



The Historical  
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Pennsylvania

Collection 3051

Jacob & Eliza Stouffer  
Journals

1843-1880

1 box, 51 vols., 2.7 lin. feet

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## **Jacob & Eliza Ryder Stouffer**

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### **Abstract**

The journals of Jacob and Eliza Ryder Stouffer tell the story of an American family living in central Pennsylvania throughout the mid-nineteenth century. They describe work done on their farm, daily weather conditions and short passages about the Civil War, especially the Battle of Gettysburg. The diaries begin on January 1, 1843, as Jacob stands to inherit his father's mill. He continues to keep this meticulous, uninterrupted record until April 24, 1880, ten days before his death. In between, Jacob avoids discussion of personal matters, choosing instead to focus on farm business. On occasion, he strays from this to make observations about the natural world, report family news, or note events in town. His wife Eliza's eleven diaries (1862-1874, with some gaps) are similar, although the work she describes focuses more on the house and yard and her entries include more family detail than corresponding entries in Jacob's journals.

### **Background Note**

Jacob Stouffer (1808–1880) was descended from Swiss immigrants who first moved to Pennsylvania in the early eighteenth century. Jacob's grandfather Abraham Stouffer (1747–1809), a son of Lancaster County inhabitants, moved to Stoufferstown, part of Guilford Township, Franklin County, in 1792. It was there that he built the Falling Spring Mill, where several generations of Stouffer men would live and work. Jacob was born there on March 4, 1808, one of fourteen children born to Abraham's son Jacob (1773–1843). The younger Jacob inherited the mill one month before his father died on July 3, 1843.

Jacob married Eliza Ryder of Loudon, Pennsylvania in 1833. Eliza was born February 20, 1809 to Adam Ryder (formerly Reyter) and Elizabeth Longenecker. Eliza was one of six children, alongside siblings Mary, Michael, Catherine, Leah, and Benjamin. Throughout Jacob's journals, frequent reference is made to "Sister Leah," in an affectionate tone.

Jacob and Eliza had five daughters: Elizabeth, Mary, Catherine, Emma, and Annie; and two sons: Amos and Benjamin. Another boy died in infancy between the births of Catherine and Amos. Both sons worked at the mill with their father throughout their

adolescence. The mill itself survived well into the 1950s when it was demolished to make way for the construction of Interstate 81.

In addition to the grinding of wheat and plaster that took place at the mill, Jacob oversaw a tremendous number of activities taking place on the farm around him. In addition to milling, the Stouffers owned cattle, chickens, and hogs. Regular products included smoked pork, veal, sausage, butter, and cheese. With the help of hired hands – sometimes as many as ten each day during the July harvest – Jacob and his family grew corn, wheat, oats, potatoes, rye, hay, tobacco, dahlia root, cabbage, clover, and sugar cane, which was boiled down to make molasses. They kept orchards of apple, peach, cherry and pear trees, grape and raspberry vines, a limekiln and, after 1857, bee hives. Jacob writes often about his fruit trees.

Most of the Stouffers' business partners and close friends were related to them through Jacob's brothers and sisters, many of whom lived nearby. They were especially close to the Snively and Dietrick families, clans into which Jacob's sisters married. Similarly, the Stouffer children married close within the family. Mary Stouffer married her first cousin, Jacob Lehman, in 1869. Lehman was her aunt Mary's son. In 1871, Emma also married into the Lehman family, although her husband Abraham was a more distant relation than Jacob Lehman.

Professional relationships were also cemented by marriage. Elizabeth, Jacob and Eliza's eldest daughter, married David Miller in 1855, a young man apprenticed to Jacob four years prior. The couple moved to Carlisle, Cumberland County the same year. In 1860, younger sister Catherine was married to Amos Miller, most likely David's brother, also from Cumberland County. The Stouffer brothers, Amos and Benjamin, married women from families without direct connection to their own. Amos married Mary Immell and Benjamin married Jessie Ferguson, both in September of 1868.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the Stouffers were at the height of their prosperity as a farming and milling family. Although Jacob took steps to remove his sons from the draft list, the family became closely involved in the war effort. They hosted Union soldiers in their home and on their land, especially in the days and weeks following the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg. They also participated in relief work through their Mennonite meeting. Eliza, Amos, Emma, and Benjamin were present to hear Lincoln's Gettysburg address in November, 1863. Most dramatic of all, the Confederate invasion (and subsequent burning) of Chambersburg and the surrounding country in June 1863 and July 1864 pulled them into the war experience like nothing else. By the end of the war in 1865, the Stouffers were faced with a greatly reduced enterprise. Fewer crops, decreased livestock and scarce labor, in addition to a wheat blight, were only some of their losses.

