

Clara J.Hutchins, Letters, 1894
DOVER, N.H.
Accession Number: 2003-004

The collection consists of 76 letters written by Clara J. Hutchins during the year 1894. Research in the library did not find any genealogies for that name in Dover in the appropriate year.

Biographical Note

Referring to the Dover City Directories revealed the following:

1895 Directory lists Clara J. Hutchins, widow of Joseph C. Hutchins, home at 633 Central Avenue. Also residing there (boarding) were J. Wesley Hutchins, Master (Malden MA) High School, and Herbert Hutchins, teacher, Glastonbury, CT

1886-1887 Directory lists Clara as a widow. 1884-1885 Directory lists Joseph C. Hutchins, grocer, at that address, so he apparently died 1885-1887. His business was at Third Street near Franklin Square, and home on Franklin near Garrison Hill.

1871-72 lists him as being in business.

1857 Directory lists "Hutchins and Elkins, Grocers"

1843 Directory lists "Hutchins, E. & I. Goods"

Reference: "Pine Hill Cemetery, Dover, N.H. Vol I, Numbers 1-1178, by Frost. 929.3778b D743fp Vol I" p. 273, Number 1139:

Hutchins, Joseph Crumbull, 1816-1885

Hutchins, Clara Jane Dow, widow of Joseph C. Hutchins, 1818-1904

Also

Hutchins, Albert Fabyan (son of above) 1847-1850

Hutchins, Clara Emma (daughter of above) 1854-1855

Also

Hutchins, Ardelia McKenny Perkins, widow of John Wesley Hutchins, 1855-1920

Hutchins, Marjorie Ardelia, 1888-1951

Reference:

"Strafford County Marriages 1630-1860" A-L 929.3778a S 896c 1995 Vol I p 525

Hutchins, Joseph Crumbull of Dover b. 1816, d. April 30, 1885

Married July 9, 1844 in Newington, Clara J. Dow, b. 1818, d. Jan 21, 1904

Scope and Content Note

All of the letters were written to Herbert, alone, or to Herbert and his wife, Mary Bell. They lived in Glastonbury CT. He was a teacher but the letters do not reveal what he taught and there are also frequent references to his work in church, again, without reference to the kind of church or what his duties were.

Clara also referred in her letters to Wesley, who lived with his family and taught in Malden, MA. Clara relied heavily on both of these men for both financial and emotional help. There was no mention of either men's names in the Dover City Directory of those times, except to say that "Herbert Hutchins" and "J. Wesley Hutchins" were residing with her at the time the directory was published. Clara had had two children earlier who died in infancy. Birth records for Dover are sketchy and none of these Hutchins' were found in the State Records. The writer has made the assumption that Herbert and Wesley were older sons, mostly based upon how Clara addressed them and, in particular, to one letter which she did sign "lovingly, your mother" (to Herbert). Furthermore, what she wrote to Herbert about Wesley, just seems to imply that Wesley was another son. Oddly, it should be noted that she always signed her letters "C.J. Hutchins".

She lived alone but for varying periods of time, had women or girls come in to help. She apparently had been ill before the period of the letters but had recovered enough to return to her home. There is no indication of the illness she had suffered.

Her letters begin with one written on January 2. The letter describes her loneliness and let-down from the holidays when, apparently, she saw her whole family together. Her letters constantly run on about illness. In January and February the Grippe (the flu) was going around and clearly had a devastating effect on the population. Clara was also ill, apparently a mild case of the Grippe, but she was also very concerned because both Herbert and Wesley were sick when they departed after the holidays.

Beginning in February Clara begins to mention eye problems, She bought a pair from a pedlar that she liked. In March she mentions a fire at either a relative's or friend's house in Northwood. No mention of the event in Dover papers for the time.

Her letters of April contain worries and complaints about her own illness as well as all of her friends who also are sick. In May she claims "neuralgia of the head", which is very painful. Her writing reveals her suffering and is almost illegible. Later in May she begins to have serious problems with her eye, much pain, and cannot see. Can't do any housework and has problems getting and/or paying for help. The doctor visited and said she might be well enough to go outside by July. The June letters contain illness complaints and concerns.

She apparently lives on a piece of land large enough to have fruit trees in commercial numbers. She has a man, Mr. Winn, who may rent from her. He picks the fruit and sells it for her.

In September she got a new stove for cooking and heat. Wesley removed a large shrub and her neighbors were pleased because it had blocked their view. She tells us "shavings came Monday" which she uses to light her stove. "Much better than paper". Someone named Margie's husband couldn't earn enough money at the shop to keep them, so he moved to a farm to help there.

October letters indicate a serious turn for the worse with her eye. It keeps getting worse; she cannot read, which is a mainstay to her enjoyment of life. She even has a very difficult time writing her letters. The doctor suggested an operation but she is afraid she will become blind. An oculist describes the problem as too much pressure in the eyeball, which sounds a lot like glaucoma. Eyedrops don't help and the year's letters meander off to a close with no relief in sight.

To summarize her letters is difficult because we don't really know if she was as sick as she described or is a hypochondriac.

A few interesting characteristics of her writing were noted. Mentioned already, she, with only one exception, signs her letters to her son, "C.J. Hutchins" and even "Mrs. C.J. Hutchins".

In her script, she uses the old "f" letter for "s". In addition, when she has a visitor, she says she "had a stranger, yesterday". It seems as though she distinguishes between relatives, where she seems to use first names, and friends and neighbors, who are the "strangers".

Box and Folder List

Folder 1 – January – February, 1894

Folder 2 – March – April, 1894

Folder 3 – May – June, 1894

Folder 4 – July – October, 1894

Folder 5 – November – December, 1894