Billing, Louis fl. 1865-1866.

Louis Billing travel diary
1865 August 24-1866 March 14

Abstract: This diary documents the 1865 journey of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, resident Louis Billing to England, where he visited relatives. He stayed with the family of his cousin William Mansell and other Billing relatives. Short trips were taken to other destinations in the United Kingdom and two months were spent in France. Billing commented on his relatives and ancestral history, described architecture and cathedrals, and made strongly patriotic comparisons between England and America. Billing served in the Union Army and mentioned English interest in the politics of abolition.
Descriptive Summary

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Title: Louis Billing travel diary

Inclusive Dates: 1865 August 24-1866 March 14

Extent: 1 v. (72 p.) ; 19 cm.

Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Louis Billings was a Philadelphia resident and veteran of the American Civil War (he joined the Union army in 1862). He had a wife, Nancy, and at least two children, Aggie and Lizzie.

Sources:

Biographical information derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

This diary documents the 1865 journey of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, resident Louis Billing to England, where he visited relatives. He stayed with the family of his cousin William Mansell and other Billing relatives. Short trips were taken to other destinations in the United Kingdom and two months were spent in France. Billing commented on his relatives and ancestral history, described architecture and cathedrals, and made strongly patriotic comparisons between England and America. Billing served in the Union Army and mentioned English interest in the politics of abolition.

At the outset of his trip (August 24, 1865), Louis Billing noted that he was given 1,500 dollars by his father and was accompanied to New York by his wife Nancy and their children Aggie and Lizzie. In New York, he boarded the steamship Scotland and sailed for Liverpool, England. During the two-week journey to England, Billing noted that he suffered frequent bouts of seasickness and the ship lost half of the top mast to a storm. When he arrived in Liverpool, he traveled to Glouchester by train where he stayed in the household of his cousin William Mansell. During his stay in Gloucester Billing traced his ancestral history and took several short trips to other English cities such as London, Warwick, Stratford-on-Avon, Birmingham, and Worcester.

During his trips Billing took a special interest in cathedrals and architecture. His entries documenting these trips demonstrates a rather hostile stance towards Protestantism, stating that a particular church was "stolen from the faithful by Henry VIII" and that "Protestantism touches nothing which it does not defile." Throughout the diary Billing also makes strongly patriotic statements and asserted "Republican supremacy in power, wisdom, freedom and virtue." This was partially in response to his discovery that Americans had the reputation of being "rude, violent...ill-mannered braggarts." The English were also very interested in the policies of abolition in the United States. After learning that Billing was a northern citizen and a veteran of the American Civil War, one neighbor came to meet him. Billing thought that the man was a "furious, blind abolitionist" and wanted only to lecture him on the subject.

Other significant events described by Billing during his trips were the funeral of the British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, touring the South Kensington Museum (London), and seeing the Prince and Princess of Wales. In November 1865, a planned trip to continental Europe was postponed by cholera in France and Italy. Billing spent the rest of the year in Gloucester, continuing to take short trips to other English towns. After celebrating the Christmas and the new year in Gloucester with his family, Billing traveled to France in January. The last full entry in the diary is dated January 2-3 and his trip to France is not described. There is a short itinerary travels from the period of January 4 to February 17 (when he returns to Gloucester). There is no documentation of his return to America.

The entry for December 10, 1885, contains a poem written by Miss Carry Billings to Louis Billings' wife Nancy in honor of their marriage anniversary. The end of the diary also contains a recipe for a "Cough Mixture" dated February 24, 1866. This is followed by a list of letters featuring the date sent and to whom they were sent.

This leather bound diary has decorative gold tooling and a partially detached spine.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Billing, Louis fl. 1865.

Topical Terms

Voyages and travels--England--History--19th century.

Geographic Names

England--Description and travel.

Gloucester (England)--Description and travel.

Form/Genre Terms

Diaries.

Occupation

Travelers.

Related Materials in this Repository

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

Publication Note

Detailed Description of the Collection

Louis Billing travel diary, 1865 August 24-1866 March 14 [Item 119]

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