

## Guide to the Harriet Messer Diary, 1849-1852

### Administrative Information

**Title and Dates:**

Harriet Messer Diary, 1849-1852

**Repository:**

New Hampshire Historical Society  
30 Park Street  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-228-6688  
<https://www.nhhistory.org/>

**Collection Number:**

1996.050

**Author of Finding Aid:**

Sandra Wheeler

**Creator:**

Briggs, Harriet Messer, 1837-1881

**Language:**

The materials in this collection are in English.

**Extent:**

1 volume ; 0.05 linear feet

**Abstract:**

Diary of Harriet Messer (1837-1881), kept intermittently during her adolescence between the ages of 12 and 15 from 1849 to 1852. The diary contains entries on her social activities, neighborhood and family gossip, town news, and her feelings.

## Access and Use

### **Acquisition Information and Provenance:**

The Harriet Messer Diary was purchased from Lyrical Ballad Bookstore on March 28, 1996.

### **Processing Information:**

This collection was processed by an unknown person at an unknown date. The finding aid was written by Sandra Wheeler in November 2021. This finding aid follows the standards set forth by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*.

### **Access Restrictions:**

Available for research.

### **Location:**

The collection is housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord, New Hampshire.

### **Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements:**

This collection consists of a diary, which requires a book cradle for use.

### **Copyright/Conditions Governing Use:**

For permission to reproduce or publish materials from this collection, please contact the New Hampshire Historical Society. Users are responsible for following all copyright and intellectual property laws.

### **Preferred Citation:**

Harriet Messer Diary, 1996.050. New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. Date accessed.

## Collection Overview

### **Biographical Information:**

Harriet E. Messer (1837-1881) was the daughter and only surviving child of Frederick G. Messer (1799-1889) and Susan Messer (1804-1890). A brother, Fred Messer born in 1841, died in 1843. Frederick and Susan were both born in Vermont, but moved to Colebrook, New Hampshire, and operated a store of some kind in the village: he is listed in the 1850 census as a “trader.”

Harriet married Lyman C. Briggs (1831-1886), also born in Vermont, on September 25, 1855 at Portland, ME. They remained in Colebrook until at least 1860, but by 1870 they had moved to Portland where Briggs was a wholesale grocer. Harriet’s parents seem to have joined the young couple in Portland, for they appear there in the censuses of 1870 and 1880 and are buried there.

Harriet and Lyman were living at Boston, MA, by 1880. Harriet died of diphtheria at Boston on August 31, 1881. Lyman died there on March 31, 1886. They are buried at Deering, ME. Harriet and Lyman Briggs were survived by at least three children: Mary G. (b. ca. 1857 at Colebrook, NH), Annie M. (b. ca. 1859 at Colebrook), Fred Messer Briggs (1861-1878 at Portland), Susie Briggs (1865-1868 at Portland), and Arthur Carroll Briggs (b. July 21, 1870 at Portland).

**Collection Scope and Content Note:**

Harriet (or Harriott) Messer (1837-1881) kept a journal intermittently between the ages of 12 and 15 (1849-1852). She tended to write more in the winter, probably because she was unhappily confined indoors. Especially towards the end, the diary is full of adolescent angst: she hated the cold, was bored in Colebrook, felt sad, and cried often. Her social activities included paying and receiving calls, playing whist, attending church, and attending both regular school and singing school. The journal also records neighborhood and family gossip and comments on what were evidently newsworthy events, such as people going to California to find gold; a flying machine exhibit in Boston; paying for an exhibit of pictures shown through a “magic lantern”; the construction preparing for the coming of the railroad in Henniker, NH; and the preaching of a Universalist minister. Though she was sent to boarding school in Henniker in 1849 for a few months and then, in the last entry, one in Concord in 1852, she was too busy to describe those experiences in any detail.

**Arrangement:**

This collection consists of one diary.

**Contents List**

Volume 1 Harriet Messer Diary, 1849-1952

**Subject Terms****People:**

Briggs, Harriet Messer, 1837-1881

**Subjects:**

Adolescence

Diaries

**Locations:**

Colebrook, NH

Concord, NH

Henniker, NH

**Occupations:**

Students