

Travel Diary of A. Herr Smith

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This is transcription of a travel diary written by in 1839 A. Herr Smith while on a tour to Montreal, Quebec and Niagara. The diary is incomplete. It begins on August 5, 1839 when he left Strasburg, Pa. and ends August 9, 1839 when he arrives in Saratoga, New York. He was 24 when he began the trip. A year later, in 1840, he graduated from Dickinson College. The original diary is housed in the archives of the Lancaster County Historical Society.

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Diary- august 1839 of A. Herr Smith while on a tour to Montreal, Quebec and Niagara – incomplete

1839 Aug.5. Left Strasburg in the morning and arrived at Lemon Place just in time to see the morning train pass. Saw cousin A.H. Herr and his sister, who by some mistake in Lancaster took the first train instead of the second, and thus left sister to come by herself as far as Kinsers where I joined her. At Paoli, where our cousins had stopped to dine, we joined them ; and after a great many questions and answers about the mistake, we continued our course to Philadelphia and arrived in the “city of brotherly love” deservedly so called in the olden times of Penn and Quaker simplicity, but now alas little less deserving of that epithet than her sister cities. We stopped at Mrs. Yohe’s (?)Hotel, now kept by Jones late proprietor of the U.S. house. In the evening we visited Queen Victoria, who appears remarkable well on canvass:and one might suppose, Sully the painter, had Venus or some ideal of his own creation, as his subject instead of her majesty’s real and bonafida person: for if his painting is a true likeness, the description that we have heretofore had of the beauty of England’s Queen has been incorrect; but if it is not, he deserves credit for his painting, but equalfor producing one which professes to be a true portrait but is not.

Her majesty is represented in the act of ascending to the royal chair; her left hand is resting on the right arm of the chair, her right hanging carelessly by her side holding a glove. Her dress is plain but rich, having a dark crimson velvet robe with a long trail trimmed with white fur: her neck and shoulders open, and very delicately relieved by a diamond necklace. Her attitude is easy and graceful: her height 5 ft. 9 in: her countenance open and expressive, and indicative of thought and intelligence; her features regular, her nose and mouth Grecian; her eyes are dark; all together her appearance is good, and as before mentioned, almost angelic. Sully has done more for her however, in our private opinion, than nature; and wehas been more liberally rewarded.

Wednesday morning took the steamboat Swan for New York, and after passing up the beautiful Delaware, lined as its shores are with neat dwellings, and touching at the intermediate towns of Burlington and Bristol, we arrived at Bordertown. This place is noted as the residence of the ex King of Spain, brother of Napoleon. Here we took the Camden and Amboy RailRoad, which begins at Camden, opposite Philadelphia, and terminates at South Amboy, situated at the head of Raritan Bay, a distance of 61 miles from Philadelphia. From this place we again took steamboat, and after passing down the Raritan, a lovely stream, on the east side of which is situated New Brighton, composed almost entirely of private country seats(?) which are built in the most costly manner. We entered the bay This town Brighton originated in 1837, during thespeculations; and was built by New Yorkers. Many if not all of its original owners have since become bankrupt and have sought shelter under the broad and expansive law of insolvency. Sic Gloria di Before arriving in N.Y. we passed in sight of Fort Lafayette, and saw at a distance the passage to the sea, called “The Narrows”. New York, has been so often described, that it will be simply necessary to say that is situated on Manhattan Island about 15 miles in length and 1 ½ in width. The Hudson and east river form this island. Broadway is the principal street in N.Y. and is crowded from morn till noon and from noon till midnight with the most fashionable of the city embracing men, women, and children. The places of amusement are the Park Theatre, Niblos &

Castle Gardens which are nightly crowded. Castle Garden, connected with the battery is tastefully laid off into walks, and in the evenings is a great place of resort. From the battery a most delightful view presents itself, embracing Governor's Island, Bedlow's Island and Ellis Island, on each of which are military stations. Here too the eye is greeted with a view of Brooklyn opposite the East river, the shores of Long Island and New Jersey and when cloyed of these, it can turn to the floating sails of some homeward bound vessels, whose inmates and anxiously longing to leave their seacabin and once again set foot on terra firma and casting the eye still farther round, the spectator may see the Stars & stripes of the Union streaming proudly from three different forts.

Niblo's Garden is situated at the corner of Broadway & Prince streets; and is one of the finest in the city. It is laid out with much taste; and the whole arrangement reflects much credit on the proprietor. Connected with this establishment is a theatre and fire works; and on the evening before alluded to the Ravel family exhibited the most astonishing feats ever witnessed by mortal eye. The first part of the performance consisted of the revolving statues, by which were represented with most inimitable ability, the attitudes and gestures of ancient heros & gladiators. The first representation, consisting of Prometheus chained to the rock, & David slaying Goliath, was so perfect that it was almost impossible to not realize that the sling bearing Gideonite, and the Vulcan banished Prometheus stood in the cold marble before us. The second part consisted of fire works and the walking of the slack rope. Gabriel Ravel commenced the performance by walking or rather running on a rope fastened to a castle 100 feet high, and stretched across a space of some 160 feet. He was followedRavel, who in agility seemed little his inferior; and amidst the roar of applause, and the thunder of fir works ascended and decended rope. This exercise closed, we again entered the theatre, and had our visible faculties exercised in no ordinary manner. Indeed so loud and frequent were the bursts of laughter that rang through the hall that a phisiognamist (?), judging by the position of our visible organs, would have unhesitatingly pronounced us laughing maniacs, and would have phrenologicallydicted a triple ration of increase in these indices of good humour. The performance ended, we took a promenade through the garden, saw much fashion, beauty and style, entered an omnibus, and in 15 minutes found ourselves again in the front drawing room of the Astor House – a house for size, business, and structure unsurpassed by any in the U. States. It has 390 rooms & can accommodate 300 guests. It is built of granite.

