

1-13-2016

Sargent, George Henry, 1828-1917 (MSS 564)

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Descriptive Inventory

MSS 664 SARGENT, George Henry, 1828-1917

1 box. 4 folders. 3 items. 1851-1853. Originals and photocopies

SC2015.3.21

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

George H. Sargent was born on 29 October 1828 to Joseph Denny Sargent (1787-1849) and Mindwell (Jones) Sargent (1792-1851) in Leicester, Massachusetts. He matriculated at Leicester Academy, where he would later serve as a Trustee. He furthered his education at Harvard College, graduating in 1849 with a degree in mercantile business; he later received a law degree from the same institution in 1853. In 1854 George moved to New York City. He worked with his brother, Joseph Bradford Sargent, in Sargent and Company in New Haven, Connecticut and New York. Upon his brother's death in 1907, George became president of the company. He was a member of the Union League, the Harvard Club, and the Hardware Club, all of New York City. He was also a patron of the National Academy of Design and a member of the New England Society. Politically he was a Republican and attended the Unitarian Church. He was Director of the Mercantile National Bank of New York and the Fidelity Trust of New York. He married Sarah C. Shaw on 15 October 1855 in Nantucket, Massachusetts; they had three children: Leicester, Rupert, and Emily. His two sons were tragically lost in a sailing accident on Vineyard Sound in 1883. George died on 14 April 1917 in New York City at the age of 88.

COLLECTION NOTE

George H. Sargent's 1851-1853 diary reveals him to be as a young gentleman with an expansive variety of interests. His makes comments about education, politics, the performing arts, noted personalities, historical events, travel, business, religion and recreation.

On 13 May 1851, Sargent describes his excitement as he viewed the speeches of President Millard Fillmore and Daniel Webster in New York City at the public celebration of the completion of the Erie Rail Road: "President Fillmore is a fine looking man, has a pleasant and captivating look." At that time the Erie Railroad running from New York City to Dunkirk, New York, on Lake Erie in Chautauqua County was the longest railroad in the United States.

In June 1851 Sargent was a student at Harvard who had been working temporarily in Brooklyn. He loved New York City but had to choose between continuing to work and returning to Harvard. A three-week visit to Nantucket Island in July provided abundant socializing,

sightseeing and recreation. On July 18th, he went “sharking” and landed 4 sharks. He returned to Harvard in late-August 1851. In September Sargent was gratified that the Massachusetts Whigs, his party, had nominated Robert C. Winthrop as their candidate for Governor.

On 17 September 1851, Sargent was elected as marshal representing the Junior Class at Harvard for the Great Railroad Jubilee Procession in Boston. He walked into the ceremony with the Senators and got as good a seat as President Fillmore and Lord Elgin, the Governor General of Canada, for the military review.

On 1 October 1852 Sargent embarked upon an extended trip to visit his sister, Lucy Baldwin (Sargent) Rupert in Louisville, Kentucky. She married Elon W. Rupert in 1846 and had moved to the Falls City. George commenced his trip by train in Brooklyn, traveled across New York State and arrived in Niagara Falls on 2 October 1852. He was very impressed by the stunning scenery of western New York. It was a fitting prelude to the sensory charge Sargent received at Niagara Falls. His reaction to the sights and sounds followed: “All words are useless and inadequate. There is but one Niagara. Niagara....I know I love thee.” On October 3rd Sargent boarded the steamer *Empire State* on Lake Erie bound for Cleveland. The steamer arrived late in Cleveland. Two thirds of the passengers were sea sick. “Lake Erie was not very kind to us. Because the steamer was late passengers were forced to take the mail train.” Sargent writes “Had a one horse dinner in Cleveland and one horse accommodations since Buffalo.”

Sargent arrived in Louisville on the Steamboat *Lady Franklin* from Cincinnati on 7 October 1852. Without a thick book of evidence he wrote a negative review of the south and Midwest. “There is visible everywhere a don’t care appearance which is so characteristic of Southerners and Midwesterners.”

On 24 October 1852 Daniel Webster died. An emotional Sargent wrote: “Webster is gone and when shall we see his like again? Great national loss and bereavement occasioned by the death of our country’s god. General gloom and a pale of sadness in the whole country. His fame is imperishable.”

On 14 November 1852 Sargent embarked upon a hunting trip to Henderson County, Kentucky and stayed at Mr. Finley’s hunting lodge. “There are 6 slaves on the place. Three men, two women and a child he states. The return from hunting was on board the Steamer *Empire State*. There has been considerable card playing for money but I detest gambling in all its forms.”

On 2 December 1852 Sargent viewed the launching of the Steamboat *Falls City* from Jeffersonville, Indiana. On 11 December 1852 Sargent boarded the *Bell Quigley* to visit Mammoth Cave in south central Kentucky. His guide was an extremely knowledgeable slave named Steven who would be freed in 3 years. He describes Mammoth Cave as “Visions of something supernatural.”

After severe flooding all along the Ohio near Louisville, citizens moved to the upper stories of their homes on 29 December 1852. By 10 January 1853 Sargent left his 3-month Kentucky home for St. Louis to become a salesman. At a young 24 years, Sargent had seen much with a great deal more ahead.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	Sargent Diary	1851-1853	3 items
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	Diary	1851-1853	1 item
Folder 3	Diary (Photocopy)	1851-1853	1 item

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS SARGENT, George Henry, 1851-1853
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Diary kept by George Henry Sargent from 1 May 1851 to 10 January 1853. The Harvard student writes on a variety of subjects, including education, religion, historical events, travel, etc. Of particular interest is a three-month sojourn in 1852 with his sister, Lucy Baldwin (Sargent) Rupert in Louisville, Kentucky. While in Kentucky, he also visits Henderson and Mammoth Cave.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Bishop, Stephen, 1821-1857 – Mentioned, 1852
Harvard University – Cambridge, Massachusetts – Relating to Henderson
Louisville
Mammoth Cave – Comments about, 1852
Rupert, Lucy Baldwin (Sargent), 1824-1895 – Relating to Steamboat travel, 1851-1853

Jeffrey 01/16/2016