

Collection #
SC 1770

**JONATHAN H. SMITH
TRAVEL DIARY, 1816-1817**

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Processed by

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 2 folders

COLLECTION
DATES: 1816-1817

PROVENANCE: The Rendells, Inc., 1981.

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE
FORMATS:

RELATED
HOLDINGS: F517 .J28 1977: Images of the Ohio River Valley: A Historical
Geography of Travel, general collection.

F532.K6 G74, 1911: History of Knox County and old
Vincennes, general collection.

F532.K6 K6, 1988: History of Knox County, general
collection.

ACCESSION
NUMBER: 1981.0421

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jonathan H. Smith is the son of John Smith whom the original owner of this diary identified as a prominent farmer of Washington Valley, Morris County, New Jersey. Jonathan H. Smith refers to himself and his father as being from Morristown, New Jersey, a town about thirty miles west of New York which Andrew Sherman's *Historic Morristown* refers to as "the westernmost colonial church-town, the outpost of New England."

Jonathan also identifies two uncles, one named Luther and another named Thomas. He visits both during his travels in the Ohio River Valley. Luther lived near Wilmington and Thomas lived about twelve miles south of Vincennes during the time in which Indiana gained admittance to the Union and the capital of the territory had already been moved from that town to Corydon.

Jonathan would return to New Jersey and later marry Phebe Condict Beach. Together they bore five sons and four daughters. He lived at least past 1856 when he was awarded a Certificate of Lifetime Membership in the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture. Two of their sons, Silas N. Smith and Zenas H. Smith, settled in Washington Valley.

Sources:

Diary of Jonathan H. Smith, 1816-1817. Folder 2.

Sherman, Andrew M. *Historic Morristown, New Jersey: The story of its first century*. Heritage Books. Bowie, MD: 1990. xxvii.

Smith, Alice Day. "Story of an Old Home and 1812 House."

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection is divided into two folders, the first containing a letter from the original owner of the diary and a descendent of its author and gives information about the Smith family and their home in New Jersey. The second contains the diary itself, written by Jonathan H. Smith during his travels through the Ohio River Valley in the early nineteenth century.

The travels of Jonathan H. Smith began when he set out from Morristown for the west on Monday, the 30th of December, 1816 and continued into the summer of 1817. Among the towns Jonathan passed through in Pennsylvania are Allentown, Harrisburg and Pittsburg; Wheeling in Virginia; and Wilmington, Vincennes, Springfield, and Columbus in Indiana.

Jonathan spent a good deal of time visiting his uncle Thomas who lives near Vincennes, Indiana on the Eastern bank of the Wabash, a town which originally served as a French, and later British, fur trading post throughout the 18th century. In May 1817, he wrote complaining of the residents as, "halfbreeds, Indian and French" (Page marked 33). Nevertheless, Jonathan did have some good things to say about the frontier, including "I do not think the beautiful plains of Egypt or Babylon could far exceed those of Kentucky" (January 29th, 1817). Jonathan occupied himself traveling, going on hunting trips and helping his uncle around his farm.

Travel diaries can give us not only a sense of the people who wrote them but also a sense of the accommodations, modes of transportation and other things which made up the business of traveling across the Northwest Frontier in the early nineteenth century. Jonathan keeps fastidious track of his finances, distances traveled and modes of transportation throughout the diary. He returned home in May of 1817 and continued his life in New Jersey, thus ending his travel diary.

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“Story of an Old Home and 1812 House,” letter from
Alice Day Smith.

Diary of Jonathan H. Smith 1816-1817

CONTAINER

Folder 1

Folder 2

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 1770).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.