



## Hemingway Diaries

Several years ago Ithaca resident John Wallace found a diary of a late nineteenth century Dryden carpenter for sale on eBay, and bought it and donated it to our archival collection. He then very generously hunted out other diaries of the same man, and bought them all and donated them as well. The History Center now has 31 diaries of Adelbert Hemingway,

ranging from the mid-1870s to 1918. More daybooks or journals than true diaries; these chronicles are gentle and leisurely works, with a few brief lines each day documenting the workaday life of a rural man in Tompkins County. He discusses visits to neighbors, his work, changes in the weather, and all the commonplaces of life in a simpler time.

January 21, 1875 – “We all went down to Candor and had our pictures taken....”

April 21, 1890 - “White washed the parlor, lower hall, front chamber and lower bedroom this fore-noon, and scraped the old white wash from the kitchen ceiling this PM.”

June 7, 1890 - “...has been cold and raw and rained a little just before noon....”

January 18, 1906 - “Drove to Etna this morning and got Mack shod and got home around 12:15. Worked on the woodpile this PM.”

January 8, 1917 - “Went to Ithaca on the train. Ran across Gene on the street and went down home with him and was there till after 2. Went uptown and got my dinner and went down to

Fred's 209 Utica Street.”

Federal census records list Adelbert (later Delbert) Hemingway as having been born circa 1845. He was the son of Dryden farmer Samuel Hemingway and his wife Sarah, or Sallie. He later married a woman, Ettie, who was 8 years his junior.

Details such as these are wonderful for genealogists and local historians. They are the underpinnings on which social history is built. But the diary entries are more than that. They are reminders of the commonalities we share with our predecessors here in Tompkins County.

Tuesday, February 27, 1906 – “It grew colder in the night and was only 10 above zero this morning. Cold and windy all day and was 10 above at chore time tonight.”

As we grapple with our Ithaca winter entries like this become personal and familiar, and comforting to read.