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Charles Sisson Diary

1864 Feb.-1865 June
1 vol. (0.1 linear foot)
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Read collection overview

At the time of the American Civil War, Charles Sisson attended the Friends Boarding School in Providence, R.I. An active member of the Society of Friends, Sisson was apparently a dedicated student and avid member of the literary society. After graduation, he pursued an enormously successful career in the textile industry, becoming a founder of the Hope Webbing Company in 1883, one of the nation's largest narrow-fabric manufacturers.

Kept by teenaged Charles Sisson, this diary includes regular entries describing a student's daily life at the Friends Boarding School in Providence R.I. In addition to occasional details on coursework, Sisson describes his social activities in some depth, and often with some humor. With rare exceptions, the larger currents of the Civil War served as little more than a backdrop, although the future of liberated slaves appeared as a topic for debate at the Lyceum, and marching was taken up as an activity by the students.

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Background on Charles Sisson

Charles Sisson was born in Coventry, R.I., on Sept. 7, 1847, the eldest son of Asa Sisson and Mary Ann (Peck), and the eighth generation of a New England Quaker family. As the grandson of Perez Peck, one of the first manufacturers of cotton machinery in New England, and the son of Asa Sisson, a machinist from Coventry who became Peck's junior partner, Charles was born into the textile business that became the source of his considerable fortune.

Like his father, Sisson entered the Friends Boarding School (now the Moses Brown School) in his early teens, the primary Quaker school in New England. A

serious student, he was active in the student literary society, the Phoenix Lyceum, and remained engaged in the Society of Friends, regularly attending Monthly and Quarterly meetings. Following graduation in 1866, he wasted little time before stepping into the business world, beginning a seventeen-year rise through the corporate ranks of the webbing manufacturer Vaughan and Greene, moving from bookkeeper to general superintendent.

With his broad knowledge of the textile business, he and a fellow employee Oscar A. Steere, decided in 1883, to step out their own, establishing the Hope Webbing Company. From a small shop in Providence with just ten looms, Hope developed into a thriving concern in Pawtucket, and one of the nation's largest narrow fabric mills by the turn of the century, eventually specializing in braided fabrics from shoelaces to parachute cords, webbing, carpet strips, and bungee cords. The company relocated to Cumberland, R.I., in 1994, and currently operates under the Hope Global Company. In addition to serving as President and then Treasurer at Hope, Sisson also became president of the Frank Mossberg Company (a tool manufacturer in Attleboro, Mass.), the Narragansett Textile Company of Pawtucket, and the Eastern Machine and Stamping Company of Providence.

Outside of his business activities, Sisson remained an active Friend and a strong temperance advocate. A moderate Republican, he took part in local politics, serving on the Town Council in North Kingstown, including a stint as President (1881), on the local School Committee (1875-1893), and later on the City Council in Providence (1896-1904). He married Elizabeth Davis Eyre of Philadelphia on Oct. 4, 1888, raising a family of five. Sisson died on Nov. 10, 1919, and is buried at the Swan Point Cemetery in Providence.

Scope of collection

Kept by teenaged Charles Sisson, this diary includes regular entries describing a student's daily life at the Friends Boarding School in Providence R.I. In addition to occasional details on coursework, Sisson describes his social activities in some depth, and often with some humor, from meetings of the Phoenix Lyceum to day trips into town, dinners, visits by family and friends, and attendance at Quaker meeting. With rare exceptions, the larger currents of the Civil War was little more than a backdrop, although the future of liberated slaves appeared as a topic for debate at the Lyceum, and marching was taken up as an activity by the students.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of I. Eliot Wentworth, June 2019.

Related Material

SCUA also holds the [Peck-Sisson-White Family Papers](#) (MS 933), which center on his father and younger sister, Emily.

Bibliography

On Sisson, see [Representative men and old families of Rhode Island](#), vol. 2, Chicago : J.H. Beers, 1908, pp. 746-747.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, June 2019.

Language:

English

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Search terms

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