

University of Memphis

University of Memphis Digital Commons

Special Collections Finding Aids

Special Collections

8-25-2021

MSS0050. Margaret Jane Rhea diary finding aid

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/speccoll-findingaids>

Recommended Citation

"MSS0050. Margaret Jane Rhea diary finding aid" (2021). *Special Collections Finding Aids*. 93.
<https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/speccoll-findingaids/93>

This Finding Aid is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections at University of Memphis Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Collections Finding Aids by an authorized administrator of University of Memphis Digital Commons. For more information, please contact khggerty@memphis.edu.

**University of Memphis Libraries
Special Collections Department**

126 Ned R. McWherter Library

Memphis, TN 38152 - 3250

Phone: (901) 678 - 2210

E-mail: lib_sc@memphis.edu

Margaret Jane Rhea diary

Title: Margaret Jane Rhea diary

Collection No: MSS.50

Creator: Margaret Jane Rhea, 1820-1880

Extent: 0.25 cubic feet

Inclusive Dates: 1862, 1865 and undated.

Abstract: The collection comprises a photocopy of a book belonging to Margaret Jane Rhea of Sullivan County, Tennessee, which is a collection of poems, stories, some clippings, and her diary for 1865.

Donor: Frances Long, Memphis, Tennessee, 1969.

Processed by: Gerald Chaudron, 2014.

Access: Open to all researchers.

Language: English

Preferred Citation: Margaret Jane Rhea diary, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: November 2014

Biographical information

Margaret Jane Rhea was born on January 25, 1820, one of 13 children of Matthew Rhea (1796-1870) and Mary "Polly" Looney Rhea (1804-1884) of Sullivan County, east Tennessee. Matthew, the son of Matthew Rhea (1755-1816), Revolutionary War veteran and Sullivan County Court clerk, was born near Bluff City, Sullivan County, and attended Washington College where he studied under Rev. Samuel Doak. Later, Matthew made a living teaching, farming and surveying. After surveying Tennessee, he and a cousin, Matthew Campbell Rhea, produced in 1832 the first map of the state based on field surveys. A new female academy was erected in Somerville, Fayette County, in 1833 and Matthew became the president and first teacher of the Somerville Female Institution. He remained associated with the school until 1860 when he retired to his farm near Somerville.

Margaret Jane first married Nicholas M. Long on July 12, 1848, and had a son, Nicholas M. Long, Jr. (1849-1931), who became a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Memphis. Her second husband was a cousin, James Dysart Rhea (1802-1886), whom she married on October 28, 1858. Their son, Matthew Belmont, who died soon after birth in 1863, was named for Margaret's brother who died at the Battle of Belmont in 1861. Margaret died on May 17, 1880 and is buried in Bristol, Sullivan County.

Scope and contents

The diary of Margaret "Margarette" Jane Rhea is a photocopy which is sometimes almost illegible because pencil was used. It is a collection of poems, stories, some clippings, and her diary for the year 1865. The first page is inscribed "Margarette Jane Long, Long Lawn, Fayette County, Tennessee", which suggests it was begun before she married James Rhea. The diary records her daily activities from January to September 1865. There are only occasional mentions of the war, noting visiting soldiers and her prayers for peace. There are some other notations which indicate she may have been teaching children.

Entries of interest in the diary:

On March 26 she records that the Confederate Army was falling back and how the family tried to prevent the soldiers stealing provisions. The following day she mentions the activities of General Vaughn to stop the Union advance including burning a nearby bridge and stripping their farm of its fence rails. This action, as well as the demolition of a nearby railway bridge on April 2, confirms to her that civilians suffer as much from their own army as from the enemy. On April 3 she writes: "Heard that the Yankees had Petersburg. Things seem to be coming to a point pretty fast." Two days later she records that "Bristol people dreadfully frightened." On April 11 she notes an attack and robbery in the area where three men were killed. On April 14 she records the fall of Petersburg, Richmond and Lynchburg. Her next entry is a prayer that "the South may submit and peace be once more restored". On June 18 she records that a soldier was at the farm all night. "I don't know what we will do about them always begging." The following day she noted that an attempt at an election was made but failed. Five days later she records that the wheat crop is light again and she is not sure how the family will survive. On July 4 she hints that her relationship with her husband is not very close but she will stay because she needs to take care of her son. Ten days later Margaret writes of a

W.B. Carter speaking in town, “trying to stir the people up to rebellion again.” At the end of August, she notes how different the situation is from a year before, when the war was still being fought, and hopes peace will continue.

Provenance

The Margaret Jane Rhea diary, along with the Nicholas M. Long collection, was donated by Frances M. Long (b. 1893) (Mrs. Frank L. Martin), who was the daughter of Nicholas M. Long, Jr.

Related materials

MSS.14. Nicholas M. Long collection.
Rhea Family Papers, 1769-1859, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Subject terms

Rhea, James Dysart, 1802-1886.
Rhea, Margaret Jane, 1820-1880.
Sullivan County (Tenn.)
United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Personal narratives.

Inventory

Box 1

Book of poems, stories, and a diary, 1865 January-September, belonging to Margaret Jane Rhea (photocopy).