Guide to the Danforth-Huntington Family Diaries
Acc. #2001.79

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Danforth & Huntington family diaries. 2
Collection Summary

Title: Danforth and Huntington family diaries

Creator: Huntington, Frances Wright; Huntington, Jeannette; Danforth, Mary Jane

Dates: 1864 - 1926

Extent: 24 bound volumes

Language: English

Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Abstract: This collection consists of the diaries written by Frances Huntington, Mary Jane Danforth, and Jeannette Huntington, three generations of upper class women from Rochester, New York. The materials date between 1864 and 1926. The materials consist of diaries written by all three women.
Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

The collection was donated by Margaret Schmitt MacNab to the RMSC Museum & Science Center in December 2001, accession # 2001.79.

Custodial History:

The collection was acquired by Margaret Schmitt MacNab at an auction around 1955. The auction was held at the Danforth residence, located at 200 West Avenue, Rochester, New York, 14611. The home was donated to the City of Rochester in 1945 by Edwine Blake Danforth.

A local Rochester historian, MacNab kept the collection until 2001 when she retired and moved to Venice, Florida. Over the years, MacNab was responsible for creating legible typescripts of most of the diaries.

Recognizing the significance it had to early Rochester history, MacNab wished to keep the collection in Rochester.

Preferred Citation:

Danforth and Huntington family diaries, [Diary #:Page #]. RMSC Museum & Science Center, Rochester, NY.
Restrictions

Conditions Governing Use:

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Conditions Governing Access:

Some original diaries are not available due to fragility. Use transcribed copies. Please ask Archivist for information on accessing the diaries.
Biographical Note

Mrs. Frances “Fanny” Wright Danforth Huntington was born on March 1, 1847 in Rochester, New York and died on February 18, 1920. She belonged to a socially prominent family during the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. She is the author of a series of diaries that offer insight into the luxurious lifestyle of a privileged socialite from early Rochester history.

Her father was a wealthy Rochester lawyer and New York State politician originally from Boston. George Franklin Danforth (July 5, 1819–Sept. 25, 1899) was responsible for affording Fanny the wealthy lifestyle that she writes about in her diaries. He would become one of Rochester’s most respected lawyers and would eventually enter into politics as an Associate Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals. He is also notable for having presided over a public meeting in Rochester in January 1894 where Susan B. Anthony spoke as part of her New York State campaign trail advocating women’s right to vote.2

Her mother, Frances Jeannette Wright (birth date unknown–January 25, 1895), was from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Frances Wright was a benevolent woman involved with several charities and became the leader of the State Industrial School in Rochester during the latter half of the 1800s until her death. She met George F. Danforth at a literary club meeting in 1843 and they were married on April 27, 1846.3 Shortly after, Fanny was born. Fanny also had a younger brother named Henry “Harry” Gold Danforth (June 14, 1854–April 8, 1918), and a younger sister named Jessie Appleton Danforth (April 7, 1861–circa 1937).

At the age of 17, Fanny Danforth began to write in a journal and would continue to write for 54 years. Her early diaries were written at a time when she and her friends were coming of age and were being approached by possible suitors. At this time, she was consumed by social engagements. Her diaries are set in Rochester, New York and mention several local acquaintances, such as the Sibleys, the Powers, the Crittendens, the Ellwangers, and the Martindales.

In October 1867, at the age of 20, a young man named Henry Fitch Huntington, born in Carlisle4, New York, expressed his love to Fanny. Fanny and Henry married on April 27, 1870. They had three children: Jeannette Wadsworth Huntington, George Danforth Huntington, and Elizabeth Partridge Huntington.

Jeannette Huntington (July 12, 1871–August 17, 1962), the eldest daughter of Fanny, began writing her own diaries at the age of 21. She continued to shed light on the social activity of Rochester’s affluent society during the late 1890s and early 1900s. She never married.

Frequent overseas pleasure trips also took up a significant portion of their time. At the age of 30, Jeannette, with

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her sister Elizabeth and her mother Fanny, toured Europe together on an excursion\(^5\) experiencing all that European culture had to offer women of wealth. Most of the later diaries of Jeannette and Fanny Huntington contain descriptions depicting what it was like to travel as a first class citizen.

Another generation of Danforth women also enjoyed traveling. Mary Jane Danforth (circa 1823– March 27, 1875), aunt to Fanny Huntington, enjoyed a trip to Europe and documented it in a travel diary dating from September 1873 to May 1874. Her name before marriage was Mary Jane Wellington. Mary Jane had married into the Danforth family in April 1845 as the wife of James Hutchins Danforth, who was the older brother of George F. Danforth. Fanny Huntington, in particular, had a very close relationship with her aunt Mary and mentions her several times in her diaries. Mary died shortly after her trip in 1875, around the age of 52.

