

Elizabeth Johnson Wells Diaries

Overview of the Collection

Repository: South County History Center 2636 Kingstown Road Kingston, Rhode Island 02881
Tel: 401.783.1328, website: southcountyhistorycenter.org

Title: Elizabeth Johnson Wells Diaries

Dates: 1921-1969

Media: Diaries, Newspaper Clippings, Photographic Prints

Quantity: 2 Box, 1 linear foot

Identification: 2023.507.0001

Language: English

Biographical Note

Elizabeth Johnson Wells (1890-1982) was a member of several notable southern Rhode Island families, including the Perry, Hazard, Potter, and Wells families. She was born in Kingston, Rhode Island, to Sarah Emily *Perry* Wells (1849-1923) and her husband Herbert Johnson Wells (1850-1933), president of the Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company. The last of six children, her siblings were Grace Perry Wells (1879–1916), Herbert Comstock Wells (1880-1964), Emily Potter *Wells* Coleman (1882–1932), Thomas Perry Wells (1884–1935), and John Hazard Wells (1885–1968). Upon the death of her sister Grace, Elizabeth appears to have assumed responsibility for raising her nephew, Wells Coleman.

Elizabeth Wells graduated from Wells College in New York in 1915 and returned to her hometown. She was involved in many aspects of community life in the village of Kingston. She performed over 20 years of service to the Girls Scouts in her life and in 1929 was elected as the first Scout Commissioner. She was also a member of the Kingston Musical Club and the Woman's Community Guild. She attended the Kingston Congregational Church regularly. She taught Sunday School, sang in the church choir, and served on various committees. In 1950 she was elected to be the 143rd President of the Rhode Island Congregational Congress, the first woman to ever serve in this role.

Scope and Content

The Elizabeth Johnson Wells Diaries consists of ten diaries spanning 1921 to 1969, with the exception of 1922 to 1924. The majority of the entries document daily life in the village of Kingston. Wells often described the weather, her daily errands, and with whom she visited. She frequently mentions members of the Beckett, Coleman, Comstock, Kinney, and Wells families along with other Kingston residents. Significant events described in the diaries include the deaths of her family members. Wells also describes the Hurricane of 1938 and its aftermath, as well as her travels to Florida.

Diary 3 contained a note to Wells from her sister Emily written shortly before her death. Other diaries also contained photographs, newspaper clippings, and various ephemera. These materials have been removed from the diaries and organized into separate folders. Individuals in the photographs include Emily Potter Wells, Harris S. Wells, Herbert Johnson Wells, Beth Pullen, Ethel Wells, Sally Hill, Carl

Stearns, Donald Sterns, and Elizabeth Johnson Wells. Many of the newspaper clippings relate to the Kingston Congregational Church, the village of Kingston, and Wells's relatives.

Administrative Information

Access: Any qualified person doing personal or scholarly research is permitted to utilize materials in the South County History Center collections.

Preferred Citation: Elizabeth Johnson Wells Diaries, South County History Center

Provenance: Undocumented, but believed to have been donated to Pettaquamscutt Historical Society (precursor to the South County History Center) by Elizabeth Johnson Wells, who was a supporter of the Society.

Processed by: Caleb Goodhouse, with the generous support of Lauri Arruda.

Subject Terms

South Kingstown (R.I.: Town) – History; Kingston (R.I.: Town) -- History; South Kingstown (R.I.: Town) – History -- 20th Century

People

Coleman, Wells, 1914-1985

Wells, Elizabeth Johnson, 1890-1982

Wells, Emily Potter, 1882-1932

Wells, Grace Perry, 1879 – 1916

Wells, Herbert Johnson, 1850 – 1933

Wells, John Hazard, 1885 – 1968

Wells, Sarah Emily Perry, 1849 – 1923

Wells, Thomas Perry, 1884 – 1935

Related Materials

Researchers interested in this collection may also wish to consult the following sources in the South County History Center holdings:

Archival Collection – Family Name Wells

Photograph Collection – Family Name Wells

Photograph Collection – Kingston Village

Contents Listing

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	-	Diary 1	1921
1	-	Diary 2	1925 – 1929
1	-	Diary 3	1930 – 1934
1	-	Diary 4	1935 – 1939
1	-	Diary 5	1940 – 1944
1	-	Diary 6	1945 – 1949
1	-	Diary 7	1950 – 1954
1	-	Diary 8	1955 – 1959
1	-	Diary 9	1960 – 1964
1	-	Diary 10	1965 – 1969
2	1	Photographs	1930 – 1944
2	2	Ephemera and Newspaper Clippings, Diary 1	1921
2	3	Ephemera and Newspaper Clippings, Diaries 2 – 5	1925 – 1944
2	4	Ephemera and Newspaper Clippings, Diaries 6 – 8	1945 – 1959
2	5	Ephemera and Newspaper Clippings, Diaries 9 – 10	1960 – 1969
2	6	Note From Emily Potter Wells	1932