

Sarah Thomson Diary, 1809

In 1939 Tuckerton resident, Eleanor Browning Price, made the following notes concerning Sarah Thomson's journal:

In the fall of 1916 Sarah Thomson's journal was discovered in the house of Miss Georgiana C. Page in Tuckerton, shortly after Miss Georgie's death. Miss Georgie's cousin and heir, Miss Eliza Stewart, came across it tucked away in a cubbyhole, or drawer, of a desk. Miss Stewart let me copy it, but the original diary she took home with her to Des Moines, Iowa. She died in January, 1919, and the secret of the final disposition of the diary seems to have died with her. About five years ago I wrote to her cousins in Des Moines, but they knew nothing of it.

Miss Georgie was the daughter of the Eliza of the diary, who married for her second husband Dr. Thomas Page. "Margrett" B. Tucker married Daniel Budd, of Pemberton. Aaron, whose handsome eyes so disturbed Sarah Thomson's equanimity, became a doctor, married Elizabeth, a granddaughter of Charles Carroll of Carrolton, and lived some time in Paris.

As for the three Thomson's of the Journal, we do not know a thing about them. One gathers from the diary that they lived in Philadelphia.

The "old Josey Ridgeway" mentioned in the diary was my great-great-great uncle, and the young man who was reading the Bible to him was undoubtedly his favorite nephew, and my great-grandfather, Timothy Pharo, Jr., who was born in 1792, and afterwards his bachelor uncle's heir.

Our family tradition has it that, Quaker though he was, Uncle Joseph owned two slaves, so no doubt the old Dinah of the diary was one of them, perhaps freed at the time.

Note: for the convenience of the reader some punctuation has been added and some severely misspelled words corrected

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Sarah Thomson's Diary

Thursday, June 22 - Started for Tuckerton, the weather very damp. Met with a smart Beau in my walk down to the Ferry. He immediately joined and escorted us safe over. We bid him adieu and walked up to the House to take our passage. The stage as they called it had more the appearance of an old Jersey waggon such as they go to market in, but there was no use in complaining. We started, nine passengers in all. The back part of the stage was stuffed full of bags, bandboxes, bags without number. One poor old man about 80 years of age, he poor soul was crammed in among them. To be shure he had a soft seat but the Band Boxes they were flat enough and their contents which were principely Sunday Bonnets for the Tuckerton Bells. Stopped at Haddonfield, saw Mrs. Bolton. Very much pleased with her. She made many inquiries after Mr. West's family. We was very sociable. Dined at Evesham. Pewter plates and wooden spoons. Landlady's father short. Very good peas and pretty good Lamb. Currant Pie, sweet with molasses. Left Mr. Bennet. Got pretty well in the Pines and heavy sand. Caught in a Thunder storm, lightning, one says, "O dear, O my, O I wish I was with the old man among the Band Boxes." The stage leaked, spoiled my pretty Bonnet. Blessed the stage and its proprietors and the old ragged curtains. arrived safe through all our troubles at Quaker Bridge. Had a very good supper, clams in abundance,

good coffee, very good beds, landlady very kind. Charles complained of the rats, said they bit his ear. Could not discover any mark. Must of drempt it. Swears he did not. Started next morning at daylight, very pleasant ride after the rain, the driver polite. He stopped several times to pick us magnolies, water Lily, and we arrived in Tuckerton to dine. Found them all well. Aron's eyes as large as ever. Too large for my comfort some how. Made my mind up not to look at them. Had the misfortune to get opposite to him at table. Change my position. Judge monstrous polite. Susan and Josephine sweet children. Fine weather, fine sperits, fine everything that is fine and clever.

June 23 - Took it out in resting and talking, no mosquitoes, great appetite that day.

June 24 - Take my turn in drumming at the piano. Walk in the evening, very serene. Walk around Hanover Square, very fine weather. The Judges land very highly cultivated.