Fanny Huntington, Jeannette Huntington, and Mary Danforth are the three principal authors of the manuscript diaries in the Danforth and Huntington family diaries. The collection of their personal writings offer a unique look into the social habits of upper class women during the development of the city of Rochester, New York, from the 1860s to the early 1900s.

Scope & Content

The Danforth-Huntington Collection contains manuscripts, typescripts, and ephemera.

The collection is largely composed of twenty-four hand-written, manuscript diaries that were mostly written by three generations of Danforth women beginning in 1864 and concluding in 1926. Fanny Danforth was the main author, having written seventeen of the twenty-four diaries. Her daughter, Jeannette Huntington, wrote five, and her aunt, Mary Danforth, wrote one. The manuscripts include personal writings and reflections about daily life.

George Franklin Danforth, father of Fanny, wrote one diary in the collection. The contents are autobiographical and mention where he was educated and who his family members are. Although he did not write more than nine pages worth of material, his writings provide detailed information about his family composition and his early life.

Of the twenty-four manuscript diaries, there are thirteen companion typescripts. The content of the typescripts is the same as the content in the hand-written manuscript diaries. The typescripts do not differ from the original manuscripts, aside from occasional typographical errors. Of the thirteen typescripts, twelve of them duplicate the first twelve diaries written by Fanny. The last of the typescripts duplicates the second diary authored by Jeannette.

Ephemera in the Danforth-Huntington Collection include various paper memorabilia as well as books and hand-written recipe books that belonged to the Danfords. Some of the ephemera include programs from charity or theatrical events, telegrams, passenger lists from voyages overseas, paper souvenirs from travels abroad, postcards, newspaper clippings, printed obituaries, and poems.

The writing style of Fanny Danforth is brisk. Her entries are mainly composed of jottings that do not provide much introspection. Her entries act like an inventory or list of daily activities. The reader is told that an event has happened, but not how the author feels about the event. On the other hand, Jeannette Huntington and Mary Jane Danforth both write with more introspection and are more attentive to how events affect them.
Arrangement

This collection consists of 24 bound volumes.

Related Materials

The Ellwanger and Selden family papers [acc.2018.23] are also in the archives, and include some of the Danforth–Huntington social friends.

Subject Headings

Danforth, Mary Jane
Huntington, Frances
Huntington, Jeannette
Rich people
Rochester (N.Y.)—Social life and customs
Travel
Victorian era
Women—New York (State)—Rochester—Social conditions
Women—United States—Social conditions

Bibliography

“Danforth Estate Given for City Park,” Times-Union (Rochester, NY), June 27 1945.


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Appendix A: Diary Summaries
These summaries are short descriptions that offer a general idea about the content within each diary. The following describes the first nineteen of the twenty-four diaries.

**Diary Number: 1**  
**Author:** Frances “Fanny” Wright Danforth  
**Date:** December 3, 1864–January 12, 1866  
**Summary:** This diary begins when Fanny is 17 and ends when she is 18. She is involved with the household preparations for Christmas and New Years celebrations at the Danforth residence in Rochester. She visits her uncle Isaac Warren and aunt Mary Danforth in Cambridge, Massachusetts for four months in 1865. In September 1865, Fanny crosses the Atlantic Ocean by ship to Paris with a friend for pleasure.

**Diary Number: 2**  
**Author:** Frances “Fanny” Wright Danforth  
**Date:** September 23, 1866–May 1, 1867  
**Summary:** This diary begins when Fanny is 19 and ends when she is 20. She is in Rochester where the winter weather is bitterly cold and miserable. The social season is in full swing with many parties and house calls. Visitation to several Rochester families, such as those of Mrs. Eastman, Mrs. Strong, the Sibley’s, the Whitney’s, and the Martindale’s are mentioned. Many parties are attended with Mary, Fanny’s cousin, who comes to visit Fanny from Cambridge in December and stays for many months. Two young men, Mr. Abbott and Mr. Huntington (Fanny’s soon-to-be fiancée) pursue them.

**Diary Number: 3**  
**Author:** Frances “Fanny” Wright Danforth  
**Date:** May 2, 1867–February 1, 1868  
**Summary:** This diary takes place when Fanny is 20 years old. The first half of the journal depicts Fanny’s three-month visit to Cambridge to visit her cousin Mary. While there, she attends church, theatrical plays, baseball games, croquet matches, carriage rides, parties, and other engagements. She and Mary entertain several callers throughout. The second half of the journal is when Fanny is back in Rochester. Most of her friends and cousins are getting engaged and married. Fanny and Mr. Henry Huntington’s relationship grows until he finally expresses his love to her. They make an arrangement to be engaged when Fanny turns 21.