After the war, Jacob became interested in a parcel of land with a farm and a mill in nearby Middlesex, to which they moved in 1869, leaving Amos in charge of the Stoufferstown mill. The Stouffers were forced to sell their land at the end of 1873, when their financial difficulties resultant from the panic of that year pushed them too deep into debt. Jacob ends his journal of 1873 with:

“The close of the year leaves us in different circumstances to what any previous one has done – we are in reduced worldly circumstances, having on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of October 1873 made an assign of all our property to James D. Scott, John M. Armstrong and John Steward Eager, all of Chambersburg, for the benefit of our selves and that of our creditors so that we now own nothing but what is left us by the benefit of the three hundred dollar (\$300) law.”

Little is known of the Stouffers' lives in the years after 1873. Eliza Stouffer died on May 1, 1880, at the age of 71. Jacob quickly followed, dying two days later on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. They were buried side by side in the family plot on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

## Scope & Content

This collection consists of fifty-one journals: thirty-nine meticulously kept by Jacob Stouffer (1843 through 1880) and eleven journals authored by Eliza Ryder Stouffer (1862 to 1869, 1871, 1872, and 1874). One additional diary in the collection, dated 1875, is tentatively attributed to their son-in-law, Abraham Lehman.

Jacob's entries are primarily concerned with the day-to-day operations of the mill and the farm, punctuated by occasional notes and observations of historical import, including his accounts of the Battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, the family's trip to hear Lincoln's dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg (where he delivered the Gettysburg Address) and the burning of Chambersburg. Prior to Gettysburg, on June 17, 1863, Jacob recorded:

A gloomy, quiet, Sabbath-like day. All of my hands [are] absent but self and Amos... the Rebels are in rule over us. Fear and distrust among the people. The prominent citizens are hid or absent. The good horses are also moved to the mountains and hiding places. Before noon, the Rebels begin to move off southward. All quiet and clear of Rebels toward evening.

Jacob Stouffer's last entry appears April 24, 1880, nine days before his death.

Eliza's journals are largely concerned with the sewing, gardening, washing, and assorted other housework duties that she, her daughters and other hired help do. Her wartime journals include accounts of the Gettysburg Address, the burning of Chambersburg, the end of the war and Lincoln's assassination. In the back of some of her journals, she recorded recipes and instructions for dyeing clothes.

Both Jacob and Eliza recorded the health of family and friends, births, deaths and marriages, as well as descriptions of Sunday trips to meeting. Jacob also accounted each day's weather, listed the hired help, and tallied bills and expenses. Receipts, totals, livestock weights and other miscellaneous documents were sometimes placed into the volumes; they have been removed and are now housed in folders.

Because the bulk of both sets of journals were written before and after the Civil War, they provide a wealth of material for comparing the economic conditions in antebellum and postwar Pennsylvania. Jacob's journals contain daily lists of the workers he employed each day and careful notes of the work they performed including planting, harvesting and mill repair. He also recorded business visits to Philadelphia and Baltimore, transactions made there and locally, and the salaries of his workers, as well as taxes paid. Eliza describes preparations for market on Wednesdays and Saturdays and records the day's profits.

These notes are maintained throughout the course of the Civil War, although both the farm and the mill saw productivity sharply decline, largely due to the absence of labor. Work effectively stopped during the June 1863 invasion. Jacob noted many days as being "Sabbath-like." As the economy worsened after the war, Eliza began, in 1867, to record the number, gender and race of people who came to the house asking for money.

Although both Jacob and Eliza tended to write short entries concerned mostly with work and the weather, they did occasionally mention their fears and anxieties, especially during the war and the hardship that followed. Eliza often writes a year-end summation at the back of each journal, thanking God for all she still had, highlighting the big events of the past year, and describing her state of mind. In her earliest diary, from 1862, she wrote on December 31:

"This is the last day of this year, brought with it many cares and trouble, a bloody time. Battle after battle has been fought. Many souls ushered into eternity. No signs of Peace as yet. The People in general are very tired of war."

At the close of 1865, she reflected on the end of the war, but seemed reluctant to believe in a peaceful future. Later, her entries reflected a growing loneliness as many of her children married and moved out of the house. She noted her own mother's death in 1864, in the midst of anxieties about another Confederate invasion, and described her sadness at visiting her parents' grave in an 1869 entry that ends in mid-sentence. She also recorded her frequent visits with her daughters, especially Emma, Mary, and Elizabeth, and described visiting with their families and her grandchildren. Her devotion to church and her strong faith in God are evident throughout her journals, especially during hard times.

Jacob's journals also provide occasional insights into his character and emotions, especially (although not limited to) during the excitement and anxiety of the early days of the war. On April 17, 1861, he noted: "Very exciting times – a domestic war at hand." A few days later, he wrote: "the domestic war excitement runs very high." During the Civil War, Jacob described troop movements through town and documented encounters with Confederate troops. He noted frequent rumors of Rebel invasion, and described the townspeople taking their horses into the mountains and hiding their flour and meat.

