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ACCESSION SHEET

Accession # 86 M 14

Location

DS-6-5

Title (John) James Duncan. Diary

Approximate inclusive dates 1846-48

Date of receipt Jan. 22, 1986

Received from Susan Duncan

Volume on arrival 1 volume

Number of boxes (after reboxing) 1 volume

Condition The binding is damaged and covers are almost torn off

Restrictions None

Description (see separate sheet)

Special Formats Photographs Maps Audio Tapes Films Graphics
 Artifacts Machine-readable records
 Other (list) _____

Temporary catalog card added entries
(see separate sheet)

Accessioned by John Stein

Date 10/28/86

(John) James Duncan. Diary

Description

(John) James Duncan (d. 1848) was born in County Down, Northern Ireland, probably in the mid-1820's, the son of James and Jane Kennedy Duncan, a family of very modest means. James was employed for a time as a sales clerk in Belfast and in Newtownards, near Belfast. A bachelor and a devout Presbyterian, he was greatly tormented by a sense of sin and by his seeming failure to live up to the harsh demands of the Calvinist ethic. Much of his leisure time appears to have been spent at prayer meetings, class meetings and other church activities. James suffered also from economic hardship and and being unable to raise the funds to set himself up in business in the retail trade he resolved to emigrate to America. On March 10th, 1847 he embarked at Belfast on the sailing ship "Massachusetts" bound for New York where he arrived after a difficult voyage and much suffering, on May 1st. He was the first of his family to come to America. Unable to find employment in New York he ^{went} to Rochester and from there to Toronto and lastly, Brantford (Ontario Co., Canada) where he took a job as a sales clerk in a general store at forty pounds per month plus board. There he resumed his religious activities which had been interrupted by his travels. On July 3rd, 1848 his father and family arrived from Ireland to join him in Brantford. According to a note pencilled in after the last entry in the diary, James died on August 14th, 1848. His younger brother, Robert Augustus Kennedy Duncan, who was but eleven years when he arrived in Brantford, had subsequently three children one of whom, Norman Duncan (1871-1916) was ~~to become~~ ^{the} noted Canadian author.

The diary (July 1, 1846 - Aug. 7, 1848) which is written in ink in a legible hand describes in generous detail Duncan's life in Ireland at Belfast and Newtownards (County Down), especially

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(John) James Duncan. Diary

Description (cont'd.)

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the 'state of his mind', his religious torments and anxieties, his church activities and social life. His experiences during the sea voyage from Belfast to New York, his sojourn in New York City, his voyage by steamer up the Hudson River to Troy (N.Y.), and onwards to Rochester via the Erie Canal, then to Niagara Falls, Toronto and Brantford (Canada) are also recorded in interesting detail. At each stage of his journey Duncan records his impressions of the places visited and his experiences in seeking employment.

At the back of the diary are 9 pages of copies of outgoing correspondence sent by Duncan to his father and friends in Ireland. Some 8 loose items (notes & memoranda) are inserted in the flyleaf of the volume.