

RawnJournals.com

Notice

All or parts of this file are copyrighted. Your use of this file or its contents constitutes acceptance of the Rawn Journals Website Terms and Conditions of Use Agreement. You may access this agreement at:

http://www.rawnjournals.com/about/terms_of_use

The Rawn Journals Website Terms and Conditions of Use Agreement states in part that, except where otherwise allowed or required by law:

You may not modify, copy, reproduce, republish, upload, post, transmit or distribute, by any means or in any manner, any contents of this file without the prior written consent of the author;

All conditions, representations, and warranties, either express or implied, including, but not limited to, implied warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose are disclaimed;

You may use the contents of this file only for your personal, non-commercial use.

For more information, you may contact:

The Historical Society of Dauphin County
219 South Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17104
(717) 233-3462

Introducing Charles Rawn, his Journals, and their Editors

By Michael Barton

Browsing his journals, one might think that Charles Rawn took note of everything he did, as well as anything that happened to him, while he lived in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, from the 1830s to the 1860s. He rarely mentioned grand ideas or personal feelings in his daily record, but he regularly listed the goods he purchased at the market, the legal clients he represented, and his fatherly activities with his wife and children. It is this ceaseless recital of commonplace details that will prevent these journals from being popular reading. But for exactly these qualities, his records are valuable guides to understanding everyday life in antebellum America, and they are useful sources as well for tracing the history of legal practice. “It is in the very dailiness, the exhaustive, repetitious dailiness,” that the power of such documents lies, writes Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, award-winning editor of the diary of Martha Ballard, an early American midwife.¹ In other words, his writings should be saved, even if they are not to be savored.

I was first shown Rawn’s journals by the dedicated and helpful staff at the Historical Society of Dauphin County in Harrisburg in the early 1990s. The Society is not certain who donated the Rawn journals or when, although they suspect it was a Rawn descendant in the early twentieth century. In their Rawn manuscript holdings, consisting of four boxes of materials, there is a photograph in an oval frame. On the back of the frame is inscribed “Charles Cotesworth Rawn, father of John Calvin Rawn, whose sons were Edward Van Ness Rawn and Andrew Bryson Rawn, whose children were Andrew

¹ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Random House, Vintage ed., 1991), p. 9. See also her essay, “The Importance of Trivia,” *Journal of Mormon History*, 19 (Spring, 1993), 52-66.

Bryson Rawn Jr. and Anne Brown Rawn Cooke. Donor Mrs. John Warren Cooke.”

Thus, Mrs. John Warren Cooke may have been the donor of all the Rawn materials.

In any case, I eventually realized the documents’ pedagogical value, and in 1997 I began including them as research materials in my American Studies seminars at Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg. I met with my graduate students at the Historical Society, and there we transcribed and annotated the manuscripts. I also encouraged them to count up Rawn’s activities and his itemizations in his daily entries. Thinking not only of Ulrich’s interpretation of the Ballard diary, our model for this kind of systematic inquiry was Prof. Michael Zuckerman's ingenious analysis of William Byrd's diary, which I knew about because I had been Mike's student at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1970s.² Working nearly every school year, my graduate students and I had completed almost 1,400 pages of transcription and annotation by summer, 2008, or about 25% of the total content of the ordinary Rawn journals. Almost half of the transcription was accomplished by five graduate students who edited portions of the journals for their master’s theses; they are Margo Groff, Rachel (McNabb) Hermann, Joseph Planté, Angela L. Eifert Key, and Jennifer Barr-Osteen. Thirty-five of my seminar students provided the remainder of the transcription and editorial labor, although not all of their work is included on the web site. They are Sheila A. Rohrer, Neil Leifert, Cecelia Eastman, Andrea Bashore, Raymond Chrobak, Mark Harwell, Brenda Bretz, Amy Cooper, Emily (Parsons) Howley, Kirk Cless, Kellan Lacks, Eloise Berntheizel, Elizabeth Sparks, Erik Walker, Jeannette Barnes, Joseph Yanosik, Georgina Leon, Thomas L. Sheeler, Robert Clay, Robin Montgomery, Jennifer Gleim, Jeff Slater, Felicia

² Michael Zuckerman, “William Byrd’s Family,” *Perspectives in American History*, vol. 12, ed. Donald Fleming (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 255-311.