**Diary Number: 4**  
**Author:** Frances “Fanny” Wright Danforth  
**Date:** February 2, 1868–November 8, 1868  
**Summary:** This diary begins when Fanny is 20 years old and ends when she is 21. She becomes officially engaged to Henry Huntington on her 21st birthday in March, 1868. Her cousin Mary is visiting Rochester and gets a marriage proposal from a Mr. Morris Longstreth, which she accepts. Her other cousin Lizzie weds a Mr. Schoby. Amidst household chores and running errands, Fanny receives regular visits from Henry Huntington. Her Aunt Mary comes and visits for the summer. Before the year is over, Fanny takes two separate trips to Niagara, a trip to Buffalo, and trip to the Adirondacks.

**Diary Number: 5**  
**Author:** Frances “Fanny” Wright Danforth  
**Date:** November 9, 1868–September 13, 1869
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 21 years old and ends when she is 22. She is in Rochester. Being engaged, Fanny attends fewer parties in the winter social season. She goes downtown and gets sick, preventing her from going outside of the house for several days. When is well enough to run errands, she often goes to downtown Rochester to Miss Shears, for example, to order dresses. She attends lectures by abolitionist and women’s rights activist Anna Dickinson and minister Robert Collyer. She goes to Buffalo for a few days in February to see her friend Annie Putnam. Henry Huntington takes a trip down to Washington, D.C. in March where he attends President Grant’s inauguration. Fanny’s cousin Lizzie dies of heart disease and leaves behind her husband Mr. Schoby.

Diary Number: 6
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington
Date: December 4, 1869–September 23, 1870 (Nearly 2 month gap from March 25, 1870-May 5, 1870)
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 22 years old and ends when she is 23. Fanny is in Rochester. She caters to her father’s club meeting where lawyers from Albany and New York City attend. She visits Cambridge to go shopping before her wedding. She gets married to Henry Huntington on April 27, 1870 during the gap in entries. She takes trips to Niagara and Buffalo. Fanny takes a trip to Lewes, Delaware in August 1870 with her family and describes going to the ocean for the first time.

Diary Number: 7
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington
Date: October 10, 1870–September 26, 1878
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 23 years old and ends when she is 31. Fanny gives birth to her three children during this period: daughter Jeannette on July 12, 1871; son George on July 11, 1874; and daughter Elizabeth on June 18, 1876. On August 18, Fanny mentions that her Aunt Mary has accepted an invitation to travel to Europe in the winter of 1873.

Diary Number: 8
Author: Mary Jane Danforth
Date: September 6, 1873–May 30, 1874
Summary: This diary takes place when Mary is approximately 50 years old. This journal documents Mary’s winter excursion to Europe. She had been offered the chance to go, all expenses paid, by her friend, Mrs. Farwell. Mary begins her trip by boarding a steamship from New York City to Paris. Not long after taking off, Mary’s ship is in a collision with a smaller ship carrying cabbages, but it is soon mended. Mary describes her eating and leisure routines on the ship. Mary arrives in France where she meets up with Mrs. Farwell. The two of them travel together and sightsee extensively, though Mrs. Farwell is ill much of the time. Their trip begins with seeing French towns, but then predominantly becomes an extensive tour around Germany. She also visits Austria and Prague in between, and ends the journal with her arrival in Brussels, Belgium. Observations of activities and visits to hotels, museums, churches, gardens, and other sightseeing destinations populate her journal.

Diary Number: 9
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington
Date: December 13, 1878–May 7, 1881
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 31 years old and ends when she is 34. This journal is mainly concerned with family life in Rochester. Fanny notes the guest list of 800 people for the celebration of her father’s, George F. Danforth’s, election as Associate Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals in January of 1879. He would take this position and continue there for 11 years. Fanny’s brother, Harry, in his mid 20’s, and her sister, Jessie, in her late teens, go to many parties. Fanny dines with her mother often and becomes very close to her as her mother becomes ill with a bad knee and has to have “electrical treatments.” Fanny, in bad health herself, frequently requests house calls by Dr. Ely. Fanny’s marriage is distanced by Henry’s frequent absence and his work-related problems at the bank. Fanny oversees the lessons of her children. The telephone is installed in her home for the first time around December 13, 1879. New plumbing is also being installed. Fanny’s mother-in-law, Mrs. Huntington, dies on February 23, 1881 and a funeral is held at Fanny’s home shortly after.

