Champney, Richard, b. 1794.

Journal of Travels Commencing from the Year 1798
1827-1828

Abstract: Richard Champney’s memoir, which he entitled in full "Journal of Travels commencing from the year 1798, through various parts, of England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Spain, Portugal, Canada, United-States of North America, Denmark, Germany, Holland, & the Netherlands. &c. by Richard Champney," was handwritten in four bound volumes and are a polished and edited version of daily journals kept by Richard Champney and his parents. The journals detail Champney's childhood journey from London, England, to Lexington, Kentucky, where his father had acquired property in settlement of a debt and the five-year struggle to live there. The journals describe Champney’s return to England and subsequent education, career as a sailor on a merchant vessel, as well as his enlistment in the militia and service in Wellington's Peninsular Campaign during the Napoleonic Wars.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 097, Item 009
Creator: Champney, Richard, b. 1794.
Title: Journal of Travels Commencing from the Year 1798
Inclusive Dates: 1827-1828
Extent: 4 v. (1450 p.) ; 24 cm.
Language: Materials entirely in English

Administrative Information

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Richard Champney was born on September 13, 1794, in London. His father, Thomas Champney, was a successful surgeon and physician. His mother, Margaret Champney, was the owner of land she had inherited from her father. The Champneys had two sons and two daughters. One of the girls, Margaret, died at the age of seven while they lived in London.

In 1798, Thomas Champney became the owner of 42,000 acres near Lexington, Kentucky, some of which he had received as repayment of a loan. In 1799, the family sailed to the United States where they lived together until December, 1805. At that time, eleven-year-old Richard accompanied his mother and sister down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where they boarded a ship for England. They were soon joined by Richard’s brother. Thomas Champney remained in the United States.

After his return to England, Richard Champney attended boarding school and spent his vacations in York with his Aunt Doddsworth until June 1810. In October 1811, Champney bound himself as an apprentice for four years on a merchant vessel, but after a short time sailing from Hull to Portsmouth, Richard returned to his family in York that November.

In December 1812, Champney began his military career as an ensign in the East York Militia. After being stationed in Scotland for a year, he boarded a transport for Spain in January 1814. After landing near St. Sebastian, Champney crossed the border into France and participated in Wellington’s Peninsular Campaign in the Napoleonic Wars. He marched through France but narrowly missed fighting any battles. He left France in July of 1814 and was transported to Ireland where he was stationed until July of 1815. At that point, he received permission to leave the army prematurely, and returned to his family in Hull.

Immediately after leaving the army, Champney wished to visit his father in the United States, but his mother’s ill health compelled him to remain in England for a year. In May 1816, Champney began his second voyage to the United States. He arrived in New York City in June and then traveled through New Jersey and Pennsylvania before taking a steamer down the Ohio River. Thomas Champney died July 30, 1816, in Indiana, but his son’s account breaks off before revealing if Richard was able to contact his father.

By 1827, Richard Champney had returned to England where he lived in Ellerker Hall in East Yorkshire. He had a wife and four children. The family was wealthy but not part of the nobility. In 1828, giving "Illness & want of occupation" as his motive, Champney compiled his journals into a four-volume memoir.

Sources:

Michelle Smock, "There and Back Again: The Journals of Richard Champney" (unpublished seminar paper, University of Delaware, 2006).


Sue Dawson, letter to University of Delaware Special Collections, July 21, 2006.

Additional biographical information derived from the collection.
Richard Champney’s memoir, which he entitled in full "Journal of Travels commencing from the year 1798, through various parts, of England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Spain, Portugal, Canada, United-States of North America, Denmark, Germany, Holland, & the Netherlands. &c. by Richard Champney," was handwritten in four bound volumes and are a polished and edited version of daily journals kept by Richard Champney and his parents. The journals detail Champney's childhood journey from London, England, to Lexington, Kentucky, where his father had acquired property in settlement of a debt and the five-year struggle to live there. The journals describe Champney's return to England and subsequent education, career as a sailor on a merchant vessel, as well as his enlistment in the militia and service in Wellington's Peninsular Campaign during the Napoleonic Wars.

