

C Scott, Elvira Ascenith Weir (1821-1910), Diary, 1860-1887
1053 .2 linear feet

DIGITIZED in Civil War collection

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INTRODUCTION

Typescript photocopy of diary of a woman from Miami, Missouri, including descriptive observations on the themes of home, family, and religion, as well as the impact of the Civil War on life in her own community and region.

DONOR INFORMATION

The diary was donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Scott Jones and Mrs. Donald V. Riddle on 31 October 1974 (Accession No. 1102).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Elvira Scott was born Elvira Ascenith Weir on 22 September 1821, near Charles Town, Indiana, the second daughter of James Weir and Jane Dinwiddie, formerly of Virginia. Elvira received her formal education at the Washington County Seminary in Salem, Indiana. Later, in 1840, the Weir family moved to Iowa Territory settling near Agency. In March of 1844 Elvira Weir married John P. Scott in Iowa. Shortly thereafter she and John moved to Missouri, settling in Miami where their two daughters were born--Eva, nicknamed "Pet", in 1845 and Hebe in 1855. There, except for a period of exile during the Civil War, they remained until John Scott's death in 1888 and Elvira's in 1910.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Scott diary was transcribed by Donald W. Riddle and is entitled *A Diary of the Civil War on the Missouri Border*. Riddle has arranged the typescript into ten chapters and has supplied additional material in the form of background information and notes. The strength of the diary lies in the immediacy and frequency of Scott's entries in closeness to the time of the actual event. It is written by an informed writer with strong Southern leanings, in a readable, descriptive style. A major drawback is that it is a typescript and is not a full transcription of the original five-volume set, e.g., a note by Riddle indicates that volume four (30 March 1868 through 31 December 1874) was not transcribed; therefore, a major gap exists in the narrative. In addition, intermittent entries in the later years leave additional gaps in time. Further, Riddle's notes indicate that wages paid to Scott's household servants, formerly slaves, have not been included in this transcription.

FOLDER LIST

- f. 1 Chapter 1, "Westward from Virginia." D.W. Riddle's introductory chapter supplies genealogical background information pertaining to the Weir, Scott, and McDaniel families who migrated to Missouri from Virginia prior to the outbreak of the Civil War.

- Chapter 2, "The Year of Peace." Diary entries begin on 9 January 1860, wherein Scott's dominant themes include home, family, and church. She refers to childrearing, sewing, practicing the piano, home visits, and her mood fluctuations, as well as to her writing.
- f. 2 Scott's topics include her feelings of inadequacy as a mother, the Episcopal Church, the Scott slaves, her own illnesses ranging from general aches and pains to depression and apathy, her reading material (the Bible, *Harper's Monthly*, and Godey's Lady's Book), and practicing the piano and the guitar.
- f. 3 Chapter 3, "The Impact of the Civil War." In his commentary Riddle supplies background information on the political and economic situation in Missouri in relation to national politics and discusses such topics as secession, the protection of the U.S. Arsenal in St. Louis, and the beginnings of guerrilla warfare in the state.
- Chapter 4, "1861." Diary entries continue with Scott discussing the national political scene and its impact on her region.
- Chapter 5, "Mrs. Scott's Civil War." Riddle summarizes Scott's diary entries, especially the narrative pertaining to the effect of guerrilla warfare on the citizens of Missouri. No diary entries exist for the period of time the Scotts were living in exile in St. Louis.
- f. 4-5 Chapter 6, "The Civil War on the Western Border." Diary entries begin on 9 March 1862, wherein Scott refers to the Battle of Mill Creek which occurred on 17 December 1861; the Kansas "Red Legs;" "Jayhawking;" the illegal freeing of slaves by Federal troops; oaths of allegiance; a trip from Miami to Agency, Iowa, under war conditions; her attitude toward Federal troops; notice of her arrest for "treasonable language" and subsequent arrest of John Scott; an eyewitness account of the murder of Judge Robert G. Smart; and bushwhackers.
- f. 6 Description of trip overland from Miami to St. Louis to enroll daughter in the Mary Institute.
- f. 7 Description of a meeting of the Union League at the Mercantile Library Hall, St. Louis; Kansas "Red Legs" episode, and bushwhacker activities.
- f. 8 Scott's chronicle of the mass migration of slaves, 31 August 1863 to Miami and description of her last days in Miami prior to her exile in September 1863.
- Chapter 7, "Reconstruction." The Scotts return to Miami, 21 June 1865. Riddle describes economic conditions, property losses, and politics in western Missouri, and in Miami in particular.
- f. 9-11 Chapter 8, "Trials of Reunion." Primarily introspective entries and comments on daily life.
- f. 10 Description of economic and psychological adjustment of Bondurant under Reconstruction, comments on remodeling Scott home, childrearing, housework, and reminiscences of the summer of 1863 and the past in general.
- f. 11 February 1867. Comments on domestic strife with sister, Julia, general

- household duties, trip to St. Louis, cholera, and death.
- f. 12-13 Entries include trip to Iowa.
Chapter 9, "Winter is on My Head." Summary and editorial comments by Riddle on the contents of volumes four and five of diary.
Chapter 10, "But Eternal Spring is in My Heart." Entries begin New Year's Eve, 1874, with family matters primarily discussed.
- f. 13 Entries include a trip to Washington D.C. and Philadelphia for the Centennial Exposition of 1876 and reminiscences of a general nature.

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