Lehr, Darin Smith, Stephanie Dedonatis, Steve Noel, Tim Yoder, Michelle Dauberman, Martin Hackett, Rebecca Robinson, David Maher, Kimberly Longlott, Catherine Zackey, Judy L. Marinucci, and R. Jean Hershner. Three other graduate students, Holly Scott, Ann Marie McDonald, and Sarah Hopkins, helped by preparing several of the transcriptions for uploading to the web site. Their assistance was funded by the School of Humanities at Penn State Harrisburg. Our web site designer, Stephen Bachmann, is likewise a graduate student in our American Studies program at Penn State Harrisburg. In sum, the scholarship of forty-four student historians, so far, has brought us the Rawn journals. One of the main purposes of the website is to show off their work. I have been responsible for the direction and over-all editing of the project. I even did some transcribing and annotating myself.

What exactly are we transcribing? It is difficult to give an uncomplicated accounting of Charles Rawn's record keeping, because he called his texts by several names and kept them in a variety of ways. His first volume opens with a section titled "Daily Memorandum," dated from February 20, 1830 to January 11, 1831. He describes there, in small handwriting, mainly the weather, his domestic and business activities, and some of his financial transactions. The entries are fairly concise and not typically ruminative. He was definitely a record keeper rather than a story teller. The next section in this initial volume he called a "Day Book," and this contains exclusively financial detail—what he bought and how much he paid for it, and how much income he received for whatever work he did. This Day Book section, dated from March 22, 1830 to March 19, 1831, was kept conterminously with the Daily Memorandum entries. The third

section he labeled a Daily Memorandum again, and it takes off where the first one ended, from January 11, 1831 to April 30, 1831. The first volume's fourth section is completely unexpected: it consists of Rawn's notes on the history of England, which he appears to have made from his reading. The fifth section continues the Daily Memorandum and runs from May 2, 1831 to June 29, 1831. The volume's final, sixth section carries on his Day Book and is dated from March 19, 1831 to January 2, 1832. This section holds more than financial data, however, as Rawn also wrote down anecdotes and toasts he probably heard. He never kept another journal in this somewhat hodge-podge format. He did not even label this volume number 1.

The rest of his volumes were organized more sensibly, perhaps after he envisioned that record keeping could be a life-long exercise. What he first called a Daily Memorandum was thereafter called a "Book." These volumes were numbered 2 through 29, beginning on August 27, 1831, and ending on December 18, 1865. Books 2 through 20 each take up about twelve months of his life, although they begin and end at various times, not on January 1 and December 31, respectively. Each of Books 2 through 20 is approximately the same size, about six inches wide by eight inches long and 3/4 inches thick, and each is hard-bound, the front and back boards covered with marbled paper and the spine made of leather. Book 21 appears to be missing from the Society's collections. Books 22 through 29 are larger paper-bound volumes, about eight by ten inches and over one inch thick; most of these take up about two to three years of Rawn's life. Book 27 also appears to be missing from the collections, although it might not have been presented with the Rawn papers in the first place. His last volume, Book 29, he referred to as a "Journal," and that is how we have decided to title all of these volumes.

He almost never called them “diaries,” and for us to present them as “books” might be misleading.