Diary Number: 10  
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington  
Date: May 8, 1881–December 4, 1884  
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 34 years old and ends when she is 37. Fanny is frustrated over not being able to find a suitable cook. She takes a cooking class. Henry, Fanny’s husband, goes to England for a month. He is not mentioned very much throughout the diary. Fanny’s children often become ill. Fanny herself experiences worsening health with vomiting, fainting, and a bad tooth. Fanny goes on trips by train to Saratoga, Avon, Hornellsville, and New York City, NY, as well as Boston, MA, and Bar Harbor, ME, in 1881 and 1882. President Garfield is shot on July 2, 1881, but Fanny does not elaborate on the event. Fanny organizes the wedding for her husband’s relative, Nellie Huntington, in April 1882. Fanny visits Nellie in January, 1883 and is present for the birth of Nellie’s daughter, whose full name becomes “Fanny Huntington Tower” in honor of Fanny. Fanny writes few entries, shorter in length, in 1884.

Diary Number: 11  
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington  
Date: December 25, 1884–February 20, 1890  
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 37 years old and ends when she is 42. Fanny’s mother passes away January 25, 1885. At this point, Fanny stops writing for a period of six months. It isn’t until July 1885 when Fanny begins writing again. She embarks on a vacation to Boston and Cape Cod in July 1885. Fanny goes on a short trip to Albany and New York City in late January 1886. Fanny returns to Rochester in early February, when she finally stops wearing her black veil in church. Her children Jeannette, George and Elizabeth all approach tween and teen ages. In 1887, Fanny goes on trips, bouncing around all over New Hampshire and New York State. Fanny becomes actively involved in several organizations in Rochester such as the Reading Club, City Hospital Board, Hospital Sewing Society, French Club, Industrial School meetings, and the Women’s Ethical Club. Henry, Fanny’s husband, is increasingly and suspiciously gone some evenings. This journal is the first where Edwine Blake, the future wife of Fanny’s brother, Harry, is mentioned.

Diary Number: 12  
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington  
Date: March 7, 1890–October 12, 1892  
Summary: This diary begins right before Fanny’s 43rd birthday and ends when Fanny is 45 years old. Under increasingly pressing circumstances of debt, Fanny’s husband Henry finally resigns from his position at a bank in April 1890. He begins work immediately at the Rochester and Charlotte Iron Company. In November 1890,
Fanny's sister Jessie gets married to Charles Edmund Miller. Fanny is heavily involved in meetings at the Hospital and Industrial School. Jeannette is the ages of 19, 20, and 21 during this time. Fanny devotes herself to a fashionable “coming out” reception for 20-year-old Jeannette in January 1892. Fanny takes short trips in the summer of 1892 to Canandaigua, Buffalo, and Southampton.

Diary Number: 13
Author: Jeannette Wadsworth Huntington
Date: October 8, 1892–February 4, 1896
Summary: This diary begins when Jeannette is 21 years old and ends when she is 24. Like her mother at that age, Jeannette is constantly involved with social engagements. These engagements include going to parties, luncheons, theatrical plays and musicals, lectures, playing croquet, and much more. Jeannette played The Red Queen in an 1895 production of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Jeannette describes going to the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893 by way of Buffalo and Cleveland. Jeannette gets word that her cousin Bessie has drowned in the sinking of the S.S. Elbe by collision with another steamer, called Crathie, in January 1895 in the North Sea.

Diary Number: 14
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington
Date: June 26, 1893–September 25, 1899
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 46 years old and ends when she is 52. Her diary overlaps by 3 years with Jeannette’s first diary (Diary Number 13). Consequently, Fanny’s diary repeats some of the same events seen in Jeannette’s first diary, such as the trip to the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 and Cousin Bessie’s death. Jeannette becomes seriously ill, but recovers. Although Henry’s new job does not pay as well, Fanny and her children continue to take trips to Buffalo, Lake Keuka, New York City, Philadelphia, Southampton, Boston, and more. Fanny gets an urgent feeling to see her father right before hearing the news that her father, George F. Danforth, has died in New York City while arguing a case in court on September 25, 1899. Her diary ends there, leaving no record of the funeral arrangements for her father or for her uncle Isaac Warren Danforth, who passed away two months later on November 29, 1899.

