

Catharine (Fay) Ewing Diary

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Creator: Ewing, Catharine (Fay)
Title: Catharine (Fay) Ewing Diary
Dates: 1866
Bulk Dates: 1866
Extent: 1 mss box (.25 linear ft.)
Abstract: This diary for the year 1866 describes the hardships, obstacles, and emotional stress encountered by Catharine (Fay) Ewing as she tried to provide a safe home for orphaned and neglected children in Washington County, Ohio.

Identification:
Language: English

Biography

Catharine A. (Fay) Ewing (1822 - 1897) was born in Westboro, Massachusetts, and in 1835 moved with her parents, William and Elizabeth (Lankton) Fay, to Marietta, Ohio, where her brother was a college student. Catharine attended the Marietta Female Seminary, and at the age of 20, she became a missionary among the Choctaw Indians in the west. While serving in this capacity, she witnessed the death of a child due to unsuitable living conditions. This incident resulted in Catharine's goal to rescue homeless children from similar fates.

After two years of teaching and saving her money, she returned to Washington County, Ohio, where she purchased several acres of land in Lawrence Township and built a "Children's Home." It was to this location that she brought the children she had seen housed in the local poorhouse alongside alcoholics and mentally unstable adults. Although she was a single woman, Catharine was able to provide proper care for these children by obtaining charitable donations and working her farm.

Following the Civil War, many additional orphans, the children of soldiers killed while in service, were in need of support, and Catharine worked with government officials to address the situation. Due to her efforts, the Ohio legislature passed a law in 1866 providing for the public support of homes for orphaned children in Ohio, said to have been the first legislation of its kind in the United States.

Public funding enabled the construction of a new Washington County Children's Home building in Marietta, and the orphans from Catharine's home were transferred to the care of the staff there. Catharine and her new husband, Archibald Ewing, also moved to Marietta, where they operated a boarding house for college students. Still interested in aiding the needy, Catharine led the effort to establish the Washington County Woman's Home, a facility that provided a home for aging females. Catharine died on April 4, 1897, and was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.

Additional information regarding Ewing and her work can be found in an article entitled, "Like Apples of Gold," by Ralph L. Schroeder, printed in a publication of the Washington County (Ohio) Historical Society, *The Tallow Light*, 1967-68.

Scope and Content

The collection includes one bound manuscript journal written by Catharine Ewing in 1866. It describes her daily activities, personal problems, and relationships during one of the most eventful years of her life. In its pages she relates the hardships, obstacles, and emotional stress she faced while trying to provide a safe home for neglected children. The often poignant entries also reveal some of the personal difficulties she experienced with her own family and her evolving relationship with Archibald Ewing, the man she married in 1866 when she was 44 years old.

Indexing Terms

Child welfare – Ohio – Washington County – History
Children – Institutional care – Ohio – Washington County – History
Ewing, Catharine (Fay), 1822-1897
Lawrence Township, Washington County (Ohio)
Marietta (Ohio)
Washington County Children's Home (Marietta, Ohio) – History

Preferred Citation

Catharine (Fay) Ewing Diary, Marietta College Library

Detailed Description of the Collection

Box 1/Folder 1

One bound journal written by Catharine Fay Ewing, Lawrence Township, Washington County, Ohio, 1866.