There are three additional manuscripts he produced during his thirty-five year span of record keeping that do not physically resemble the journals: The first is a pocket-sized booklet that he began on May 25, 1833 and ended on September 24, 1833. Rawn appears to have tried this form so that his record keeping would be more portable; indeed, this booklet begins when he marries and he and his wife are traveling. In any event, he only tried this form once. He intended to re-copy its entries into the normal-sized Book 4, but he wrote that “my time and inclination will not permit,” so the booklet exists now as a kind of insert in Book 4. The second unusual manuscript is a brief paperbound booklet, titled “A Journey To or Towards the Seat of War,” in which Rawn described his trip south in July, 1861, to observe the first battles of the Civil War. The third atypical document is a transcription titled “Rawn's Service Diary of Capt. Eby Byers' Company of Cavalry, in September, 1862.” It was transcribed in 1893. We do not know where the original document is or who copied it. Rawn had written it as a narrative of his few weeks of service as a sixty-one-year-old soldier in a unit intended to be a home guard against a southern invasion.

After he changed the format of his record keeping in the second volume (which he started with dozens of pages of definitions of legal terms, from “Treason” to “Piracy”), Rawn still noted his household expenditures and income in his journals, but he reserved his most extensive financial data for separate volumes he continued to call Day Books. There were five of these that covered the periods (1) January 2, 1832 to October 28, 1837; (2) November 1, 1837 to March 1, 1842; (3) 1837-1851; (4) October 24, 1839 to April 12,

1854; and (5) April 14, 1853 to January 2, 1866. After he died in mid-December, 1865, someone entered transactions in his Day Book for two more weeks to close his accounts. Finally, Rawn also maintained four other volumes he labeled, “Receipt Books”; these consist of pages of hand-written notes documenting monies that he had handled in legal transactions. These volumes are labeled “No. 1, April 2, 1834 to July 21, 1849”; “No. 2, July 23, 1849 to April 1, 1855”; “No. 3, April 1, 1855 to August 15, 1861”; and “No. 4, November 26, 1861 to December 15, 1865.”

Of Rawn’s total of forty volumes of writings and documents, our goal is to transcribe and annotate his thirty-two daily journals, which include the first un-numbered, mixed volume of Daily Memorandums, Books 2 through 29, the May-September 1833 pocket journal, the 1861 “Journey to War” booklet, and the 1893 transcription of the 1862 militia journal. These journals might finally amount to about 8,000 pages of word-processed text, or about 2,000,000 words from over 11,000 daily entries.

What sort of man kept these records? The students’ introductions to their transcriptions—particularly the introductions to the master’s theses by Groff, Hermann, Planté, and Key—convey the most biographical details, but a summary here of the high points of Rawn’s life and journals will be useful. Characteristically, he was objective and methodical, but also sentimental and moralistic. He was a public citizen engaged with his community and devoted to his profession, but he was also an amiable private friend and a dutiful family man. He was white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, behaving in a way that the sociologist Max Weber would later call a combination of the “Protestant Ethic” and the “Spirit of Capitalism.” But Rawn employed a valet and domestic servants, owned

properties in the city, and resented “impudence,” so it would be inadequate to say he was simply a middle-class American. We might judge him partly by his tombstone, which is good-sized, straight-forward, and well-placed in the Harrisburg Cemetery, but certainly not monumental or highly ornamented like others in that burial ground. The county histories contain biographies of him, but there are no streets or buildings named after him in the capital city. Twenty years after his death, a colleague remembered him as

. . . possessed of considerable ability, of great energy of character, and indefatigable in attention to his professional business. He was fluent in speech, and in controversy was the last to yield. He was about six feet high and of good address.³

Charles Coatesworth Pinckney Rawn was born in Georgetown, Washington, DC, on July 30, 1802, to David Rawn and Elizabeth Cheyney Rawn. His grandparents, Caspar and Barbara Rahn (original spelling) were natives of Germany. He had a sister, Julia Ann, and a brother, David. When Charles was seven years old, his father died in Staunton, Virginia. His mother then moved the family to Thornbury, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. He attended West Chester Academy and then relocated in 1826 to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he studied law in an apprenticeship for five years with Francis Rawn Shunk, his cousin through his father’s side, who would be elected governor in 1844. On May 25, 1833, at age 30, he married Frances Peacock Clendenin, age 18, of

