

Patterns of Her Life - The Diary of a Vermont Dairy Farmer's Wife • Susan Francis

Patterns of Her Life

THE DIARY OF A VERMONT DAIRY FARMER'S WIFE

1894



In the dooryard of the Stoddard house in the 1890s

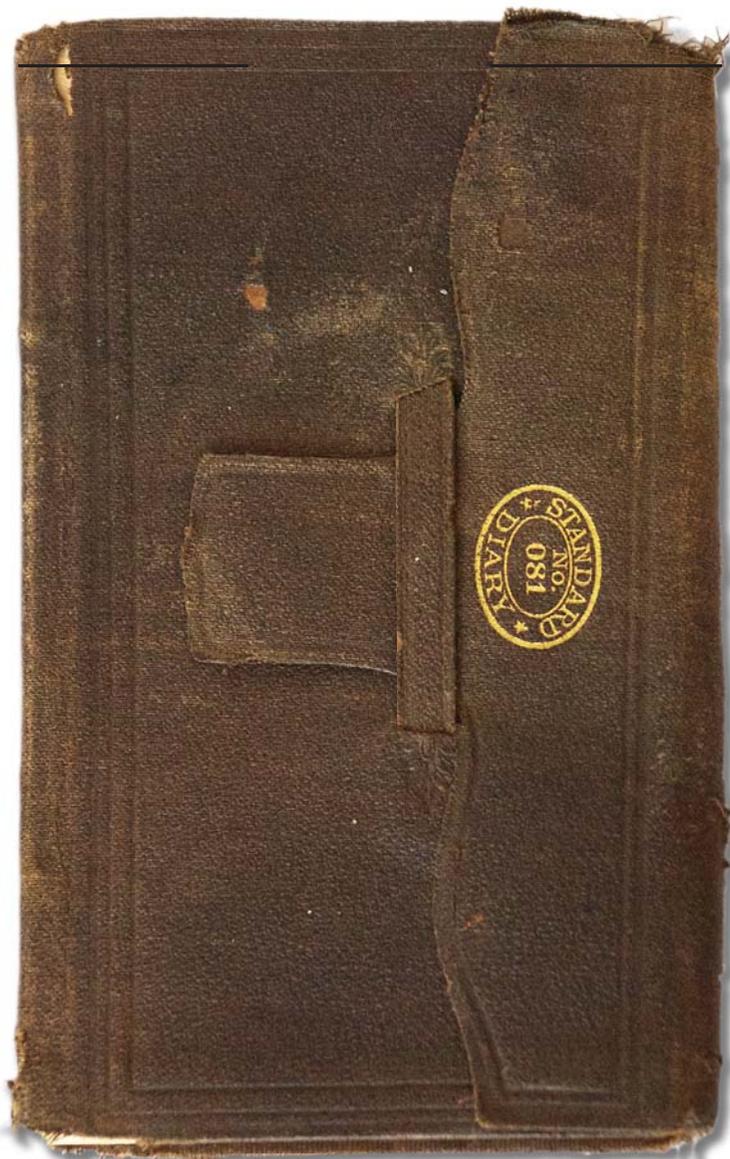
Deciphering & Analysis by Susan Francis



Patterns of Her Life

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1894



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Dedication

In memory of my maternal grandmother,

Annie F. White,

of Acushnet, MA,

first a one-room school teacher,

then a dairy farmer's wife (1882-1976)

Adaline Stoddard's Diary

Acknowledgements

I want to thank several people who helped me with the research and the writing of this work. Foremost is Keith Taylor, a published historical non-fiction writer himself, who has a connection with Waitsfield, the location of the diarist. He repeatedly sent me books about Waitsfield found in the Waitsfield Historical Society's gift shop. He was my most enthusiastic supporter, especially after he read an early draft.

Alan Rumrill, Director of the Cheshire County Historical Society in Keene, NH, agreed to be my mentor. He suggested that I add more background on the agricultural history of Vermont to set the diary in its time and place. He helped me shape and finalize this document and wrote a foreword.

Lois De Heer, President of the Waitsfield Historical Society, has helped me more recently, ferreting out information on where the Stoddard family was buried, with the help of Jack Smith, and on other questions.