June 25 - Charles and Aron go a gunning, not much luck. Great fatigue and little game, poor fellows. Had to cream their faces so blistered with the sun. Charles tore a great hole in his back and Sally had to mend it. Had a dance in the evening. Charles and Aron did not come home till 2 oclock, staid out sparking, sad fellows. Mama scolded. Did not mind it.

June 26 - Fine day, took a ride down to the salt works. The Horse very troublesome. Would not go, sulky Devil, however conquered him at last. Had a fine view of the bay. Returning back saw a 4 footed animal sticking in the mud up to his neck. He seemed to sit very composed. He fell through the railing of the Bridge and it was imposible for him to extricate himself without assistance. The alarm was given pretty quick and the poor creature relieved.

June 27 - Very cool. Put on our flanil peticotes. Sewed a little that day. Introduced to some fine girls in the evening. Had a dance. Enjoyed myself very much. Mama and the Judge led down the dance. Aron was my pardoner. He dances very well. Elsa looked

June 28 - Invited to a quilting frolic. 20 round the frame. Looked at them a little while and come home. Went to bed and had a nap. Dreamed of Arons eyes and cryed because I had not them.

Most crazy with the pain in my face, staid out too long in the night air. Dose it up with garlic. Had a fine ride in Judge Crane's carriage and Tandem. Rode up to see Mr. Deacon's country seat. Fine prospect but nothing else to recommend it. Mama taken very ill with the cholic, all very much frightened, hot - - - - - oil, laudanum and much better.

Able to ride out. Must not eat any more radishes. Had a fine walk in the wood, fine teaberry leaves, love them dearly. See a great Black Snake. Got off before we could kill it. Magnolies in abundance, Charles and Aron picked a fine parcel to decorate the chimney.

June 29 - Embarked for the Beach, Judges family, mama, Charles, and myself. Fine breeze, but notwithstanding met with some trouble on our road, such as getting a thump with the car now and then. But low and behold we all got betared. My pretty silk peticote is gone to the shades. Blessed Capt Gale from the bottom of my heart, got safe to the Beach. Found the landlady in the straw, set about to get breakfast. Eliza made the short cake, Margret the coffee. I opened clams and laid the table. Charles and Aron split some wood to make the kittle boil. Made up a very good breakfast, went to take a nap. Dreamed of the Shaddow. Thought we picked L- - - - and John up half drowned on our Beach. Give them some coffee and short cake. Just going to look at the wreech when up comes Mag and wakes me. The Shaddow and all is gone, not a vestage left, not even poor L- - - - . All a dream, blame it, so it was.

June 30 - Very bad back ake. Tryed to clean my peticote. Got the stomach ake, could not do any thing with it. Prepared to take a ride. The Horse got into a mulish fit and the Devil could not move him. 4 at his head and 2 at his tail. Beat, punched, and poaked in every quarter, all would not avail. Give up our ride when low and behold the Judge knocked him down for dead. Did not lay long. Got up pretty quick and

started spanish round Hanover Square and so round about till we was tired.

July 1 - Took a walk in the afternoon, called to see old Dinah. Clever old soul but she did not give us any cherries. Josey was a bed, could not see him, continued our walk. Aron and me lost our company some how another. Obligated to walk home alone. Found my walk very agreeable notwithstanding. Introduced to Dr Garrison. Very tall, fine eyes, commanding figure. No fault excepting his pantaloons being different color and coat tail too short, and looked too much at Margrett. Got jelious. All looked uncommonly handsome that evening. He loves her I do think, but I suspect she dont care much for him. Had the honner of his company to dance.

Very good spring, jumps admirable. Had like to upset Miss Deacon in one of his springs. He lodged with us that night. Snored very well, prevented me from sleeping.

