Abstract: This diary of American soldier and painter John Rogers Vinton (1801-1847) covers the period September 20, 1827, to March 22, 1828, and provides a detailed look into the political and social atmosphere of Washington, D.C., in the late 1820s. Vinton discusses Washington, D.C., politics (including the upcoming 1828 election between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson), his duties as an officer in the military, as well as his social life, interest in painting, fashion, and theatrical performances.
### Descriptive Summary

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<td>Vinton, John Rogers, 1801-1847.</td>
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Biographical Note

John Rogers Vinton was born on June 16, 1801, to David and Mary Vincent of Providence, Rhode Island. In 1829 he married Lucretia Dutton Parker of Boston, Massachusetts, with whom he had at least two children. Parker died in 1838 and Vinton never remarried. Vinton was killed in action on March 22, 1847, in Battle of Vera Cruz, during the Mexican-American War. In his honor, a military outpost in Florida was renamed "Fort Vinton."

Vinton entered West Point Academy at the young age of fourteen and completed his course of study in two and a half years rather than the customary four. He received a commission as Third Lieutenant in 1817, at the age of 16. By 1819, he had become First Lieutenant 4th Artillery. He served as Adjutant of the Artillery School for Practice at Fort Monroe, Virginia, from 1824 to 1825, and Aid-de-camp to Maj. General Jacob Brown (General-in-Chief of the Army) from March 1, 1825, to May 24, 1828. He became Brevet Captain in 1829, Captain in 1835, and Brevet Major as a result of his conduct during several battles of the Mexican American War.

In addition to military pursuits, Vinton was well versed in the Greek, Latin, Hebrew languages, and well-read in theology, physics, ethics, and several other academic disciplines. His skill for drawing was noted while at West Point and this lead to him assigned to topographical duty on the Atlantic coast and Canadian border. He later became an artist in his own right, creating portraits, landscapes, and documenting the Seminole War (in which he participated) through painting.

Sources:

This diary of American soldier and painter John Rogers Vinton (1801-1847) covers the period September 20, 1827, to March 22, 1828, and provides a detailed look into the political and social atmosphere of Washington, D.C., in the late 1820s. Vinton discusses Washington, D.C., politics (including the upcoming 1828 election between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson), his duties as an officer in the military, as well as his social life, interest in painting, fashion, and theatrical performances.

Vinton began his diary with several entries under the headline "Politics" during which he discussed the political atmosphere of Washington, D.C., where he was assigned as Aid-de-camp to the General-in-Chief of the Army. He focused on the upcoming presidential election between President John Quincy Adams and Andrew Johnson. He believed the country had not been "agitated with any single topic as with...the next presidency." Vinton assessed the strengths and weaknesses of both candidates and their supporters. Throughout the journal, he described on-going events of note in Washington as well as maneuvering by the two political factions in anticipation of the election.

Much of the diary covers Vinton's duties as Aid-de-camp to General Jacob Brown, General-in-Chief of the Army, and as acting Assistant Adjutant General. Because of Brown's high station, many of Vinton's duties included attending social gatherings and meetings with officials in the government, which gave him greater insight into the workings of Congress and the Executive Branch. In December of 1828, Vinton began to write about an ailment suffered by General Brown, which he characterized as "an old complaint." By February, the disease was affecting "his head directly, by paralyzing his intellectual faculties, his memories and speech" rendering him incapable of attending to his duties. Brown quickly declined over the course of the month and died on February 24. On February 29, a funeral took place and was well attended by Washington notables and accompanied by much "martial and civic pagentry." Brown's placement was not appointed by the end of the diary entries on March 22.

Early in the diary, Vinton mentioned his "great fancy" for "painting likenesses and drawing heads." Throughout the entries he discussed painting materials and technique, his increasing skill, as well as his pleasure at being able to draw portraits of his friends. Vinton noted that between his painting, military duties, and social obligations he often found little time to add to his diary.

Vinton also wrote about being in "that trying crisis, which all men experience perhaps once in their lives" or the ritual of courtship. He began courting a "Miss. H." from Philadelphia in January, 1828, with whom he quickly became infatuated. He wrote that his strong feelings towards her became embarrassing at times but quickly began to think of a marriage noting that he was twenty-six years old and he "ought certainly to begin to think seriously of matrimony." Despite his strong romantic feelings, the relationship declined and eventually came to an end after a social gathering (with all of Miss H.'s family in attendance) during which Vinton accidentally hit his intended in the head with a knotted kerchief. The diary also includes Vinton's reflections on society, brief mentions of other ladies of interest, notes on the current fashion, and the description of theatrical performances attended in Washington, D.C. (including two pages about actress Clara Fisher).
This diary was rebound at a later date and the pages were tipped into page guards. The cover features decorative gold tooling and a leather spine with the inscription "Journal J.R.V." and dates of the diary entries. The inside cover features a bookplate bearing the name John Albree. The diary also includes a pamphlet of orders from the Adjutant General's Office, dated October 12, 1827. The orders are signed by Vinton, serving as Aid-de-camp and acting Assistant Adjutant General at the time. This is the fifth volume in a series of diaries written by Vinton. The location of the other diaries is unknown.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Vinton, John Rogers, 1801-1847--Diaries.

Brown, Jacob, 1775-1828.

Corporate Names

United States. Adjutant-General's Office--Diaries


United States. Army--Military life--History--19th century--Sources.

Topical Terms

Courtship--United States--History--19th century.

Courtship--United States--History--19th century--Sources.

Geographic Names

Washington (D.C.)--History--19th century--Sources.


Washington (D.C.)--Social life and customs--19th century--Sources.

United States--Politics and government--19th century.

United States--Politics and government--19th century--Sources.

Form/Genre Terms

Diaries.

Occupation

Officers (military officers)

Artists.

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