

# Guide to the Wood Family Papers, 1865-1928, 1979, 1992

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## Summary Information

**Title:** Wood Family Papers

**Inclusive Dates:** 1865-1928

**Inclusive Dates:** 1979

**Inclusive Dates:** 1992

**Call Number:** Eau Claire Mss BQ

**Quantity:** 4.4 c.f. (12 archives boxes)

**Repository:** Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

**Archival Locations:** UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

**Abstract:** Financial records, correspondence, family photographs, and diaries kept by David Wood, and by his sons, James Lincoln Wood and Ralph Winthrop Wood, residents of Trempealeau County, Wis., near Whitehall. The diaries, which span 62 years, are a daily record of farm chores, family events, accounts, weather, and community life in western Wisconsin during the settlement period. Ralph and James began keeping their diaries during childhood, with Ralph continuing his into adulthood. Also included with the collection are two published works concerning the diaries; a Wood family genealogy; and other related material. Relevant family names include Hook, Eaton, Lawson, Bierbauer, Weirick, and Jordan.

**Language:** English

## Biography/History

David Wood was born to Alyah Wood, a Baptist deacon, and Amanda Porter Wood on February 10, 1840 in Cattaraugus County, New York. His ancestors came to Massachusetts from England as religious dissenters in the 17th century, then made their way to New York. When cheaper land opened up in Wisconsin in the 1840s, the family moved to Dane County. His mother died on February 25, 1854. Dave, as a sixteen-year-old, was one of the first settlers in Lincoln Township, Trempealeau

County in the winter of 1856-57, one of Wisconsin's most bitter.

Dave married Mary Parsons, the daughter of his stepmother. Dave and Mary had five children, all born near Whitehall, Wisconsin. Archie Edgar was born on February 9, 1864, followed by the birth of James (Jim) Lincoln on February 11, 1867. Sarah Dewey, nicknamed Kippy, was born in 1870 and Alta was born in 1875. In October of 1877, all of Dave's children suffered from diphtheria. Kippy and Alta, as well as Dave's niece Jane, who lived with the family as a housekeeper, died within days of each other in early October. Ralph Winthrop was born over a year later, on January 19, 1879. He married Martha Johnson on September 27, 1906. They had two children, Helen, born in 1908, and Harold Charles, born on February 24, 1910. Harold is the father of David Charles Wood, donor of this collection, who was born on March 18, 1936.

The elder Dave Wood lived in Whitehall, Wisconsin until his death on June 28, 1927. He was a farmer, a bridge builder, a wholesaler of baled hay, and eventually a part-owner of Whitehall's bank. He was a leader in the town's Baptist community.

Dave began keeping a diary in 1865. Entries for 1865-1868 are entered in the first volume of the diaries. His entries for those years are sporadic. He made an entry almost every day from 1869 until his death in 1927. The ninety-one small leatherbound diaries filled by Dave and his sons Ralph and Jim, as well as three ledgers and fifteen account books, were discovered in 1974 by great-grandson Dave as he was scavenging through a pile of scrap lumber stored in an old horse barn behind his ancestral home in Whitehall. As he sorted the lumber, an old ammunition case was revealed, housing more than one hundred leatherbound diaries, neatly arranged and in near-perfect condition. The sixty-two year record of farm life in Trempealeau County is considered to be the longest run of farm diaries in the United States.

## Scope and Content Note

The collection is arranged in five series: DIARIES, FINANCIAL VOLUMES, CORRESPONDENCE, MISCELLANEOUS, and PHOTOGRAPHS.

The DIARIES are subdivided by writer (Dave, James, or Ralph Wood), and arranged chronologically thereunder. There are fifty-nine farm diaries written by Dave Wood, dating from 1865 to 1927. There are also nine diaries written by Dave's son, Jim Wood, primarily from 1888 to 1898 (but one isolated volume from 1879), with eleven missing years (1880-1887, 1890, 1895-1896). Twenty-six diaries were written by Dave's youngest son, Ralph Wood, from 1889 to 1927, with fourteen missing years (1894, 1896-1902, 1908-1909, 1912, 1915-1917). Common themes of the brief daily entries are weather, expenses, and farming. Each year is represented by one brief pre-dated volume with one to two days per page.

The FINANCIAL VOLUMES are arranged chronologically and consist of three ledgers and fifteen account books. Most of the entries in the ledgers were made daily. The work ledger, dated 1937, has a few pages in the back, with dates, that pertain to how many hours Ralph Wood worked and how much he was paid. The payroll ledger, dated 1885, contains an alphabetical listing of employees. The employee and produce ledger covers the years 1914-1915, 1921, and 1924. These records include breeding records, cream accounts, poultry income and expenses, and employee hours and costs. The fifteen account books are dated between 1875 and 1928. They cover various aspects of farming and household expenses. The owner of most of these volumes is unknown but, because of the "R" on the binding, they are assumed to be written by Ralph.

