

Country teen, 1905-1906

Day diary reveals no time for dawdling

By June W. Kennedy

The following is an excerpt from the diary of May E. Day (1890-1973), the granddaughter of Emma & Warren Day, covering two of her teen years. She went on to serve as librarian of the J.V. Fletcher Library for 42 years, and lived at the J. Warren Day Homestead on Cold Spring Road:

D iary of July 1905 — Uncle A. got a phonograph & we heard it through the telephone. I had to build the fire. Had potatoes & codfish for breakfast again. Papa got up at quarter past four to get in the hay. I had to tramp the hay and then I went over to Graniteville with team for Uncle Arthur to get some wood in. I did not wear a hat either time and I got sun burned. Half a pail of cream fell over in the ice-chest. Had Jell-o ice cream for breakfast. Good.

Put the beans to soak this morning. I had to bake this afternoon because I forgot to make the batter yesterday. Grandma had to mould the white bread because I cut my finger when I was gettin the pork for the beans. Got some hay in from the further sheep-pasture in the dump cart. In the evening Grandma & I went for a ride, stopped at library. Otis went to church to pump the organ. Cooked the ice cream for breakfast tomorrow. Cooked potatoes for the pigs. I churned after. I got 5 lbs. 12 oz. — it was soft as putty. I put it down cellar for the night.

D iary of Dec. 1905 — Hung up my stocking last night. Got half a dozen handkerchiefs from Grandma, penwiper from Addie, collar from Mamma. Papa gave me 10¢, orange, dates, chocolates peanuts and candy in my stocking. Went to the Christmas tree in town in the evening. Mrs. Osgood gave each in her class a box of writing paper. I have plenty of that already.

D iary of Feb. 1906 — There is a musical at the hall. It is in the lecture course. I liked all but one part. It was a scene between a man & his wife.

D iary of August 1906 — After supper, went in sitting room & played string tricks. Had a nice time. Otis showed his coin trick ... Addie played paper dolls ... stuck cloves in apples ... twins trying to make small kites.

Got some fish & made guess cake, did the dishes, swept all three rooms, put some apple juice to straining, filled the lamps, gathered the sleeves of night dress, put 2 patches on my apron, ripped the sleeves of white waist. Got dinner — Mamma got 14 yds. of linen, 6½ cts./ yd. and I am going to have a dress of it. Stopped at Aunt M., held the baby. When Uncle Arthur got there he had a live lobster. They cooked the lobster; he turned from green to red. They took the shell off. It was good.

D iary of September 1906 — It's Sat. Got up between 6:15 & 6:30 — carried Grandma to Pyne Ridge. She is going to South Berlin. Walked the horse home. Set the table ... Sweet potatoes for breakfast. Went outdoors, ate some pears & read before Papa got home. Did the dishes, made my bed, dusted out front of my desk, made a guess cake, got 28 ears of corn & husked it for dinner. Boys got wood in forenoon. Otis went to Willow Station with pigeons & Albert to play ball but fellows didn't come so he came home. Swept sitting-room & kitchen. Mamma's making pickles. Addie picked some grapes and pears. Changed my dress, read some & stitched 2 tucks in skirt, binding on & hem in. Studied some. Cut some corn off for supper. Milk toast also. Addie carried milk to Uncle A's, no one at home.

Out riding, stopped here & I have them some stockings Grandma knit. Studied French

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May Day

in evening. Had a bath. Went to bed 9:15. Addie swept our room today.

This morning I got a chain letter. It said to copy the prayer & send it to 9 persons beginning the day I got it. If I did I would have great joy on the 9th day ... if I didn't something terrible would happen to me. One person met with an accident who didn't do it. At Holy Feast in Jerusalem it was said that those who did it would be saved from any calamity. Mamma showed it to Mr. Anderson. He said it was a fraud. He would answer for anything happening to me. The letter came from Lower South Hampton where Aunt Lizzie lives. I am not going to answer it. Went to bed 10:15.

June Kennedy is a Westford resident and author of "Westford Recollections", a collection of historical vignettes and photos. Series.)