

Connecticut Historical Society
museum & library

Albert Walker Papers, 1831-1899

A Guide to the collection at the Connecticut Historical Society

Collection Overview

Repository:	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
Creator :	Walker, Albert
Title :	Albert Walker Papers
Dates :	1831-1899
Extent :	2.5 linear feet (5 boxes)
Location:	Ms 99732
Language:	English

Biographical Sketch

Albert Walker was born in Glastonbury, Connecticut in 1836 to Nathaniel and Polly Walker. Nathaniel was a farmer who also worked for other farmers and took a turn in a knitting mill in order to make money. Albert's mother Polly killed herself in 1856. Albert was a many-faceted person like his father. He made cigars, worked in a factory in the Curtisville section of Glastonbury that made spoons and forks, helped his father with farm work, painted and repaired wagons, buggies and sleighs, and repaired and cleaned clocks. As a young man, for entertainment he fiddled at or attended local dances, went to horse races and engaged in cock-fighting. He also spent many nights "in the street", perhaps a 19th century version of cruising. After he turned 40, however, he seemed to settle down or at least did not include entries about being in the street in his diaries. Most notable among his avocations or hobbies was Albert's interest in magic tricks and ventriloquism. His diaries give some idea of his activities, such as the time the factory boys came to his house to buy cigars and Albert "performed a few tricks". He also records making his own box to store his equipment, working on his equipment, and making Punch, Judy and dancing images. (puppets?) Albert died suddenly in December 1902, leaving a wife, Matilda, and two children, Edna Elizabeth and Howard Albert.

Scope and Content

This collection was purchased at an auction in southeastern Connecticut from a family estate along with Walker's magician's trunk filled with his apparatus, his puppets, books on magic and ventriloquism, his clock repair kit, and broadsides advertising his performances. The trunk and its contents and the clock repair kit are in the museum collection. The broadside and books are part of the library collection and a photographic portrait of Albert went to graphics. Albert kept a regular diary from 1856-1895, with a few missing individual volumes. In the diaries he recorded the weather, his activities such as farming, making flatware and stripping tobacco, attending or playing his fiddle for dances, fights with his father, birth, marriages and deaths in town, and comments on local politics, fires and explosions, and national events such as the death of Abraham Lincoln. The name William Griswold appears frequently in his entries before 1865, but his role in Albert's life is not yet illuminated. The diaries after 1867 are only sparsely filled and give the impression that he eventually assumed the role of gentleman farmer. A partial transcript of the diaries is available in the collection file in the archivist's office.

Restrictions

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions on access to the collection.

Use Restrictions

Use of the material requires compliance with the Connecticut Historical Society's Research Center regulations.

Subject Headings

Personal Names

Walker, Albert, 1836-1902.

Subjects

Diaries --Connecticut --Glastonbury --1856-1895.
Diaries, --1856-1895.
Farmers --Connecticut --Glastonbury.
Glastonbury (Conn.) --History --Sources.
Magicians --Connecticut --Glastonbury.
Ventriloquists --Connecticut --Glastonbury.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Item, Collection Title, Collection number (Box #, Folder #). Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

Processing Details

Collection was processed by Barbara Austen in 2007.

EAD Finding Aid created June 2011.

Accruals

The collection is closed.

Contents:

Papers

Box	Folder	
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1	1	Diary, 1856
1	2	Items removed from diary
1	3	Diary, 1857
1	4	Items removed from diary
1	5	Diary, 1858
1	6	Items removed from diary
1	7	Diary, 1859
1	8	Diary, 1860
1	9	Items removed from diary
1	10	Diary, 1861
1	11	Items removed from diary
1	12	Diary, 1862
1	13	Items removed from diary
1	14	Diary, 1863
1	15	Items removed from diary

Box	Folder	
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2	1	Diary, 1864
2	2	Items removed from diary
2	3	Diary, 1865

2	4	Items removed from diary
2	5	Diary, 1867
2	6	Items removed from diary
2	7	Diary, 1871
2	8	Items removed from diary
2	9	Diary, 1872
2	10	Items removed from diary
2	11	Diary, 1873
2	12	Items removed from diary
2	13	Diary, 1875
2	14	Items removed from diary

Box Folder

3	1	Diary, 1876
3	2	Diary, 1877
3	3	Diary, 1878
3	4	Diary, 1879
3	5	Items removed from diary
3	6	Diary, 1880
3	7	Items removed from diary
3	8	Diary, 1882
3	9	Items removed from diary
3	10	Diary, 1884

Box Folder

4	1	Diary, 1885
4	2	Diary, 1886
4	3	Diary, 1887
4	4	Diary, 1888
4	5	Diary, 1889
4	6	Diary, 1890
4	7	Items removed from diary
4	8	Diary, 1891

Box Folder

5	1	Diary, 1892
5	2	Items removed from diary
5	3	Diary, 1893
5	4	Diary 1894
5	5	Correspondence, including broadside advertising the Fakir of Siam, 1854-1897
5	6	Essay on ventriloquism and Punch & Judy script, 1855
5	7	Advertising jingles, undated
5	8	Business cards, undated

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5	9	Lists of tricks and paper-folding figures, undated
5	10	Notes on making flatware and house accounts, 1875-1881
5	11	Bank, household and personal accounts, 1860-1888
5	12	House specifications, ca. 1899
5	13	Bills, letter, engraving, 1870-1882, undated
5	14	Nathaniel Walker account book, 1831-1865
5	15	Items removed from account book