \$13; bought hair tonic for \$1; bought a suit of clothes from H. Lebrun for \$6. And so forth through the year.

Access Points:

Sculley murder

File listing:

171	1	1880	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1881	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1882	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1883	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1884	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1885	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1886	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1887	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1888	Brown Bros, embossed title on front

171	1	1889	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1890	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1891	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1892	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1893	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1894	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1895	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1896	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1897	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	1	1898	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1899	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1900	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1901	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1902	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1903	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1904	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1905	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1906	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1907	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1908	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1909	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1910	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1911	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1912	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1913	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1914	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1915	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1916	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1917	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	2	1918	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	3	1919	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	3	1920	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	3	1921	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	3	1922	
171	3	1923	Brown Bros, embossed title on front
171	3	1924	Brown Bros, embossed title on front