July 2 - Sweet day. All went to meeting, very much pleased with Mr. Budd. Preached with moderation. Some of the good folks groaned very much. Come home wrote some poetry on Dr. Garrison and Margrett. He left us in the afternoon. Margrett sighed and I went to bed. Dremp nothing. Walking in the evening, Charley still at Deacons, mother dont like it. Sends over for him, wont come. Sent Margrett for him. Threw cherry stones at her. She give Charley a pinch and brings him off. The Deacons swear vengeance. Charles not a bit pleased and Margrett is scolded for interfering and me too for taking Charleys part. All this work for a little innocent sparking, poor fellows, how I pity them.

July 3 - Notwithstanding all this, went over to Deacons again for our strings. Sally Deacon tied Charley. Our mother looked very Grim. Took a walk down to the launch, was chased by a mad Bull, was deprived of our walk. Met the Judge, wanted to get on behind him. Would not let me because the Horse would kick up of course. I would meet with the same fate and that would not be so clever. Came home, just time enough to set down to a capital dinner, Turtle soup, dessert, cold coustard, fritters.

July 4 - Rather dull, damp, rainy. The people seemed to caught the infection and appear sleeping away the most glorious day, a day that gave them Freedom. Cleared up in the afternoon, people begin to stir. I hear a cannon, - - - - - the Tuckertonians begin to show themselves - this day must be remembered, orations was read, toast was drank - got quit of their lethargy, and the 4 of July was celebrated quite in stile. Took a ride, run over a great stump, had to get out, began to put up a prayer. Horse began to be mulish, began to pray in earnest, how to get home? Fortune smiled, got in again arrived safe. Spent the afternoon at Deacons. Mrs. Deacon a fine old woman, one of her daughters very handsome. Had a dance in the evening, Eliza looked butifull. Dance till 12 oclock, had plenty of cherry pie. Looked up me and Aron in the dark, took it out in dancing.

July 5 - Sweet day, walked in the morning, got a ride in the saplings in the afternoon. Took a ride on horseback. Went to meet Charles and Aron. Did not see but one tract, Nancy Deacon greatly distressed about it. Found out two tracts at last. Give our nags a cut, tore through the woods like two furies. Met the gentlemen at last and behold they got speechless, thought we was some crazy girls. Soon convinced them of the contrary. Returned home. Our ride lay through a butifull woods, violets, magnolies and roses. The evening very mild. Went a sparking.

July 6 - Went to Hawken in the afternoon. The Judge and mama, Charles, Margrett, and Miss Deacon rode in the waggon. Aron and my pretty self went in the gig. Very pleasent ride. Just get in the door and it began to rain. Arrived at Mr Grays. Very much pleased with the family indeed, Quaker but so kind and every body so Fat. Fine prospect from the bay. Staid all night, room too close, had like to smothered. 4 of us in one room, knocked my elbow against the petitions forst time. Found the mosquitoes troublesome.

July 7 - Left Grays ferry. Call at Judge Cranes, very good kind of a man. Called at Hawken. Went a shopping, seen Kaly Wright, bought a pair of shoes of him and a thimble. He talked quite smiling, grown very fat. Got some string and started for Tucker ton, took some cake and wine. Too tired to dance in the evening. Set ourselves down to a dush of Politics. as we were all Demoes could not of had much

argument. Stage arrived, flew to hear the news, did not get any letters, read the papers.

July 8 - Introduced to Mr Dean, monstrous man to beshure, a second Goliath. He talked much of Kaly Wright. Runned down Sammy Smith, did not thank him for it, took Sammys part. Soon got in a good humer again for he told me Kaly and Dr Gant was coming the next day to see us. Margret dashed away at cleaning, house suds began to fly, brushes and soap. Dear O Dear everything begin to change coler, even the very brick. In fact where ever she touched her hand it began to shine.

July 9 - Fine day. Indeed we have the finest weather in the world here. Went to Quaker Meeting. Got the back ake. No wonder, had no back to their benches. No preaching, people go to nodding. Come to a very good dinner. Got low—spirited for low and behold the doctor and Kaly never come. They had quarterly meeting in their town. No wonder, staid to see the pretty girls. Had Aunty Chases company in the afternoon, took a walk in the evening. Went over to Mr Deacons. Saw Danney Shinn, right clever little fellow, looks very hard at Sally Deacon. Sally looked quite interesting.

