

Finding Aid for the diary of the early West Michigan pioneer Bethuel Church Collection 154

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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October 1992
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Summary Information

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Repository | Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department |
| Creator | Church, Bethuel, 1784-1859 |
| Title | Diary of the early West Michigan pioneer Bethuel Church (1784-1859) |
| Date [inclusive] | 1854-1858 |
| Extent | 0.83 Linear feet One box |
| Language | English |
| Abstract | <p>Bethuel Church (1784-1859) was an early resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan area. His diary describes his daily life, contains weather reports, and mentions current events. Written in the final years of his life, the diary begins on July 2, 1854 and ends on May 30, 1858. It discusses his family, including his first wife Lydia, second wife Mary Ann and son Melvin. His siblings mentioned are sister A. Boot and brother C.C. The diary notes Bethuel's occupations variously as handyman, delivery man, preacher and lumberjack. Bethuel Church was born in Cambridge, Washington County, New York and moved to near Grand Rapids, Michigan at a date not yet identified. He also tells of his experiences in the War of 1812 in the diary. Patrons are asked to use the photocopy of the diary provided, where possible, to protect the fragile original.</p> |

Biographical/Historical note

Bethuel Church (Feb. 17, 1784-Jan. 3, 1859) was born in Cambridge, Washington County, New York. Church worked many jobs such as a handyman, delivery man, preacher and lumberjack.

Church had a sister (who is only mentioned a few times as A. Boot), a brother C.C. Church, and his fellow handyman Rufus Church. The collection mentions his first wife Lydia (whose maiden name is not given), whom he divorced and who later died at age 54. He and his second wife Mary Ann (whose maiden name also is not given) had a son, Melvin. Mary Ann died at the age of 34.

Church served about a year as Captain in the War of 1812, but did not fight in any battles. The diary continues through May 30, 1858, an appended note indicates that Church became sick and died at 4 a.m. on January 3, 1859.

Scope and Contents note

This diary of Bethuel Church provides information about his daily life in West Michigan during the mid 1850s. Scattered throughout the margins of the diary are numerous penciled notes from an unknown source, commenting on what Church has written. The diary also provides a very good source description of daily life in the early 19th century as well as an indication of the daily weather. The volume begins with a brief autobiographical account written in 1816, religious writings, and acrostic poetry by Church.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department October 1992

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Mrs. James H. Campbell, August 1910, accession 1986.037

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

See also Coll. 123, Carolyn Campbell Collection.

Controlled Access Headings

Genre(s)

- diaries

Geographic Name(s)

- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History -- 19th Century
- United States -- History -- War of 1812

Collection Inventory

| | Box | Folder |
|---|------------|---------------|
| Diary, 1854-1858. (not for general use) | 1 | 1 |
| Photocopy of diary for patron usage | 1 | 2 |