³ George Washington Harris, in William Henry Egle, ed. *History of Dauphin and Lebanon Counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Biographical and Genealogical* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1883), p. 277

Harrisburg, in a ceremony performed by Rev. W. R. DeWitt, a local Presbyterian pastor. Frances was the daughter of Joseph Clendenin and Elizabeth Slough. The newly married couple set up their home near Market Square in the center of Harrisburg, only a short walk from the Susquehanna River.

Charles and Frances's union produced seven children, four of whom died young. Their first baby was stillborn on March 1, 1834. Elizabeth Rawn was born in 1835 and died three years later on March 19, 1838. She apparently suffered from a spinal disorder, and Rawn often refers to her medical care in the journals. Their third child, Charles C. Rawn, Jr., was born on December 16, 1837. He attended the Edgehill School and Princeton in New Jersey, then went on to a notable military career as a major in the United States Army. He survived the Custer battle of 1876 and was cited for bravery. He died on October 6, 1887. James C. Rawn was born in 1840 and died April 12, 1842. Mary Scott Clendenin Rawn was born on April 10, 1842 and died in March of 1852 at the age of ten. Frances Clendenin Rawn was born on April 18, 1849 and was educated primarily in private schools. She later attended Ivy Hall Seminary in Brighton, New Jersey, and married William J. Torrington. The last child, John Calvin Rawn, mentioned often in the journal, also attended Princeton. He became a civil engineer and manager of the Roanoke Gas and Water Company. He died on October 3, 1926.

Rawn was devout, if not saintly. He was one of the original seven Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Harrisburg at Chestnut and Second streets, organized in 1859 and now called Market Square Presbyterian. Among the other Trustees were the prominent Harrisburg citizens James McCormick, A. Boyd Hamilton, and J. Donald Cameron. He also attended the Episcopal Church on Front Street with his mother-in-law, Elizabeth

Clendenin, where she was a member; however, he thought Episcopalians tried to be “all things to all men.”⁴ When those churches weren’t holding services, the family attended others in the city such as the Baptist, Reformed, and Lutheran. Church appeared to be an opportunity for fellowship as well as worship. One might even be entertained there, and Rawn often commented on the qualities of the pastors he heard. His shortest journal entries were on Sundays, his day of rest. His journals show religious sentiments from time to time, such as his asking, when he was ill, that God’s will be done.

Rawn was admitted to the Bar on January 18, 1831. He was twenty-nine then, and had started his journal the year before. The manner of his initiation says much about the ritual and fellowship among lawyers in antebellum Harrisburg. Rawn wrote in his Daily Memorandum on January 17, 1831:

I was examined upon the law from 7 to 10 o’clock this evening at Buehlers. By Saml Douglas attor genl state, Geo Fisher 40 years of the bar, S B Wood of perhaps 15 years, Pres Judge Calvin Blythe and there was also present Advocate Judge Hummel. I was passed with the unanimous compliments of all the gentlemen. We drank 1 bottle of champagne and 2 bottles of sherry wine on the occasion.

The next day he wrote:

This morning on motion of Geo Fisher Esq (prefaced by some highly flattering remarks upon my having had much attention), I was sworn and admitted to practice as an attorney in the several courts of Dauphin County. In the evening I was visited and congratulated over 6 bottles of sherry and of champagne by the following gentlemen all the

⁴ Rawn Journal, Book 13, May 22, 1842

members of the Bar excepting 2 being present. Judges Blythe McKinney: Wood, Schoch, Ayres, Harris, 2 Alricks, McClure, Roberts Geo Fisher, Franklin, Forster, Shunk, Parke, Burnside, Edgars, Fortis, Findlay and Hister/Students. Dr Roberts Misses Shigogue, Clendenin, Peacock, Pop Hamilton (printer) Buehler and perhaps a few others. We adjourned after a delightful evening at 12 o'clock.