July 16 - Sunday morning, fine day. Went to hear Mr Mills preach, liked him pretty well, quite refined in some of his ideas. People did not understand him, some went to sleep. Had preaching at Quaker meeting. Had a walk in the afternoon. Aron, Miss Deacon, and myself lost the rest of our company so we bent our way to old Josey Ridgway. Found him sitting up and a young man reading the Bible to him. Did not stay long. Went to see old Dinah, nice old creature. Came home, went to get some dewberrys, could not find any. We all walked round Hanover Square about 20 times.

July 17 - Got a making cards to play wist. Had a sort of a pack but not enough. Aron made king and Queen, did very well. Plaid wist, got terribly beat.

July 18 - Ceres godess of plenty must not be forgotten. She is keeping in her favors. The reapers are crowding in for their dinner. Seemed to like their rice pudding very much. Took a peep at them through the window. Round went the can, the jest, the glee. Took a liking to one with the blue jacket. He cleverest looking, I think, but I have heard that he parted from his wife. Dont like that much, and she was a mighty pretty woman too. What a pity. Seen Pat Towers Beau, old Bear. Wore a white hat, talked about his old flame Patty. He appeared to be a clever soul.

July 19 - Most terrible day, got the Blue Devils. Not only me but mother. Even our Philosopher, Aron, would not smile. No, not for a kingdom. Got mad. At last went upstairs, got to singing, the only way to forget myself. Had some talk in the evening, got so mad went to bed. Mama very uneasy about the boys. The wind blew very hard, thought of the Francis and the shadow.

July 20 - A death. Poor old Jack fell down in the night, could not get up again. Took a spasm, ended with the lock Jaw, poor creature. Drawn off to the woods for the crows to pray on. Quite a loss to the Judge. Walked in the afternoon for huckleberrys. Musquitoes plenty, and Tick O Ticks by thousands, scratch all night. Run over to see Sally Deacons bed quilts, but the best of all was brought me, a quart bowl full of huckleberrys and milk. Quite a treat.

July 21 - Receive letters, great joy. One from Brother Sam. Delighted to hear he visit with his cousin Anthony at Fyall. Mad at Joe for not writing, so taken up with partys. Got a letter from Cousen Dick, thinks I am going to be married, very much mistaken. News from aunt - - - - - Bert sends her compliments to Dr Hamm. How disappointed she will be, no Dr Hamm here yet. Wished he would come, expect them next week. Should like to see them. Took tea at Dr Towers, very clever family. Their house very pleasantly situated, fine view of the bay. Dance in the evening. Taken with a very bad headache. Leave the dance, fever in my head. Get frightened, come home, go to bed. Take some cordial, sleep pretty well.

July 22 - Saturday. Find my head much better. Crimp shirt and darn stockings. Look hard for Dr Garrison, dont come. Try the woods again for huckleberry, get enough to eat but the woefull insects wont let us alone. Come home most bit to death. Spent very quiet evening. M.B.T played for somehow felt myself

very happy that evening. Dreamt a queer dream about Aunty Stretches family.

July 25 - Lovely day. Talk of going to Quaker meeting. Changed our mind and all go to hear Mr Jenkins preach. Disappointed. Mr Jenkins sick, great many of the good fold prayed most terrible loud, was ready to come out several times. Mr Wardell brought us a fine parcel of dew berries in the evening.

Monday August 10 - A party of us went to Bass River. About - - miles. Had a walk on the river. Fine supper, boiled chicken, coffee, and short cake. Went after a fiddler. Mans wife not let him come. All tearing mad. Had a great notion to go and tie the woman and fetch the husband off. Concluded to dance by our own music. Started for home at nine, kept it up a dancing after we got home till 11 oclock.