Another who assisted me in understanding more about farm life was my elderly neighbor, Stephen Tarr, who grew up on a farm in New Hampshire. I am grateful to him for correcting my idea that the Evaporator mentioned in the diary was for facilitating the cream to butter process. It was used to speed up the making of maple sugar! Lastly, thanks to all my early readers of my manuscript who encouraged me to publish the results after years of research and writing.

Lastly, thanks to Jim Dodds, of Its-Your-Story.weebly.com, who took my manuscript and turned it into a book. He also found the photograph of the Stoddard House in the 1890s and took the photographs of the headstones and the house as it now stands. I am grateful for his skill and ideas. Thanks also to the Waitsfield Historical Society for the use of photos from its archives.

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Foreword

The federal census agent who visited the families of Waitsfield, Vermont in 1900 found 178 households in this central Vermont community. Almost 100 of those families, well over half, reported that their chief occupation and source of income was “farmer” or “farm laborer.”

Agriculture was still the dominant economic factor in Central New England in 1900, but the nature of life on the farm was changing dramatically. Emigration had been plaguing New England farms for decades and now modern technology was affecting the size and production of farms. On the other hand, centuries old farming practices and traditions still ruled farm life in the region at the end of the 19th century.

How can we learn more about these farms, farm families, and the impact they had on New England history? The six state region is blessed with a rich record base dating back hundreds of years. Among the most personal of those manuscripts are daily diaries. The insight and details recorded in diaries can help us to understand how individual lives impacted, and were in turn impacted by, the larger themes of American history.

Waitsfield farmer Hiram Stoddard and his wife Adaline were deeply entrenched in the long standing agricultural traditions of their day, while at the same time being swept up in the rapidly occurring transitions of the 1890s. During 1894 Adaline Stoddard recorded her activities on their farm and in the town of Waitsfield in a daily diary. Susan Francis’ opportune encounter with this diary has resulted in a study that allows the reader to look back into the Stoddard farm house and the community of Waitsfield more than 120 years ago. She explains and expands upon the diarist’s simple, unembellished entries

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to help the reader gain not only an understanding of daily life on the farm, but also the complex interactions of an entire community of farmers, laborers, mechanics, and professionals – and how they fit into the ongoing transformation of American life.

The reader views the unending work of women on the farm: baking, sewing, cleaning, washing laundry, making clothes, processing produce, and the constant churning of butter. The annual patterns of agriculture quickly become apparent: planting, tending, harvesting, maple sugaring, drawing wood, breaking roads, and much more. We also see the impact of technology, such as the railroad, and of expanding regional and national markets.

Francis' transcription and explanation of Adaline Stoddard's diary illuminate the experiences of a Vermont farm family during a period of sweeping agricultural change and serve to expand our understanding of the impact of hill farms and farm communities on the history and landscape of New England.

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* *Courtesy of Waitsfield Historical Society Photo Collection*
<http://www.waitsfieldhistoricalsociety.com/photosnw.htm>

Adaline Stoddard's Diary

1. INTRODUCTION

Acquiring the Diary and Deciphering its Content

The note read:

Stoddard Historical, Stoddard, N.H.

This little diary, dated 1894 was written by Mrs. Hiram F. Stoddard. It came to me in an Auction box and I found it very interesting. I don't know if Mrs. Stoddard came from your town or not, but I am ready to pass it on so thought of you. Hope you enjoy it.

[Note with diary from L. Eileen MacLeod]

In 2005, when first I picked up the worn, leather bound diary, I did not know I was about to begin my first adventure in historical detection, which has preoccupied me ever since. Kindly, a woman had sent it to the Historical Society of the nearest town with the name "Stoddard," which happened to be Stoddard, NH, where my husband was then president of the Stoddard Historical Society. Although the woman wanted the diary to be connected with our town, it was not.

Having the diary in our home over the winter (since our little museum has no heat in the winter), I picked it up several times and tried to read it. It was very difficult. I think Mrs. Hiram F. Stoddard had some local schooling in a one room schoolhouse, but probably only to about seventh or eighth grade. She had to guess at words or names she had not seen in print, usually phonetically. Also, I think she wrote this diary before going to bed when she was commonly exhausted.