At the beginning of each volume, Champney wrote a title page containing the title, volume number, and "Ellerker Yorkshire. 1828." He numbered the pages continuously across the volumes. Volume I contains pages 1–356; Volume II, pages 357–731; Volume III, pages 732–1129; and Volume IIII, pages 1130–1221. In addition to describing his daily activities and thoughts, Champney described the places he visited in great detail. He also interspersed numerous poems and verses related to the events he recounted. While none of these poems are attributed, it is likely that they were copied as in a commonplace book. Each volume but the fourth, which is incomplete, end with an "Index" containing a chronological list of subjects covered with page numbers. Following that is an "Appendix" containing the names of places Champney visited and the distance he traveled by both land and water.

The first volume begins with a "Preface" in which Champney explained that his remarks are drawn from previous journals and that he was "revising them for the perusal of [himself] & friends." He also explained that he incorporated information drawn from his parents' journals, especially in his account of the first voyage to America. The journal then contains a daily account of the voyage from London to Philadelphia beginning September 1799. Champney traveled aboard the Washington, a ship owned by Captain Williams. Champney described the wind and weather as well as a brief account of daily occurrences on the ship. On October 24, the Washington was forced into an engagement with a French frigate. The women and children hid below deck while the men on board fired at the frigate with guns (7-10). Several men were killed or injured, and the ship was forced to dock at Lisbon for repairs. The Champneys remained in Lisbon until the ship was ready to sail again on March 29, 1800 (13-31). They arrived in Philadelphia on May 12 and traveled through Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh, and then down the Ohio river to Lexington, Kentucky, arriving there November 15 (50-62).

For the next six years, the Champneys lived near Lexington, Kentucky. During that time, Thomas Champney cleared and farmed their 42,000 acres of land with the help of slaves. Richard recounted memories from his childhood including playing with his brother, the treatment of slaves, the customs of the Americans, and his father's experiences as a farmer. Beginning December 15, 1805, Champney traveled in a flat-bottomed boat down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans (135-164). He described the boat, his travel on it, encounters with Indians, and landmarks they passed. He also described his stay in New Orleans until his mother could procure passage to England on the George Washington with Captain Marten from Newport,
Rhode Island (165-172). They left New Orleans March 12, 1806, and arrived in Liverpool on April 30 (172-197). Champney described weather, marine life, daily progress, and anecdotes on board the ship.

The next section of the journal describes the rest of Champney’s childhood in England, including his life as a school boy and the vacations spent with his Aunt Doddsworth. After finishing school in June 1810, Champney enjoyed a year of freedom spent boating, attending horse races, and traveling within England (229-246).

In August, 1811, Champney debated beginning a career as an independent farmer or a sailor. In October, Champney bound himself as an apprentice on a merchant vessel (246-249). He then described his experiences sailing south-west around the coast of England from Hull to Portsmouth (251-270). On November 8, because he decided he did not want a sailor’s life and because an ankle injury prevented him from performing his duties, he received the captain’s consent to go ashore and returned to his family in York. Champney described some highlights of his stay with his family including a fortnight’s journey to Ripton (283-294) and an excursion to Castle Howard.

Champney then enlisted as an ensign in the East York Militia. On December 10, 1812, he received a letter instructing him to report to Seaton Castle near Edinburgh, Scotland. Until December of 1813, Champney was stationed in Scotland (313-507). He described daily occurrences, weather, military life, and the places visited. On December 1, 1813, Champney received orders to march to the headquarters of the 74th Regiment at Carlisle. From there his unit proceeded to Portsmouth. After taking nine day’s leave to visit home, he met the army in Warrington and marched with them through Newcastle, Trent, Coventry, Woodstock, and Oxford before reaching Portsmouth on January 19, 1814 (532-562). On January 29, he boarded the ship Warrener, Transport No. 616. On February 13, he landed north of Bilbao, Spain.