CORRESPONDENCE in the Wood collection has been organized chronologically and consists of personal and business letters from 1881 to 1923. Many of the personal letters are from C. S. Tull in Ravenna, Ohio. Business letters note then-current market prices, and discuss weather, crops, and financial matters, as do several of the personal letters.

Most notable among the MISCELLANEOUS materials is a Wood family history prepared by Elsie Wood; a 1992 newspaper article by Harold Wood; and a copy of the book *Wisconsin Prairie (sic) Diary 1869-1879*, written by Dave Wood, great-grandson of the original Dave Wood. These provide helpful background and interpretive information on the collection.

PHOTOGRAPHS include many identified photographs of the family of Mary Parsons Wood, Dave Wood's wife, and the family of Jim Wood. The Jim Wood family photos also include the Olive Tull Collection (Olive Tull was Jim Wood's wife). In addition, there are also identified photographs of the Hook, Eaton, Lawson, Beirbauer, Weirick, and Jordan families, plus numerous identified and unidentified miscellaneous photos, including an unidentified tintype of a man and his dog that was found in Dave Wood's 1869 diary. Several dozen cyanotype blue photographs are dispersed throughout the collection. Two glass negatives and a cyanotype printed from one of these negatives are also included.

## **Administrative/Restriction Information**

## **Acquisition Information**

Presented in 1991 by David Charles Wood, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Accession Number: M92-077, M96-026

## **Processing Information**

Processed by Celeste Keating-Hadlock, Archives Assistant at Eau Claire, 1997.

## **Search Terms/Subject Terms**

- Wood Family—Genealogy
- Agriculture—Wisconsin
- Children—Wisconsin
- Farm life—Wisconsin
- Wood, David, 1840-1927
- Wood, Ralph Winthrop, 1879-
- Wood, James Lincoln, 1867-1933

# Contents List

## Series: Diaries

Dave Wood

Box 1 1865

Box 1 1869-1890  
**Note:** The 1877 diary is mislabeled on the spine.

Box 2 1891-1909

Box 3 1910-1927

James Wood

1879  
Box 4 **Note:** Looks like "J.S." but is James L. from internal evidence.

Box 4 1888-1889

Box 4 1891-1894

Box 4 1897-1898

Ralph Wood

Box 4 1889-1893

Box 4 1895

Box 4 1900-1903

Box 5 1904-1907

Box 5 1910-1911

Box 5 1913-1914

Box 5 1918-1927

**Series:** Financial Volumes

Box 6  
Folder 1 Work ledger, 1937

Box 6  
Folder 1 Payroll ledger, 1885

Box 6  
Folder 1 Employee and Produce ledger 1914-15, 1921, 1924

Account Books

Box 6 Jan. 1875-[Aug. 1876], 1901 and 1902, 1908, 1908  
Folder 2 and 1909, Jan.-April 1909, 1910

Box 6 1913, May 1913-May 1914, 1915, Jan.-May 1916  
Folder 3

Box 6 1917 (2), 1918 and 1919, 1920 and 1921, 1928  
Folder 4

**Series:** Correspondence

Box 6 Business and personal, Jan. 9, 1881-July 24, 1899  
Folder 5

Box 6 Personal, Feb. 2, 1896-June 4, 1923  
Folder 6

**Series:** Miscellaneous

Box 6 Crane Family record, graduation announcement,  
Folder 7 homemade 1914 calendar with photographs, calling  
card

Box 12 Postcards and greeting cards  
Folder 3

Box 12 Tourbook, journals, clipping  
Folder 4

Box 12 Newspaper article by Harold Wood, *Star Tribune*, Feb.  
Folder 5 2, 1992

Box 12 *Wisconsin Prairie Diary 1869-1879*, by Dave Wood,  
Folder 6 1979

**Series:** Photographs

Box 7 Unidentified tintype found in Dave Wood's 1869 diary  
Folder 1

Box 7 Mary Parsons Wood Family (including adopted daughter  
Folder 23 Bessie McNitt)

Box 7 Jim Wood Family (including Olive Tull collection)  
Folder 45

Box 7 Hook Family  
Folder 6

Box 7 Eaton Family  
Folder 7

Box 7 Lawson, Bierbauer, Weirick, and Jordan Families  
Folder 8

Wood Family

Box 7  
Folder 9-  
10 Identified

Box 8  
Folder 1- Identified  
2

Box 8  
Folder 3- Unidentified  
8

Box 9  
Folder 1- Unidentified  
5

Box 10  
Folder 1- Unidentified  
7

Box 11  
Folder 1- Unidentified  
6

Box 12  
Folder 1- Unidentified glass negatives  
2

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