

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas Gardner Gayley was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 31, 1832. He entered the freshman class of Lafayette College in the fall of 1850, and continued with his studies until his graduation in the summer of 1853. He was a member of the Franklin Literary Society. While he was a student at Lafayette College, Gayley's father, Rev. Samuel M. Gayley, was a member of the Board of Trustees. Thomas' cousin, Samuel Rankin Gayley, was also a member of the class of 1853. Upon graduation, he became a teacher and later a real estate agent. He died in Philadelphia on April 21, 1907.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of a two-volume diary (1 box, .2 linear feet) kept by Thomas Gardner Gayley during his time as a student at Lafayette College. The diary's volumes were originally bound, but over the course of time the binding has deteriorated, leaving only the front and back cover as well as the leaves. Several pages from this diary are missing, and there are also fragments and unpaginated leaves at the end of the collection. A photocopy of the diary is also included. The diary was presented to Lafayette College by David B. Skillman '13 in January 1965. Thomas Gardner Gayley was his great uncle.

In the first volume of the diary, beginning November 6, 1850, Gayley describes his daily activities as a student, including his recitations and the sermons of the various church services he attended. Gayley was an avid churchgoer, most likely due to his father's great involvement within the church. Gayley recounts the weekly services at several churches in the greater Easton area (as well as in Philadelphia, PA and Wilmington, DE when he traveled home or to visit family). He mentions classes with Professors McCartney, Coffin, McLean, Burroughs, Alden, and Green. In addition, he often discusses the weather and the letters and news from home which he received.

By October 30, 1851, Gayley considered his conduct as a student so poor that he contemplated leaving Lafayette College. However, he never formally dropped out, and continued on until graduation. Gayley discusses various activities for students, including time spent downtown and courting women. He describes many of the important events happening in Easton during this time, which were indicative of the technological progress of the town, including the addition of steamboats and railroads. He also describes a fire in Easton on February 23, 1853.

The second volume recounts the last few months of Gayley's career at Lafayette. He begins this volume by discussing how he began a diary in the first place, and how it has affected him:

...I took but very little interest in writing a diary but since I have made it a part of my everyday business it seemed pleasant for me to record the actions of the day. Sometimes, when I feel very much in the humor of writing, I feel as if I must write something merely for the purpose of writing. I have exercised my thinking faculties in vain. I hope I may

**GAYLEY, THOMAS GARDNER
DIARY, 1850-53**

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continue writing this till I can write no more. It may afford me pleasure at some future time to peruse the pages already written, at least I hope so. (May 6, 1853)

Gayley continues recounting his daily activities, including his commencement exercises, and writing in his diary until about a week and a half after graduation, after which there are no more leaves in the collection.

INVENTORY

Volume I: November 6, 1850—May 4, 1853

Volume II: May 6, 1853—June 29, 1853

Photocopy of the diaries