

C Dryden, John G. (1835-1890), Diaries, 1856-1883
4104 .3 cubic feet

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INTRODUCTION

The John G. Dryden diaries include four volumes between the years 1856 and 1883 that document the life of a farmer and justice of the peace living in Vernon County, Missouri.

DONOR INFORMATION

The diaries were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Callaway Baze on 28 July 1993 (Accession No. 2973). An addition was made on 11 October 2004 by Madge Baze.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John G. Dryden was born on February 2, 1835, in Jefferson, Indiana, to Morgan A. Dryden and Elizabeth Gassaway. John's mother, Elizabeth, passed away on September 13, 1835, for reasons unknown, and Morgan soon afterwards moved. By 1839, Morgan Dryden wed Sarah McKnight in Coles, Illinois, and the 1860 census shows the family living in Platte, Buchanan County, Missouri.

Morgan and Sarah Dryden had many children (records differ between whether they had six or eight children) together, providing half-siblings for John. There seems to have been a falling out between John and his father over Sarah, however, and by the time his journals begin in 1856, John is living in Metz, Vernon County, Missouri. John does continue to exchange letters with his father and some of his half-siblings, especially Clay, despite tensions.

On April 6, 1857, John marries Louisa Meek who was born in Indiana in 1838. The couple had a number of children, many stillborn, but three children lived to maturity: Elizabeth (b. 1863), Nannie L. (b. 1871), and Pearl A. (b. 1876). The family lived in Vernon County, Missouri, where John farmed his own land and cut rail ties seasonally. In the early 1870s, John Dryden was elected to serve as justice of the peace, and did so out of Nevada City, Missouri.

John Dryden passed away on December 24, 1890, in Metz, Missouri. His wife preceded him in death on January 18, 1882, along with nine of their children. The diaries offer insight into the hardships of nineteenth century rural living and the frequent occurrence of death in infants and children.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Dryden Diaries include four volumes with years clearly indicated and page numbers provided. Two of the volumes, journals three and four, are marked as such; the remaining two volumes have been cataloged as volume [two] and [five] based upon the dated entries. Volume 1 is presumed missing.

Volume [2] contains a description of John G. Dryden's life between the years 1856 and 1872, and documents his opinions regarding the years prior to the Civil War

and the politics surrounding the conflict, including John's thoughts on loyalty to government and the issue of slavery. The entries within the diary also touch upon some instances wherein John's home was set upon by bushwhackers and time he spent living in Kansas.

John Dryden's travels in South America, including a quite detailed description of how far and how quickly the journey was traveled, can also be found within the journal. John also copied two letters he had written to family members, with some added exposition, that pertained to the discussion of religion (mostly Methodist/Christian discussions) within the region.

In **Volume 3** Dryden writes at length about farming, the weather, and the various illnesses in the family. He also mentions the destruction caused by the grasshopper plague, matters of the school in his district, and the 1876 elections.

Dryden writes about his work as the justice of the peace, events surrounding his family, the weather, and farming in **Volume 4**. There are several passages where he talks about religion, specifically the Campbellites, Methodists, and Baptists. He also mentions the death of President Garfield and periodically laments that he is getting older.

In **Volume [5]**, Dryden describes in great detail the death of his wife, which occurred January 18, 1882. He uses this diary to describe his feelings of loss and loneliness and expresses his many opinions on religion. He continues to write about the day to day chores of farming. Of interest is his entry regarding the assassination of Jesse James.

FOLDER LIST

v. 2	17 August 1856 – 1 February 1872
v. 3	1 January 1875 – 28 December 1878
v. 4	1 January 1879 – 26 December 1881
v. 5	1 January 1882 – 1 May 1883

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