

American Antiquarian Society

Manuscript Collections

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Very Family, Papers, 1840-1866

LOCATION:

Octavo vols. "V"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

7 octavo volumes

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

For genealogical information on the Very family, see Essex Institute *Historical Collections*, vol. 2 (1860), p. 37. For a biographical sketch of Lydia Louisa Ann Very, see *DAB*, vol. 19, p. 257-258.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gift of Charles Henry Taylor, 1926

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

Frances Eliza Very (1821-1895) and Lydia Louisa Ann Very (1823-1901) were the daughters of Captain Jones and Lydia (Very) Very, of Salem, Mass. Their brother, Jones Very (1813-1880) was a controversial poet, author, and religious/spiritual figure among the Transcendentalists. The Very sisters lived with Jones and another brother, Washington (1815-1853), in Salem. Both women had long careers as teachers in public and private schools in Salem. They were known as slightly eccentric, ardently humanitarian, and nature-loving women.

The collection consists of one undated volume of writings by Frances Eliza Very, four volumes of poetry by Lydia Ann Very, dating from 1840 to 1848 and 1857 to 1866, and school records kept by Lydia, 1847 to 1853. Frances included poetry and several essays in her notebook. She wrote "A Dissertation on the Soul and Body," appealing to Christians to prepare for an eternal life by looking inward. Other "musings" examine such topics as education, "By Precept and Example how can we best inculcate the Spirit of Christianity?" and the "Miracles of the Fig Tree." She also wrote a critical essay addressed to Orestes Augustus Brownson (1803-1876), inquiring his opinions of the writings of Theodore Parker (1810-1860). Her poetry is inward, spiritual, and sentimental in nature.

In 1856, Lydia's poetry was published in a small volume entitled, Poems (Andover, Mass.: W.F. Draper). These verses are found in manuscript form in volumes two, three, and four of the collection. They also contain original drawings by Lydia. Her interests centered around children, animals, and flowers. Her poetry shows none of her brother's or sister's transcendentalism. She made occasional contributions to the Salem Gazette and the Boston Transcript and, in later years, published more poetry and several third-rate novels.

From 1847 to 1853, Lydia kept thorough records of student attendance and payments for a private school maintained by her brother, Washington.

See Contents List.

15 August 1977
contents list added 20 August 1991
revised 5 March 2010

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Contents List

Octavo Volume

- 1 Frances Eliza Very, Notebook "Musings" (including "A Dissertation on the Soul and Body")
- 2 Lydia Louisa Ann Very, Poems and Drawings, 1840-1842
- 3 Lydia Louisa Ann Very, Poems and Drawings, 1843
- 4 Lydia Louisa Ann Very, Poems and Drawings, 1845-1846
- 5 Lydia Louisa Ann Very, Poems and Drawings, 1847-1848
- 6 Lydia Louisa Ann Very, Poems, 1857-1866
- 7 Lydia Louisa Ann Very, School Records (for Washington Very's private school), 1847-1853