The diarist's very florid capital letters, her phonetic spellings especially of names, her abbreviations for people, places and things, her almost total lack of punctuation, her misspellings and inconsistent spellings, her single words oddly split between two lines and her incomplete words made

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for slow going. However, the more I figured out, the more I wanted to continue. Eventually I was hooked! It took me that first winter just to transcribe what I could decipher of the whole diary. I had many questions.

Although it was a challenge, I loved it when I would suddenly get a breakthrough on a word, name, or a reference to something I could look up. At first I was in the dark as to where the diarist had lived until she mentioned on February, 15, 1894, that “The girls went to Montpelier...” After focusing in on Montpelier, possibly the capital of Vermont, I also found other towns mentioned, like Moretown, Warren, and Roxbury, towns north and southwest of that Montpelier. I still did not know exactly where the diarist was living until I tapped into www.nara.gov, a National Archives site for census records. There was a Hiram F. Stoddard and his family in Waitsfield, VT, south of Montpelier.

The 1880 U.S. Census listed him as a farmer, born October 13, 1840 (hence 53 in early 1894), his wife Adaline Stoddard, also born 1840. Their children were listed: Gertrude, age 13 (27 in 1894), Cherey, 6 (20 in 1894) and Clinton, one year old. Now I understand why people can get so excited about discovering their ancestors. Seeing them in the records suddenly makes them real. Now I needed to reread the diary in light of this information, because on the first read, I had imagined Adaline, the diarist, as maybe in her late 30’s or 40’s and her girls as young. The son must have died before 1894, for he was never mentioned in the diary. What a help to the aging Hiram a fifteen year old son would have been on the farm in 1894.

Other breakthroughs followed as I realized words were not necessarily used the same as today. For example, Adaline often wrote that she “went up to Warren” or “down to the village”. Today, as a New Hampshire resident, I would say, “I went up to Lisbon, NH, and then down to Massachusetts” meaning “I went up [North] to Lisbon and then down [South] to MA.” The physical setting of the diarist became clearer when I grasped that she was *literally* going “up to Warren” which was higher than where she lived and she was going “down to the village” which was a descent from her home. Again if I were to say today, “I am going to visit my folks this

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2. WAYS TO APPROACH THE DIARY

When I was putting this project together, I knew I wanted to include some photocopied pages of the handwriting. Also I wanted to present her exact words in typed form, leaving misspellings, phonetically spelled names and no punctuation between thoughts(Appendix G). To help the reader in reading Adaline's handwriting, as I learned to decipher it, so I've added a key here. Appendix F will give the reader a fully edited version.

A		N	
B		O	
C		P	
D		Q	
E		R	
F		S	
G		T	
H		U	
I		V	
J		W	
K		X	
L		Y	
M		Z	

Figure
01

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Wednesday, May 16 Pleasant

I done up my work and sewd on Cherries cape

Thursday, May 17 Pleasant

the same work as yest/erday finished of C cape and comenced her Dress

Friday, May 18 rainy

I ironed forenoon sewd a little H went after Cherrie Mother worse Clate came up to tell us Hiram went down to see her in Eve

Saturday, May 19 rainy

Churned C moped afternoon she and I went to Warren

Sunday, May 20 cold and cloudy

I went to Church a lone every body fraid of the can/ker Rash the text was from Math 10-30 by the presidind E surley there is a God, oh I wish I might rearalize more from day to day that good old psalm the Lord is my S

Monday, May 21 Pleasant

I warshed and made soap and hulled corn went to bed so tired could not sleep the tryals of life are at tim/es discouragin but when I look to God he helps me to bare them al

