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John Bradford Diaries¹

US-HHS-2005-001

Hardwick Historical Society
47 Depot Street, PO Box 177
Hardwick, Vt. 05843

Collection Title: John Bradford Diaries

Collection Dates: 1905-1962 (bulk 1938-1962)

Collection Size: 15 volumes

Name of Creator: John Bradford

Abstract: A collection of diaries kept over the course of the first half of the 20th century by a man who worked in the granite industry until it dried up. For a number of years he worked at a lot of jobs, then he eventually became the janitor at the local high school.

Preferred citation: John Bradford Diaries. Hardwick Historical Society, Hardwick, Vt. 05843

Biography: John J. Bradford was born in Cabot in 1874. His family moved to Walden in 1879. In 1892 he went to work for G.A. Badger, who had an ice cutting and delivery business in Mackville, and worked for him off and on for the next six years.

Bradford worked as a granite cutter and represented the union at a meeting in Montpelier in 1912. Hardwick's granite industry fell off greatly at the start of World War I, and Bradford had to find other work. He took a logging job for Haskell Balch in November 1917, and in January 1918 worked in some undefined capacity for Arthur Waterman. In February 1918 he worked in a bobbin factory, and by April he worked in a quarry on Buffalo Mountain. In 1920, he took a job at John Walsh's quarry on Buffalo Mountain.

In 1920, he bought a homestead next to his own in Mackville. In 1921, he sold the house and retained 3 acres for his own use. In 1917, he had had to sell some cows because he could not find pasture for them. He immediately put some cows on the new pasture. In April, 1921, he went to work for P.A. Pike. In September, 1922, he was working at the Klondike Quarry. In March, 1923, he went to work for George Bond. In July, 1924, he was seriously injured while tearing down a building when a falling beam hit him. In March, 1926, he went to work for ER Fletcher, in the Village. In April, 1929, he was boarding at Leonard Atkins, in Woodbury.

In December, 1931, he moved his family into the Village for the winter. In January, 1933, the newspaper referred to him as the regular janitor at Hardwick Academy (HA). In May, 1933, he moved from the Pierce Block on Main Street back to his home in Mackville. In January 1935, he and his wife occupied the house of Dr. Crane while Crane spent the winter in Florida. The

¹ For technical details about this collection, see the last page of this document.

Bradford returned to Mackville in May. That became their pattern – winter in the village beginning in November, and the rest of the year in Mackville, beginning in May. In 1938, at the HA&GS annual meeting he was elected truant officer. In 1941, he was a Trustee of the Fairview Cemetery Commission.

Allen Davis, HA Class of '49, remembers that “Bradford did more than sweep the floors and tend the furnace. He was a quiet authority presence around the building, and because his “office” was next to the men’s room, he helped to contain the army of boys who arrived during recess.” He added “I remember was 1946 Red Sox vs Cardinals [World Series] (we were all Red Sox fans). All the games were played during the day. One at a time a group of us would ask permission to go to the men’s room and then gather in Bradford’s room where he had the radio on to the ball game. On one occasion the Principal Chandler Moser joined us for he was a fan too. Bradford would have been 70 years old.”

Bradford was an active member of Modern Woodmen of America, the New England Order of Protection, and on the Commission that oversaw the Fairview Cemetery.

Bradford married Hattie Balch in August, 1901, and they had a daughter, Ada. A devout Baptist, Bradford and his wife held prayer meetings at his home, beginning about 1917 and continuing through the 1930s. In July, 1951, John and Hattie celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. She died in November, 1954; he in 1962.

Scope and Content: The collection consists entirely of diaries in which Bradford recorded the weather, work he did, people who came to visit, the comings and goings of his daughter, etc. Typically he's not emotive, but he's regular in what he reports and that tells a story across time.

System of arrangement: Chronological

Removed from the Collection: Nothing

CONTROLLED HEADINGS²

People and families: John Bradford*; Ada Bradford*; Hattie Balch Bradford*

Geographical names: Hardwick, Vt.– History; Vermont – Social history; Mackville (Vt.)*

Corporate names: Hardwick Academy and Graded School District (Vt.)

Occupations: Stonecutters, Janitors

Genre: Diaries

Topics: Daily Life – Hardwick (Vt.)

SERIES/BOX/FOLDER List

1905, 1938, 1942-1943, 1944, 1947, 1949, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1962 (Mackville)

Ada Bradford, Friendship Birthday Book

2 * indicates this terms does not appear in a Library of Congress or Getty controlled vocabulary

Technical Details

Conditions governing access: Open and available to the public.

Details of physical access: A volunteer will retrieve the parts you want to see

Details of technical access: No issues

Conditions governing reproduction access and use: Subject of copyright laws.

Languages/scripts in the collection: English

Other finding aids: None

Custodial history: Elwyn J. Daniels, Jr., bought the collection at an auction in 2005 and donated it to the HHS.

Immediate source of acquisition: Elwyn J. Daniels, Jr.

Processing Information: Processed by Elizabeth H. Dow following the rules of DACS 2019.03, finishing in December, 2020.

Appraisal/destruction/scheduling information: Nothing scheduled

Accruals: Nothing scheduled

Existence/location of originals: Hardwick Historical Society

Existence/location of copies: None

Related archival materials: Enos Balch Diaries

Publication notes: None

Miscellaneous notes: None