Aug 11 - Started for the Beach, mama, Eliza, myself, Aron, and Charles. Pleasant sailing. Found the landlady running about as well as ever. Coffee, short cake, and shell fish for dinner. All went in the surfe, but my how funny mother looked when she come from behind the white hills in her white flarin peticote. Put me in mind of one of the witches in Macbeth.

Aug 12 - Very cool, did not go in the surfe. Went a rideing in the ox cart, hunted birds eggs. Charley got a handkerchief full, fetched them home to make egg nog, found them all full of young ones. Ha ha ha. Had a great joke upon Charles and poor mother. As I got out, the cart tilted up and down went mother with her head in the sand, her eyes turned up. We all thought she was gone to Davy Jones locker. She was stunned at the time, but soon recovered. Very bad pain in her head that night. Was very uneasy about her, was affraid her brain was affected, but it appeared to be rheumatism.

Aug 13 - Mama much better. Charles and Aron went a fishing, no luck. Took a long walk on the beach, come home with a wonderful appetite, drank a quart of buttermilk. They called me Miss Guzzle. Break my peticote string every day, shall certainly get too fat.

Aug 14 - Fine day. All went in the surfe, find myself very much refreshed. Went to sleep, got up with a great appitite. Aron and me went a walking on the Beach. The sea looked grand, the roaring of the waters and the white foaming waves all seemed combined to add to the buty of our walk. Meet Charley agoing again in the surfe. His suspenders broke and he seemed to be in such trouble about his small cloths that I turned about and walked homeward. Was agreeable surprised, found some of our acquaintance from the city. Very glad to see them tho we did not know where to put them. Great consultation. Agreed to put Charles and iron on the floor to sleep. Could not sleep for thinking what a hard berth they must of had. Great mind to give them a piece of my bed.

Aug 15 - Give up our place at the Beach for our city friends. Detained by a sloop to take some groceries for some of the Tuckertonians. Mama did not like it a bit. Set in one of Mr Homer's chairs, hope nobody dot tell Mr Homer. Arrived safe to dinner, found the green yard decorated with the Harvest table. I glad of it, put my mind upon carrying the Luncheon. Heard that Reuben Tucker was married, dont believe it.

Aug 24 - Nothing paticular, excepting my being very much troubled with the headake, occasioned by my eating to much milk. Cant help it, I do love it so.

(top of page badly torn)

Bad headake, they tell me about takeing salts. Blame the salts, and I must be bled too and pucked(?) by all that lovely. Begin to think about coming away.

Aug 26 - Fine weather. Tuckerton is certainly a very healthy place, never hot here. They have such fine sea breeze. Sick stomake, it is the milk. I have give it up, they wont give me a drop to save my life. They say cannot think of taking medicine after being so hearty.

Aug 27 - My head much better, getting out of the notion of pucking. Mr. Evans family and Deacons are all

gone to the Beach. Talk of bringing the violin over and having a dance up at the Tavern.

Aug 28 - Could not get the fiddle so all the dancing knocked in the head. Had a little kick of our own. In the evening danced fishers hornpipe and what beat all, the Judge can tire us all out dancing. I could not join in their dance so went to bed sick.

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Eleanor Price in her notes concluded: It seems very probable that Sarah either died here in Tuckerton from (possibly) appendicitis, or was too ill when she left to remember to take her rather revealing diary with her. I remember that the diary grew more illegible, and so harder to decipher, as it approached its end and its author grew more miserable.

One of the things found in Miss Georgie's house (along with the diary) was a white and gilt mug with the name "Charles" on it. We know of no Charles in the Tucker or Page families, and we always wondered whether the mug was left behind by Charles Thomson after the 1809 visit.

A good sketch of Judge Ebenezer Tucker and his family is found in the book known locally as "Leah Blackman's Book," but contained in a volume published by the Surveyor's Association of West New Jersey in 1880. In that book Mrs. Blackman gives a very interesting account of the early history of Tuckerton.

Note: The above was copied from a typed manuscript given to the Bass River Community Library History Committee by Steve Dodson, Tuckerton, N.J.