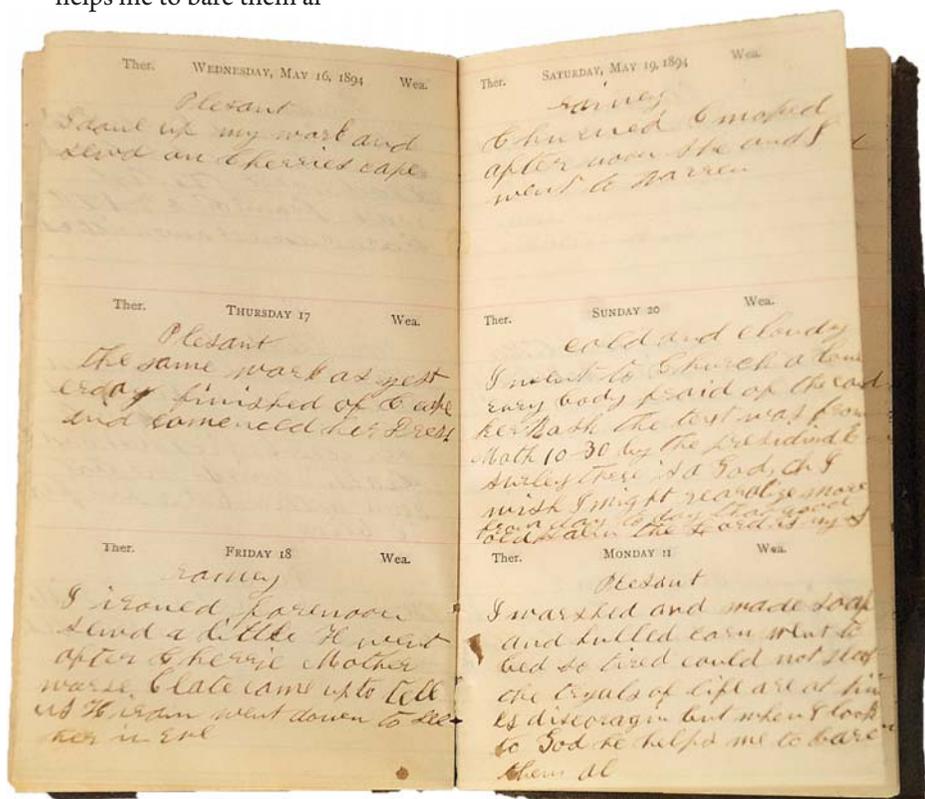


Figure 02

3. THE SETTING - WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

The Location and Topography

While you may understandably be eager to get to the actual diary and the analysis of it and may choose to skip over this section on the geography of Vermont and a brief survey of the state of agriculture in the 19th century, to Section 4, "The Cast", I suggest that you will get more out of the diary if you take the time to read this material first.

To understand the life of the Stoddards and their town of Waitsfield, we need to orient ourselves to Vermont and its geographical features. First, the state of Vermont is in the northeastern part of the United States in what is called New England. The state is bordered on the north by Canada's Quebec Province, on the west by New York State, the east by New Hampshire, and on the south by Massachusetts. Vermont got its name from the French who named it for its dominant features, the green mountains. Indeed, four ranges of mountains lie in a generally north to south orientation with valleys in between.

The most prominent is called the Green Mountains Range which extends from the Canadian border all the way to the Massachusetts' line. It is located a bit west of the north/south center of the state. Generally the mountains were forested in the time of the diary and still are. The valleys were enriched with alluvial soils from the local rivers and streams. Early eighteenth century pioneers mostly came from Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, which were getting crowded. They first settled on these promising valley lands and began farming. As the best spots were taken, more and more folks cleared the lower slopes of the mountains, mostly raising cattle and grains to feed them.

For many years the parallel north/south nature of the mountain ranges made it hard for folks to travel in an east to west direction and vice

4. "THE CAST" - MAJOR PEOPLE IN THE DIARY

Imagine yourself arriving at a party where you did not know anyone personally. When you found the host, he would introduce you to a whole raft of people. After general chit-chat, you would settle down to really talk with maybe only two or three. You would introduce yourselves, and then learn about each others' work or interests. The next day you would remember a bit about those persons' lives, but their names might elude you. The next time you met them, you would not remember their names, having to ask again, but could ask how the garden was thriving or if they had finished writing their book.

This is what it is like to dive into a diary by an unknown person. The diary written by Adaline Stoddard was her daily recording of events as she lived them and the interactions with her family and villagers. To help you get a grasp of who was greatly involved in Adaline's life, I have made the following list. I have bolded names of the most important. This information is found in Jones, p. 373, 387, 405 and 475.