Thursday morning August 8th took steamboat for Albany. The scenery along the Hudson is so grand, and has been so often deleniated that to attempt a description would be vain & useless- vain, on account of the inability of the tourist, and useless because many excellent descriptions have already been given. The scenery consists of beautiful county seats, rich and cultivated farms, lawns, parks, dark & winding ravines, cascades, & mountains of every size, whose summits are covered with forests of the richest foliage. Many of the places are memorable on account of some revolutionary scenes; and not a few have been the foundation of many of Irwins Tales. In fine (?) the North river affords scenes upon which the antiquarian may dwell with peculiar interest, scenes from which the patriot may learn the frailty and treachery of human nature: and the philanthropist and Christian weep at the custom which sacrificed Hamilton on honor's bloody shrine. Six miles above N. York is Weehawken, the place where Gen. Hamilton fell in a duel with Col. A. Burr. It is screened by rocks from the observation of man; and seems well

adapted for settling affairs of honor. Hamilton's remains were deposited here, until lately when they removed to Trinity Church in N. York by order of St. Andrew's Society. A monument has been erected to his memory: which I fear will have to be removed, as Wall Street is to be opened to the river, and must necessarily pass through the graveyard. The duel was fought July 2nd, 1802. Eight miles from N. York are seen the palisades which extend along the western side of the river a distance of 20 miles andfor 20 to 550 feet in height. These abrupt steepes of solid rock give a singular wildness to the scenery of the river; and the eye is only relieved by glancing on the opposite side which is beautifully checkered with farms and groves. On the brow of these Palisades, 300 feet high, is the site of fort Lee, and directly opposite is Fort Washington, which was taken by the Hessians & British, with the garrison, composed of 2600 militia (?) & regular troops. Twenty four miles from N. Y. is Tappan Bay on the western shore of which is the village of Tappan, noted for Arnold & Andre's conspiracy. Andre's grave is still pointed out near this village, though his remains were removed to England some few years by order of the British government. On the Eastern shore about a mile above the village of Tappan, is the village of Tarrytown where Andre was captured by Paulding, Williams & Van Wart(?) militiamen. A monument has been erected to Paulding & Van Wart who died a few years since. Near the northern extremity of H. Bay is SingSing Prison. It comprises 800 cells, can accommodate from 800 to 1000 convicts, and cost \$200,000. Fifty miles from N. Y. is West Point of the west side of the Hudson. It was one of the strongholds of the American army during the revolutionary war; and hence the endeavours of the British to obtain possession of it. This was the post the traitor Arnold wished to deliver into the hands of Gen. H. Clinton and his residence is still to be seen on the opposite side of the river. The military Academy here established was organized in 1802 by Gen. Williams. The number of cadets is limited to 250, each of which costs the government \$336 annually; and the whole establishment costs per year \$115,000. Pupils are not admitted under the age of 14 years, nor above the age of 22; and must spend 4 years at the Academy before they can graduate. The scenery around West Point is unusually bold and striking. The most prominent objects here are the hotel, Koocinsko's monument erected to the memory of the Polish patriot who made this his place of residence, and another monument erected in honor of the cadets who fell leading a charge at thefrom Fort Erie, on the 17th Sept. 1814.

After passing Poughkeepsie, celebrated for the culture and manufacture of silk, Catskill for its high majestic mountains, Pine orchard and water falls, and the city of Hudson, the traveler arrives at Albany, situated on the west side of the Hudson. This was settled in 1612: and with the exception of Jamestown is the oldest settlement in the U. States. Albany is the capital of N. York and many of its edifices might vie in elegance with those of N. York or Philadelphia. From this place we took the RailRoad for15 miles distant, where we tarried till the following day at noon to the Miss Rearson and her brother, and to take a peek at Union College which graduates annually 100 students.says, however that a sheepskin can be very easily obtained there and I fear that her Ladyship, though much addicted to fibbing, is too correct.

Friday 9th arrived at Saratoga, ran from one hotel to another to secure lodgings and fainally found them at the Pavilion House -- a house noted for nothing save high charges, small rooms and a bowling alley. Truth however demands that we notice, a large dining hall, filled with chairs & tables, the lat..(?) of which at meal times are spread with a

number of large shallow plates and dishes with but little in them, and the former are occupied by the guests or rather visitors in the evening listening intently to some vocalists, instance Misses Shaws. Having succeeded in regeristering (?) our names in a book, judging from its appearance, kept for any other purpose than that of registering names we proceeded arm in arm down Saratoga street, elbowing our way rather unceremoniously through its crown, until we reached Congress Spring, the most noted and the most resorted to at Saratoga.