Rawn operated a general law practice, with his office located at 7 South 2nd Street on Market Square, near his home. He later developed a reputation as a criminal defense specialist, although he sometimes prosecuted too. There are constant references in his journal to deeds, powers of attorney, wills, agreements, contracts, and similar mundane instruments, but he also defended clients against seduction and bastardy. His fees ranged from \$2 to \$10 at first; later he charged up to \$50 and more for his services, and his annual income grew from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. The transcriptions by Groff, McNabb, Plante, and Key, among others, go into much detail on the finances of his legal practice, his correspondence, and the typical matters he handled.⁵

Rawn became active in civic affairs, as one would expect of an enterprising attorney. He was a Mason and paid close attention to anti-Masonic activities and political candidates. He was appointed Deputy Attorney General of Dauphin County in 1833, and he was also a member of the Pennsylvania Canal Commission and the Harrisburg Library Association. He became a leader of the Harrisburg Greys, a local militia unit, and during the Civil War was appointed Commissioner of the Board of

⁵ For legal history in Dauphin County, see Homer L. Kreider, "History of the Dauphin County Courts," *Dauphin County Historical Review*, 1 (December, 1952), 5-19, which is included in this web site, and also George P. Donehoo, "The Courts and the Attorneys of Dauphin County," Chapter 9 in *Harrisburg and Dauphin County: A Sketch of the History for the Past Twenty-five Years, 1900-1925* (Dayton, OH: National Historical Association, 1925), 85-93.

Enrollment for the 14th Congressional District by Secretary of War William Stanton. He helped organize a lyceum, served on the school board and examined pupils, and invested in the Harrisburg Cotton Manufacturing Company and the Dauphin Deposit Bank.

Rawn mentions the prominent Pennsylvanians with whom he mingled. These included several governors, such as Francis Shunk, George Wolf, and William Findlay, and Senator Simon Cameron, whom he came to deplore. Even more striking is the number of national figures he mentions encountering socially or observing in action, such as Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, Nicholas Biddle, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Calhoun, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Abraham Lincoln. Rawn was an active supporter and associate of James Buchanan, and his papers include many newspaper clippings about the fifteenth president. Rawn himself was a Free Soil Democrat who attended the party's state convention in 1853. Once on the 4th of July, he read the Declaration of Independence in public.

According to William Henry Egle's sketch of his life, "Charles C. Rawn was an earnest antagonist of human slavery and during the days of the Fugitive Slave law, was the eloquent pleader in behalf of the poor black."⁶ Indeed, it is Rawn's discussion of his relations with many African American clients, workers, and household employees that is possibly the most important feature of his journal. Rawn surely had anti-slavery credentials. In July, 1852, he wrote a graphic and highly critical account of his visit to the slave market in Richmond, Virginia: "I detest and abhor the accursed business . . . this Nation will yet weep over this National sin of slavery," he declared. His defense of black "rioters" and runaways in Harrisburg courts in the 1850s has been analyzed by

⁶ William Henry Egle, ed., *Notes and Queries, Historical and Genealogical, Chiefly Relating to Interior Pennsylvania*, Reprint First and Second Series in Two Volumes, Volume II (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1970; orig. ed. 1893), p. 226.

scholars citing Rawn's journals.⁷ Rawn's ally in his defense work was Mordecai McKinney, and their adversary was the federal slave commissioner in Harrisburg, Richard McAllister. In 1854, Rawn was elected president of a public meeting that opposed the admission of Nebraska to the union if it were a slave state. He declared to a colleague that he was for "Freedom and Free Kansas." In 1857 he recorded the appearance of William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass in Harrisburg.