The Stoddards

Hiram Freeman Stoddard, husband of diarist, b. Oct. 13, 1840,
[53, early 1894]

Adaline Palmer, [Mrs. Hiram F. Stoddard] b. Sept 18, 1840,
[53, early 1894]

Gertie [Gertrude], first daughter/school teacher, b. 1867,
[27 in 1894]

Cherrie [Cherey] 2nd daughter/student in teacher school,
b. 1874, [20 in 1894]

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Cherrie was allowed home for Christmas from the 21st to early Dec. 26:

Dec. 26 Colister Church went to carry Abbie and Cherrie back to Waterbury....

Cherrie and Abby were either going to the same school or to schools in the same town. Their fathers were taking turns with their conveyance. It is not clear whether she might have been teaching in Waterbury or continuing her preparations to eventually teach. Cherrie did pass her exam and ended up teaching in Schoolhouse #3 in Waitsfield by summer of 1895 (*Bisbee, p. 254*).



**Inside the 2nd Methodist Church in Waitsfield village,
Adaline's new church.**

**"Mr. McLaughlin and boy came to build the arch,
Oct. 19, 1894" WHS# 107**

**Figure
08**

7. SOCIAL LIFE, PERSONAL AND VILLAGE

Adaline's involvement with Other People

On a scale of one to ten with one being the least sociable and ten the most, I would have to put the diarist at ten plus. When you read about all the work she did regularly, you wonder how she could have such a full social life. She obviously liked people and was close to the many relatives of both her own and Hiram's families. Among the many acquaintances and friends, the couples, John and May Kelty and William and Alice Kelsey, were their closest friends. To give you an idea of the level of connectedness, I have included lists of her many interactions. [I have bolded names so they stand out.]

People who had meals and/or stayed overnight

- Jan. 12 ...**Duane Hudson** here to Dinner....
- Feb. 8 ...**Wheeler** from Roxbury took Dinner....
- Mar. 1 I got a boyl'd dish for Dinner if **Alma** [**Hudson**] and children here.... [They did come.]
- May 9 ...**Harry and Harriet** [**Porter**] hear to Dinner
- May 10 ...I got a boill'd dish [,] **May** [**Kelty**] up after noon [,] I sew'd for her....
- May 26 ...**Andrew Long** [Adaline's brother-in-law] here to supper [and presumably for Hiram's mother's funeral]
- Jul 9 ...**Kilie Hill** stade over Lunch....
- Jul 16 ...**Charley Sabens** cam [stayed overnight]

8. MORE VIEWS OF THE DIARIST

Her Religious Life

Listening to and trying to follow God's word was extremely important to Adaline. Not only did she bring home from her Methodist Church each Sunday the chapter and verse of the sermon, but she fretted when she could not get there at all:

I did not go to Church [,] I thought it to[o] bad to go a lone but I am sorry I did not go for it is a long lonsome day without hearing the word of the God preached [,] O Thou who hearest prayer whether we are conscious of it or not [,] teach me how to do Thy will [2/11]

The diarist really liked her regular minister whom she called "Bro Duglass" or "Bro D". He was William Douglass who served in the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1892-1894 [Jones, p. 124, 132]. He did not seem to use hellfire and damnation to scare his parishioners to righteousness. Instead, she praised him often as a teacher [1/7, 4/8, 8/19]. Home after church on Sunday, June 3, she said Bro Duglass, "... showed us how that through the Bible we might have hope..." Another Sunday, September 23, her entry read, "... Bro S preached as good as usual telling and explaining in his good way."

Sometimes her church had "union" services with the Waitsfield Congregational Church. She also had praise for this minister, Rev. Elisha S. Fisk, called to that church in 1887 [Jones, p.121]. She wrote:

*...both ministers spoke...Mr. Fisk spoke the best I ever heard him
[1/21/94]*

Mr. Fisk preached ...very good [4/22/94]

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Around plowing and planting time, April 19-21, William Kelsey came two days, and a Mr. Wright was hired. Later in May, Ralph Fisher, a young man, "...was here to work" [5/23], and on July 23 Andrew Liberty was also "here to work". When Hiram and Adaline went on a trip for six days in late July, Hiram fetched William Dale to do the chores for that time. [7/26-27] Hiram could afford to hire men when they were needed.