During the 1863 invasion, he described Confederate troops raiding his supplies and refers to a wounded Rebel soldier briefly in their care. He also remarked upon his

desolation when, the day after the withdrawal of Confederate forces, his neighbor and close friend Absalom Shetter committed suicide on July 4, 1863: "This is a gloomy morning. Absalom [Shetter] has hung himself. Self and wife up—having a grave dug for him." Although no specific mention is ever made about the end of the war, Jacob does note Lincoln's assassination and subsequent death march by train through Harrisburg.

In his journals both before and after the war, Jacob occasionally departed from his standard business-focused entries to describe special things like a trip to the dentist, his children's excursion to the mountains to pick blueberries, his dismay over birds' predilection to eat the cherries off his cherry tree and an incident in which a train he was riding on went off the track, delaying him three hours.

Despite these somewhat whimsical asides, his record is primarily a formal business log and does little to demonstrate biographical characteristics of its author. Eliza's language was less formal and generally more revealing of her character.

### **Overview of arrangement**

Series I	Journals of Jacob Stouffer, 1843-1880	39 volumes
Series II	Journals of Eliza Ryder Stouffer, 1862-1869, 1871, 1872, 1874	11 volumes
Series III	[Journal of Abraham Lehman]	1 volume

## Bibliography

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Green, Helen Brinkley, comp. *Pages from a Diary 1843-1880: Excerpts from the Diaries of Jacob Stouffer and Eliza Ryder Stouffer*. Hagerstown, MD: 1966.

Snively, Kate S., comp. *Genealogical Memoranda: Stouffer 1579-1943*. Pottstown, PA: The Feroe Press. 1943. Reprint. 2000.

*A Stouffer Line of Descent that originated in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*, 1951.

## Subjects

Antietam, Battle of, Md., 1862  
Farm life – Pennsylvania – 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Family life – Pennsylvania – 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Gettysburg, Battle of, Gettysburg, Pa., 1863  
Home economics, Rural.  
Mills and mill-work – Pennsylvania  
Pennsylvania – History – Civil War, 1861-1865  
Rural families – Social life and customs  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Economic aspects  
United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – War work

Lehman, Abraham, 1842-1914  
Lehman, Emma, 1847-1934  
Lehman, Mary, 1835-1928  
Miller, Elizabeth, 1834-1912  
Stouffer, Amos, 1842-1924  
Stouffer, Eliza, 1809-1880  
Stouffer, Jacob, 1808-1880

## **Administrative Information**

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### **Processing note**

Processing was started by extern Catherine Gaffney in January 2004 and finished by volunteer Wesley Ratko in May 2004.



## Box and folder listing

### Series 1. Journals of Jacob Stouffer

Title	Date	Volume/Folder #
Journal	1843	Vol. 1
Journal	1844	Vol. 2
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Journal	1846	Vol. 4
Journal	1847	Vol. 5
Journal	1848	Vol. 6
Journal	1849	Vol. 7
Journal	1850	Vol. 8
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Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1851 Journal	1850-1851	Folder 1
Journal	1851	Vol. 10
Journal	1852	Vol. 11
Journal	1853	Vol. 12
Journal	1854	Vol. 13
Journal	1855	Vol. 14
Journal	1856	Vol. 15
Journal	1857	Vol. 16
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1857 Journal	1857	Folder 2
Journal	1858	Vol. 17
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1858 Journal	1858	Folder 3
Journal	1859	Vol. 18
Journal	1860	Vol. 19
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1860 Journal	1860, 1863	Folder 4
Journal	1861	Vol. 20
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Journal	1862	Vol. 21
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Journal	1864	Vol. 23
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1864 Journal	1864	Folder 6
Journal	1865	Vol. 24
Journal	1866	Vol. 25

Journal	1867	Vol. 26
Journal	1868	Vol. 27
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1868 Journal	1868	Folder 7
Journal	1869	Vol. 28
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1869 Journal	1866	Folder 8
Journal	1870	Vol. 29
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1870 Journal	1862, 1863	Folder 9
Journal	1871	Vol. 30
Journal	1872	Vol. 31
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1872 Journal	1872	Folder 10
Journal	1873	Vol. 32
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1873 Journal	1868	Folder 11
Journal	1874	Vol. 33
Journal	1875	Vol. 34
Materials Removed from Jacob Stouffer's 1875 Journal	1875, 1876	Folder 12
Journal	1876	Vol. 35
Journal	1877	Vol. 36
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Journal	1880	Vol. 39

**Series 2. Journals of Eliza Ryder Stouffer**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Volume/Folder #</b>
Journal	1862	Vol. 40
Journal	1863	Vol. 41
Journal	1864	Vol. 42
Journal	1865	Vol. 43
Journal	1866	Vol. 44
Journal	1867	Vol. 45
Materials Removed from Eliza Stouffer's 1867 Journal	1864	Folder 13
Journal	1868	Vol. 46
Journal	1869	Vol. 47
Journal	1871	Vol. 48
Journal	1872	Vol. 49
Journal	1874	Vol. 50

**Series 3. [Journal of Abraham Lehman]**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Volume/Folder #</b>
Journal	1875	Vol. 51