Rawn's journals also demonstrate, however, that his racial attitudes were complicated and not always generous. He was not color-blind. He was very careful to keep track of race throughout his journals, seeming always to note when he had dealings with a "colored," "black," or mixed-race "yellow" person. (He also noted when he dealt with Irishmen.) On January 25, 1837, he signed a petition in the Harrisburg *Keystone* newspaper that called for resettling free blacks in Liberia. In 1843, he angrily pursued one of his own black servants who had run away. On June 28, 1842, he condemned in his journal a black workman he thought had talked his sister into paying too much for hauling a trunk. "Rascally extortion," Rawn called it, and he wrote in his journal, in large letters, underlined, that the man was a "nigger." In his reminiscence, George Washington Harris asserted that Rawn was "decidedly opposed to abolition, alleging a fear of a servile war of blacks against whites."⁸ Rawn thus demonstrates the contradictions that

⁷See Gerald G. Eggert's pioneering articles, "The Impact of the Fugitive Slave Law on Harrisburg: A Case Study," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 109 (October, 1985), 537-569, and, in the same issue, "A Pennsylvanian Visits the Richmond Slave Market," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 109 (October, 1985), 571-576. George Nagle's website, "Afrolumens," once provided information on Rawn's defense of blacks in Harrisburg, but this valuable, volunteer contribution at http://www.afrolumens.org/rising_freehbqcem05.html is not presently available.

⁸Egle, ed. *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lebanon in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Biographical and Genealogical* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1883), p. 278. See also William Egle, ed. *Commemorative Biographical Encyclopedia of Dauphin County, Pennsylvania . . .* (Chambersburg, PA: J. M. Runk & Co., 1896), p. 940.

were sometimes in the minds of even those Americans who were adamantly opposed to slavery.

He walked for an hour or so almost every day of good weather, or else he rode his horse for that amount of time. He also took his family for carriage rides regularly. He worked his own garden in the morning, and usually worked in his law office until 9 p.m. He attended temperance meetings, considered public bathing on the Jersey shore somewhat foolish-looking, and was offended by a painting portraying Adam and Eve unclothed and expelled from paradise. But occasionally he drank with colleagues, gambled on election results, and attended the local theater. He played quoits, but not on the Sabbath. What we know about both his ordinary and his extraordinary behavior comes from our transcribing only a fourth of his journals to this point, so we expect to understand him better, as well as be more puzzled by him, as we continue reading. Rawn's associates knew that he was keeping a private journal, and one of them said to a newspaper that it "may contain some interesting reminiscences." Already we agree with that.

The journal's closing page may be its most poignant. An ailing Rawn had begun the 29th volume on October 23, 1865, predicting that he would not be filling all its pages, as he had the other books. His final entry, a typical one, was made on December 14, 1865. He died a few days later, on December 18, at 64 years of age. Following his last entry, someone, perhaps a son, wrote a benediction bringing father's ever-present journal to a proper close:

The faithful hand here ceased its labours, laid down its pen,
never to resume it, and after a brief struggle with the king

of terrors, calmly fell asleep in Jesus on the morning of the 18th of Dec 1865. Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his.”

Directly beneath that remark, perhaps the same person pasted Rawn’s newspaper obituary:

RAWN—at Harrisburg on Monday, December 18. Charles Cotesworth Rawn, Esq. of the Harrisburg Bar. Mr. Rawn was one of the oldest and best known members of the legal profession in Harrisburg. He was an industrious and faithful lawyer and a gentleman of high standing. His health had been declining and he looked forward to his death with Christian fortitude and resignation, having set his house in order and prepared himself in every way for the great change.

The record Charles Rawn left behind is probably the most detailed and extensive life history ever composed by a resident of Harrisburg, and it might be one of the most useful personal documents available about a nineteenth-century Pennsylvania lawyer. It cannot be recommended for its literary merit, and the author did not intend to pack it with trenchant social and political observations, but historians who are looking for evidence of antebellum everyday life should find Rawn and his journals indispensable.