Early on Adaline records a busy day. Among many tasks she "...warshed [washed] down both sets of stars [stairs]..." [3/3] From this I deduce that theirs was a two story building, probably in the New England Cape style. The Cape roof is steep in order to shed deep snow and comes down just above the windows of the first floor. There would have been a fancier set of stairs at the front the house, likely leading upstairs from a front entry hall [11/15]. The second set would have been at the back of the house, probably coming down from the bedrooms, or "chambers" as the diarist calls them, to the kitchen. On January 4 she remarks that she had "...put stair Carpet down..." again most likely on the more formal front stairway. Also she "...cleaned plastering..." [11/13] These were embellishments not all farmhouses would have had.



**Figure
10**

This photo of the Stoddard Homestead in the 1890s was discovered in the Waitsfield Historical Society's collection, #144. The woman in the

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photo isn't identified, but by her clothing and the date of the picture it's fairly certain it is either Adaline or one of her daughters.

I know that the house was reasonably bright for she mentioned washing windows often. As part of her spring cleaning on April 21, she "...warshed six windows and casin [casings around windows]." June 3 she was washing windows again, [additional? or the same ones as before?] and five more on August 24-25. The diarist also said that she had put on window screens [6/11/1898] and hung a screen door [6/9/1894]. I suspect the door was the back door of the kitchen so that the heat from the year-round cooking stove could be vented.

For one thing the house must have been good sized because of some other comments Adaline made. Off the kitchen she had "...cleaned one Sid[e] pantry" [10/22]. This implies to me a large pantry with two walls of shelves. She also mentioned cleaning "...the parlor bedroom..." [8/24]. Now this is a bit confusing to me because normally a parlor was the best room in the house rarely used and only for formal company. Maybe practical Adaline had turned it into a spare bedroom. We know that when the boarders came November 3-5, there were two married couples to put up. Another puzzlement was a reference: "...Cherrie cleaned big room" [11/12]. Maybe there was a "family" room as we would say today where the whole family could gather.

The milkroom played a fairly important role in the layout of the farm. If their house was like most 19th century farmhouses, the house proper was connected to other extensions, possibly the milkroom in this case, where the barn, also attached, gave ready access from the barn to the milkroom. We know there was a pipe which Adaline was at pains to keep clean. [10/18] This milkroom was usurped for the boiling down of the watery maple sap in early spring. This continuous connection of the house to the barn through other functional rooms allowed the farmers in winter to get to their animals no matter how bad the weather.

Being fairly self-reliant about the house myself, I was endeared to Adaline because she would tackle most any task around the house. In the November, she made a big effort to oil all the window blinds to let

Appendix B: Identifiable Minor Persons

APPENDIX B.

LIST OF IDENTIFIABLE MINOR PERSONS MENTIONED IN DIARY

Note: Spellings are Adaline Stoddard's unless corrected by other sources or census records. She also spells the same people's names differently at times so I have had to choose one. Much of the following information such as birth dates and family relationships came from www.familysearch.org and ancestry.com and Matt Bushnell Jones, *History of the Town of Waitsfield, Vermont 1782-1908*, George E. Littlefield, Boston, 1909. These people can be found in the diaries on the dates given.

Last, First Name

Allen, Ed	6/7/1898; held reception
Barnard, Orlo[w]	2/21/1894; held an auction which Hiram attended
Barry, Len	10/19/94; visited Adaline and Hiram.
Billings, Destings	5/2/94; Adaline and Hiram attended his funeral.
Brown, Emaline	2/14/94; cousin of Adaline; b.1833 to Adaline's uncle, Jonathan Palmer; m. Hiram Brown [Jones, p. 406]
Bruce, Cyren	1/10/94; Hiram and Adaline visited; probably b.1839, Warren, farm laborer.
Bruce, Herbie	son of Cyren, b. 1869; visited Adaline and Hiram; stayed overnight 11/20-11/21/94.

APPENDIX C.
 OBITUARIES AND CLIPPINGS IN BACK POCKET



Figure
18

GOLDEN TEXT.
Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Luke 12. 30.

LESSON HYMN. 10, 11.

Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,
 Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite,
 Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,
 The promise assures us, "The Lord will provide."
 The birds, without barn or storehouse, are fed:
 From them let us learn to trust for our bread:
 His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied,
 So long as 'tis written, "The Lord will provide."
 When life sinks apace, and death is in view,
 The word of his grace shall comfort us through:
 Not fearing or doubting, with Christ on our side,
 We hope to die shouting, "The Lord will provide."

TIME.—A. D. 29.
PLAQUE.—Uncertain.

1. W
 for food
 2. W
 the ray
 3. H
 cannot
 our I
 4.
 to
 cloi
 5.
 Sel
 6
 he

GOLDEN TEXT.
Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Isa. 1. 16, 17.

LESSON HYMN. 8, 7.

Here I'll raise mine Ebenezer:
 Hither by thy help I'm come;
 And I hope, by thy good pleasure,
 Safely to arrive at home.
 Jesus sought me when a stranger,
 Wandering from the fold of God;
 He, to rescue me from danger,
 Interposed his precious blood.
 O to grace how great a debtor
 Daily I'm constrained to be!
 Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
 Bind my wandering heart to thee:
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
 Prone to leave the God I love;
 Here's my heart, O take and seal it;
 Seal it for thy courts above.

Figure
19

APPENDIX F.
FULL COPY OF EDITED 1894 DIARY

**Mrs. Hiram F. Stoddard of Waitsfield, Washington County,
Vermont. Transcribed and edited by Susan Francis**

Notes:

1. *The town of Waitsfield is in the Mad River Valley about fourteen miles as the crow flies southwest from Montpelier, the capital of Vermont, but further by road because of the mountains. Waitsfield had 760 people at the time of the 1900 census, only six years after the diary. Residents of Waitsfield were very close to those of Warren, a town five to six miles S.W. and at a higher altitude.*

2. *Below are the typed words of the handwritten diary as I understand it after many readings along with my edits. The text of the diary is bolded except for the weather notations. The scarce punctuation, erratic spellings and capitalizations are the diarist's. She often did not finish words, and much of her spelling, especially of proper names, is phonetic and was not always consistent in its misspelling. She seems to have written at night, usually after an exhausting day of work.*

Symbols used in editing

[] = my edits: usually helpful information, indications of possessives, and commas to indicate breaks in thoughts since Adaline did not use periods and very rarely commas.

/ = where word was cut and wrapped to next line or above the line.

[sic] = thusly written

[?] = a reasonable guess

— = unreadable letter(s)

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Monday, Jan. 1 Ple[a]sant Weather [,] neither wagoning nor sleighing

John Kelty[‘s folks [neighbor with wife, May, and children] **here to New years** [,] **Gertie** [27 year old, unmarried daughter] **taught school, begin the New year with New faith** [,] **Be of good courage and He will stren/gthen your heart al ye that hope in the Lord**

Tuesday, Jan. 2 Plesant Weather

I [Adaline was fifty-three when she started this diary] **baked afternoon and then went down to see how Alice was** [Alice Kelsey, wife of neighbor, William Kelsey]

Wednesday, Jan. 3 Plesant Weather

chored al the forenoon [,] **H**[iram] [Adaline’s fifty-four year old dairy farmer husband] **went to the village** [Waitsfield,VT] **in the afternoon** [,] **I went down to Norton**[‘s House [,] **Ironed in the Evening**

Thursday, Jan. 4 Rainey Weather

I chored forenoon [,] **put the stair Carpet down and done up a fine Shirt and sewd in Evening**

Friday, Jan. 5 Snowey Weather

done up my morning[‘s work and then sewd [,] **Colister Church**[‘s] folks [a familiy from Warren] **came here a visiting**

Saturday, Jan 6 plesant Weather

oh so pretty the snow on the trees [,] **I done up the work and mop**[p] **ed** [,] **H**[iram] **went after Gertie** [Gertie taught and boarded Monday to Friday in another town, but was usually brought home for the weekend by Hiram or Adaline] [,] **they had a Church meeting at the Cong**[regational church] **and a Dinner**

Appendix G.
Full Copy of Unedited 1894 Diary

Original 1894 Diary of Adaline Palmer Stoddard.
Mrs. Hiram F. Stoddard) of Waitsfield,
Washington County, Vermont

Notes: These are the words of the handwritten diary with very little editing. I have italicized the weather to separate it from her entries. The scarce punctuation and erratic spelling and capitalization are hers. She often did not finish words, and much of her spelling, especially of proper names, is phonetic and was not always consistent in its misspelling. She seems to have written at night, often after an exhausting day of work.

