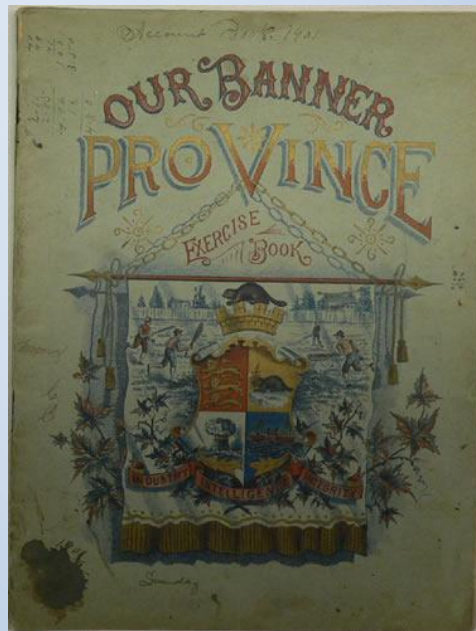


ESTHER CLARK WRIGHT ARCHIVES
ACADIA UNIVERSITY

REBECCA ELLS FAMILY FONDS
Accession 1986.004-ELL



Compiled by Wendy Robicheau & Sarah Story

July 2009

Rebecca Ells family fonds. – [textual records]. – 1896-1915. – 4cm of textual records

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Scope and Content

The fonds consist of seven diaries of Rebecca Ells, one account book kept by her, and a farm journal kept by Manning Ells. Each of these items highlight farming life at the turn of the 20th century.

File list

- 1986.004-ELL/1 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1896, January - 1900, October) includes financial information (1902, 1914-1915) and two recipes
- 1986.004-ELL/2 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1901, January - April)
- 1986.004-ELL/3 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1901, April - September)
- 1986.004-ELL/4 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1901, September - December)
- 1986.044-ELL/5 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1902, January - May)
- 1986.004-ELL/6 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1904, January - December)
- 1986.004-ELL/7 [diary of Rebecca Ells](#) (1905, June - December)
- 1986.004-ELL/8 [account book kept by Rebecca Ells](#) (1901-1902) giving a daily account of items bought and sold
- 1986.004-ELL/9 [farm journal kept by Manning Ells](#) (1901, May - 1902, April) giving a daily account of events on the farm

Family Biographical Sketch

Rebecca Chase (nee Kinsman) Ells was born on June 25, 1856. She was the daughter of Samuel Kinsman of Upper Canard and Wilhelmina Kinsman (nee Rockwell) of Port Williams. At age 23, Rebecca married George Cyrus Ells, a carpenter and shipbuilder who was born in Scots Bay in 1854. His father, Abram Ells, was a shipbuilder with whom Cyrus worked until the age of 25. Rebecca and Cyrus had two children, Manning Kinsman, born on 23 September 1880, and William Chase, born on 23 March 1885. William died in 1893, after a school yard accident in which he sustained head injuries. Manning married Rachael Winifred Messinger and had three children, Lewis Messinger, Donald Cyrus, and Mary Rebecca.

In 1879, Rebecca and Cyrus moved to a farm in Cornwallis (now the Port Williams area) and received the deed to land on Belcher Street in 1884. Cyrus left the farm in 1899 and went on an expedition with Sir Fredrick Borden of Canning to work in the Klondike as a lumberman, staying in the Yukon to mine gold. In 1911, Cyrus returned to the farm in Port Williams.

During the twelve years that Cyrus was away, Rebecca ran the farm on Belcher Street with the assistance of her son Manning, her father Samuel Kinsman and her brother-in-law Robert Rand. Her diary reflects that Rebecca sold eggs, poultry, strawberries, cream, farm produce at the market, and butter to supplement the farm income, and cleaned granaries and tended to the livestock. Rebecca also ran the household, tended to the gardens, and handled all farm transactions. Even after her husband and son went into business, she continued to assist on the farm.

Manning became a prominent businessman in Port Williams, N.S. In 1911, Manning and his father became partners of the firm Cyrus & Manning Ells, in the apple and strawberry growing and exporting business. They became known as one of the largest growers and shippers of strawberries in the Annapolis Valley and were active members in the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers and Shippers Association. Later, they expanded the business and went into poultry farming and egg production. By 1952, Cyrus and Manning Ells Ltd was a half a million dollar poultry business. It was later sold to A.C.A. Cooperative of New Minas.

Rebecca's diary shows that she had a strong network of friends and was an active member of her community. She belonged to the Women's Missionary Aid Society, Endeavour (Society of Baptist Churches), the Sons of Temperance Lily of the Valley Division no. 440, and attended meetings of the Uneda Club (a literacy group). Baptized on July 8, 1871 at the First Cornwallis Baptist Church, Rebecca regularly attended the

Port Williams Baptist Church. Cyrus and Manning were baptized at Canard on November 15, 1896.

Rebecca died during her sleep on May 20, 1928, at her home on Belcher Street, after a short-term illness. She is buried at the Upper Canard United Baptist Church Cemetery along with her husband, children, two sisters (Olivia and Mary) and other members of her extended family.

Notes

Supplied title based on contents of fonds

Digital copy of each item available

Items are fragile, use digital copy

Original records are in the public domain

See also "Historic Annapolis Valley : Rural Life Remembered" by Mike Parker [FC2345 .A4 P37 2006 SPCOLL], page 122-123 and 154

See also "No Place Like Home" by Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw, Donna Smyth in which her diaries were transcribed and her life is highlighted

See also Brenda Eveline Naugler, And a Hundred Other Little Things to Do: The Diaries of Rebecca Chase Kinsman Ells – Nova Scotian Farmer, 1896-1905. Thesis. Acadia University, Sept. 1994

See also Brenda Naugler accession 1994.005-NAU for transcriptions of items in this fonds

See also "How the Chicken Became King of Nova Scotia's Fruit Belt" in Kings County Vignettes, vol. 2, page 51.

Citation for this electronic finding aid:

This finding aid should be cited as a website. Relevant information is as follows:

Title: Rebecca Ells family fonds

Date: 2009

Author: Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University

Access Points

Ells, Rebecca (1856-1928)

Ells, Manning (b.1880)

Port Williams (Kings Co., NS)

Agriculture—Nova Scotia—Annapolis Valley

APPENDIX A – photos taken by Sarah Story, 16 July 2009



Stone for Rebecca and Cyrus Ells



Stone for William Ells