Diary Number: 15
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington
Date: July 13, 1900–October 14, 1901
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 53 and ends when she is 54 years old. When Fanny begins, it has been roughly 8 months since her father passed away. Her husband Henry died less than a month before she begins this diary, on June 25, 1900. Fanny begins this diary with descriptions of visiting New Hampshire. Then Fanny and her two daughters, Jeannette and Elizabeth, go on a trip to Europe in late January 1901 that continues until October 1901. They leave from New York City by the steamship S.S. Hohenzollern to the Strait of Gibraltar and finally landing in Naples, Italy. The rest of Fanny’s diary notes her visits in the cities in Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, France, and England. Fanny’s last entries describe the beginning of her voyage back to the U.S. on the S.S. Minnehaha in October, 1901.

Diary Number: 16
Author: Jeannette Wadsworth Huntington
Date: January 11, 1901–September 22, 1901
Summary: This diary begins when Jeannette is 30 years old and ends when she is 31. This diary overlaps in time with Fanny's diary (Dairy Number 15) about the same trip to Europe. However, Jeannette's diary is more introspective and more interesting to read in its reports of the trip. It begins a week before Jeannette, her mother, and her sister, are to set sail over the Atlantic. The descriptions of the sea voyage, operas, concerts, colleges, museums, libraries, churches, hotels, river rides, and leisurely walks all show how charmed Jeannette was by the experience. Her diary ends in London, only a few weeks before she boards the S.S. Minnehaha to return to the United States.

Diary Number: 17
Author: Frances “Fanny” Danforth Huntington
Date: November 11, 1902–September 13, 1903
Summary: This diary begins when Fanny is 55 years old and ends when she is 56. In this journal, Fanny makes comments about trips she takes to Boston, several cities in Canada, Buffalo, and finally New York City. From there, she leaves on the S.S. Minneapolis on a trip to Europe with her daughters. They arrive in London, proceeding on to visit Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and France. Throughout her stays, she mentions the their activities abroad, such as see churches, shop, take walks, go to museums and exhibitions, and take train rides. The journal ends abruptly, without explanation, when Fanny is in the south of France in 1903.

Diary Number: 18
Author: Jeannette Wadsworth Huntington
Date: July 17, 1905–December 31, 1909
Summary: This diary begins when Jeannette is 33 years old and ends when she is 37. Jeannette wrote in a journal that was preformatted as “A Line A Day” book that allows less space to write. Thus, Jeannette’s entries are more condensed in this dairy than in her previous diaries. Jeannette begins her diary in Rochester in July 1905 describing the intense heat and lazy summer activities like horseback riding, rowing, picnicking, bowling, hiking, playing tennis, attending church, walking, and sitting on her house’s piazza in the evenings. A “Mr. Strayer” and “Ernest” are usual visitors to dinner and are frequent traveling companions. In September 1905, Jeannette goes on a short trip to Boston. Thanksgiving is taken at her Uncle Harry’s home in 1905. In 1906, Jeannette’s entries are brief and mostly talk about the weather, who visited her, and who dined with her. In late May and June of 1906, Jeannette embarks on a wagon trip to Yellowstone National Park, CA and passes through Chicago, IL, Minneapolis, MN, Badlands National Park, SD, Lower Geyser Basin, WY, and Old Faithful, WY. Jeannette’s Uncle Charles (married to Jessie Appleton Danforth) dies on December 20, 1906, but Jeannette does not attend his funeral. In 1907, Jeannette goes on a trip to England and Scotland with her mother, Fanny, and sister, Elizabeth, and Ernest. Jeannette’s sister, Elizabeth, gets engaged to Laurence de Kalisch Stephens in March and gets married on July 20, 1909.

Diary Number: 19
Author: Jeannette Wadsworth Huntington
Date: January 1, 1910–August 15, 1914
Summary: This diary begins when Jeannette is 38 years old and ends when she is 43. Home life in Rochester is written about briefly. In contrast, her travel abroad to the Middle East is discussed in greater detail. Jeannette begins her diary with a trip to Montreal to visit her sister Elizabeth. Elizabeth has two children in this dairy, first
a son born on June 14, 1912, and then a daughter born on August 9, 1913. On April 15, 1912, Jeannette mentions the sinking of the Titanic and the drowning of 1,300 people. In January 1913, Jeannette and her mother travel to Egypt, along with other regions in the Middle East, where she takes in the sights and sees the cities. While abroad in March 1913, Jeannette becomes very ill with typhoid fever and gets down to 92 pounds in weight. She recovers slowly and eventually carries on her trip. She becomes acquainted with famed King Tutankhamen tomb discoverer, Mr. Howard Carter, while abroad. Jeannette then passes through Italy, Spain, and England before leaving for home on the S.S. Minnewaska in June of 1913. Although there aren’t many entries in the year 1914, Jeannette finishes her diary by mentioning the opening of the Panama Canal in August 1914.