Champney then marched through France as part of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington’s Peninsular Campaign (600-856). He described daily occurrences as well as his observations of the towns, countryside, and people. Places he visited include Bayonne, St. Esprit, Peyrehourade, Puyoô, Hagetmau, St. Sever, Grenade, Barcelonne, Moulounguet, Vic-en-Bigorre, Tarbes, Rabastens-de-Bigorre, Miélan, Mirande, Auch, Gimont, Ile Jourdain, Toulouse, Grenade, Beaumont de Lomagne, St. Clar, Nérac, Bazas, Bordeaux, Castelnau de Medox, St. Laurent, and Pauillac. A map of his route can be found in the accession folder. Champney’s unit arrived in Toulouse only two days after Wellington won a major battle there on April 10, 1814. Champney, however, did not see any major military action. He boarded a transport for Ireland on July 6, 1814.

Entries from July 26, 1814, to July 1, 1815, contain a description of Champney’s life stationed in Ireland (888-980). Places he visits include Birr, Calway, and Dublin. He requested an early release from the army and left Ireland on July 20, 1815. Entries describing the time spent with his family from July 1815 to May 1816 are less frequent (980-1030). Champney only mentioned unusual occurrences such as a trip to Scarborough for his sister’s health and time spent entertaining friends.

Beginning May 2, 1816, Champney prepared for a voyage to New York. He procured passage on the ship Thomas, of Lancaster, with Captain Mathewson. Entries dated May 9 to June 25 describe the voyage and the ship’s passengers (1039-1143). Champney then visited New York City before traveling through Trenton, New Jersey, to Philadelphia (1159-1164). From there he again traveled through Pennsylvania to
Pittsburgh and then down the Ohio River (1164-1212). He described towns, forts, islands, and channels the boat passed. The journal ends abruptly on July 19, in what appears to be the middle of a poem.

In the fourth volume, it appears that some of the original gatherings have been removed. Other items are laid in. The first are two gatherings containing 126 pages of copied poetry. The poems are not attributed, but at least some of them have been copied. For example, the "Sonnet" on page 43 is by John Wilson and "The Man that Thinks" on page 45 is from Peter's *Letters to His Kinsfolk* by John Gibson Lockhart. The titles of the poems are indexed at the beginning of the gatherings.

Other loose papers are laid in. A draft for an index to the fourth volume is written on smaller, blue paper. Another folded leaf contains an entry for June 15 in Thorne and Doncaster, England. The volume also contains two soft-bound books labeled "Book 2" and "Book 3" and numbered continuously. They contain daily entries from August 9, 1827, to May 1828. The entries describe travels in England including regattas and a cricket match in Portsmouth and a trip to London. These journals have numerous revisions marked in them, including slips of paper with additional passages pinned to the pages.

Despite its title, the journal does not contain an account of travels to Canada, Denmark, Germany, Holland, or the Netherlands.
Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Champney, Richard, b. 1794--Diaries.

Champney, Thomas, 1761-

Champney, Margaret.

**Corporate Names**

Washington (Ship)

George Washington (Ship)

Warrener (Ship)

Barosso Transport (Ship)

Thomas (Ship)

**Topical Terms**

Frontier and pioneer life-- Kentucky.

Napoleonic Wars, 1800-1815.

Voyages and Travels--History--19th century.

Farmers--Diaries.

Merchant mariners--Diaries.

Military officers--Diaries.

**Geographic Names**

England--Description and travel.

England--Social life and customs--19th century.

France--Description and travel.

Ireland--Description and travel.

Kentucky--Description and travel.

Lisbon (Portugal)--Description and travel.
Mississippi River--Description and travel.
New York (N.Y.)--Description and travel.
Ohio River--Description and travel.
Pennsylvania--Description and travel.
Pyrenees--Description and travel.
Scotland--Description and travel.

Form/Genre Terms

Diaries.
Commonplace books.

Occupation

Farmers.
Military officers.
Merchant mariners.

Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 097 Diaries, Journals, and Ships' Logs collection.

Publication Note

Arrangement

Four consecutive volumes and additional laid-in materials.
Detailed Description of the Collection

370 p.

374 p.

Journal of Travels Vol. III, 1828 [Volume 3]
397 p.

91 p. with 130 p. in 2 gatherings, 14 p. in loose leaves, and 133 p. in 2 booklets laid in