/ = where word was cut and wrapped to next line or
above the line.

[sic] = thusly written

[?] = a reasonable guess

— = unreadable letter(s)

Monday, Jan. 1 *Plesant Weather neither wagoning nor sleighing*

John Keltys folks here to New years Gertie taught school,
begin the New year with New faith Be of good courage and He
will stren/gthen your heart al ye that hope in the Lord

Tuesday, Jan. 2 *Plesant Weather*

I baked afternoon and then went down to see how Alice was

Wednesday, Jan. 3 *Plesant Weather*

chored al the forenoon H went to the village in the afternoon I
went down to Nortons House Ironed in the Evening

Patterns of Her Life - 1894

Thursday, Jan. 4 *Rainey Weather*

I chored forenoon put the stair Carpet down and done up a fine Shirt and sewd in Evening

Friday, Jan. 5 *Snowey Weather*

done up my mornings work and then sewd Colister Church folks came here a visiting

Saturday, Jan 6 *plesant Weather*

oh so pretty the snow on the trees I done up the work and mop[p]ed H went after Gertie they had a Church meeting at the Cong and a Dinner

Sunday, Jan 7 *Plesant Weather ferry snow*

Gertie and I went to Church Mr Duglass preached oh so good from Acts 2 37-38 and a prayr meeting after sabath school Week of prayr

Monday, Jan 8 *the Wether flery [flurry] of Snow*

I warshed and chored al day Hiram went to carrie Gertie to her school

Tuesday, Jan 9 *plesant Weather*

I chored forenoon got redy to go to prayr mee/ting Harry and Harriet Porter came and I went to the village with her I went to prayr meeting in the Evening

Wednesday, Jan 10 *the Weather snowey*

Ironed some forenoon H and I went to Cyron Bruces in after/noon finished ironing in Evening

Thursday, Jan 11 *plesant and pretty*

I chored in morn Chaney [R ?]oyce buchard I went to meeting afternoon Cherrie went down to the Village School, Mr. Duglass spak on the Power of the holy Spirit

Patterns of Her Life

It was only by chance that the worn, 1894 diary of Adaline Palmer Stoddard ended up in the hands of Ms. Susan Francis. When she dove into it, little did she know that it would lead her on a fascinating search for this woman. Using just the diary itself, Ms. Francis gleaned as much as she could from repeated readings (in the cutting edge way history is being taught now).

Once the old-fashioned handwriting was deciphered and the abbreviations used by Adaline were figured out, Ms. Francis wanted to make this capsule of a pre-electric and pre-gas powered way of life available. A fully edited version of the diary is included in this book along with analyses of the diarist's daily, weekly and seasonal tasks as a Vermont dairy farmer's wife. We learn what it was like to churn and mold butter each week, to "sugar off during maple sap season, to cut out a waistcoat, and make lots of chicken pies and doughnuts!

Life in 1894 was not all hard work. The diary reveals lots of "sociables" at different homes in the long winter, oyster suppers at the Odd Fellows Lodge, horse trot races, Decoration Day (Memorial Day) celebrations, local fairs and a strawberry supper.

In Adaline's diary, she describes the busy schedules of her school teaching daughters, her husband's work, and her close friendships, especially with the Poland, Kelsey and Kelty families. Because Adaline gives the first and last names of around ninety individuals, Ms. Francis was able, using the Internet, to recreate village life in Waitsfield, Vermont, in the Mad River Valley.

"Doing this detective work was the most fun I have had in years", Susan writes. She hopes after seeing how much can be done with skimpy lines in a diary, that you might be inspired to do the same with your family's written treasures.



Author Photo by Roberta Bell

After teaching English and American Literature for many years at Northeastern University in Boston, Ms. Francis ran her own garden design and landscape business in Concord, MA, and is now teaching watercolor painting in NH. She enjoys gardening, painting, Tai Chi, reading, and being with her children, grandchildren and friends.

