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A Guide to the
Francis Brisbane Dick, 1814 - 1859,
Journal (accounts), 1820 – ca. 1865

1 item

UPT 50 D547

Prepared by Irina Kalashnikova
December 2003

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PROVENANCE

Accessioned by the University Archives in April 1973.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Francis Brisbane Dick, the youngest of four sons of William Dick (1778 -1831) and Margaret Brisbane, was born in the Medical Hall of the University of Pennsylvania in 1814. His parents lived in Renfrew, Scotland until 1813, when they immigrated to Philadelphia. Four children accompanied them. Two more were born in Philadelphia. William Dick started a family tradition when he became Janitor for the Medical Department at Penn in 1813. He continued for nearly thirty years, until his death in 1831. Two of his four sons, Francis and "Major" Frederick (1805-1875), served the university in this capacity.

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In the early and mid 19th century, the Janitor at Penn performed duties not usually associated with this title today. The Janitor was responsible for many non-Academic services at the university, including tasks that are currently performed by Facilities Services, the Bursar's Office, and the Office of University Life. William Dick and his descendants were not only in charge of maintenance and utilities, but also of collecting tuition money from students, managing the records related to tuition payments, and some aspects of student discipline.

Before becoming Janitor at Penn, Francis worked for the First Presbyterian Church, then located on the corner of Seventh and Locust Streets facing Washington Square, as a sexton and locksmith. His duties included attending funerals, digging graves, and installing or repairing locks in private houses. He is listed in the 1840 city directory as, "Dick, Francis B., locksmith, S W 9th & Locust," and his own accounts demonstrate that he was employed by the church until at least 1847. Francis became a janitor for the University of Pennsylvania in 1850, where he was employed until his death in 1859. He married Sarah Cornman, with whom he had a son, George Handy Dick (1838-1864), who received an M.D. from the University in 1862.

Although Francis and his brother, "Major" Frederick, succeeded their father as University Janitor, many of William Dick's descendants attended the University of Pennsylvania, some receiving M.D.s. "Major" Frederick's son, Walter Brisbane Dick (1836-1920) received an M.D. from the University in 1860, and became an assistant surgeon in both the army and the navy during the Civil War. Francis' brother William Dick Jr. graduated from the University with a

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B.A. in 1821, one year before his death. His other older brother, John Brisbane Dick (1803-1833) received an M.D. in 1828, and was the father of William Brisbane Dick (1827 -1901), who became the author of many historical household books and a partner in the publishing firm Dick and Fitzgerald. William Brisbane Dick's son, Harris Brisbane Dick donated an extremely valuable collection of artworks to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Presbyterian church that employed Francis Brisbane Dick was the first Presbyterian congregation in Philadelphia. It was founded in 1698 by Francis Makemie, who organized an ethnically mixed group of Presbyterians into a congregation. The first church building was erected in 1704 at the southeast corner of High (now Market) Street and Bank, and became known as the Buttonwood Church because it stood in a grove of buttonwood (or sycamore) trees. The building was enlarged in 1755 and again in 1761. It was then rebuilt in 1793 -1794 by the architect John Trumbull. This [new church](#) was the first public building in Philadelphia to have a classical temple façade with freestanding massive Corinthian columns and portico. However, because the columns needed to be replaced as early as the 1820s, the congregation was forced to leave this site. The High Street church was demolished in 1822, and a new structure, designed by John Haviland, was built at the corner of Seventh and Locust Streets, facing Washington Square. Francis was employed by the church when it was located at this second location, where it remained for more than a century. In the late 1920s, the church moved once again, this time to 15th and Locust Streets due to demographic changes. Today, it is located at yet another building at 21st and Walnut Streets.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection consists of a manuscript journal, which is divided in roughly two parts. The first part, pages 1 -45, date from 1820-1823 and contain accounts of the First Presbyterian Church. These records include accounts of work at the old church building located on Market Street and payments for work constructing the new church on Washington Square. More specifically, the account book includes payments to the architect John Haviland, stone mason John Struthers, and cabinetmakers/builders Henry Connelly and Ephraim Haines, as well as incidental expenses relating to the relocation of the church.

The second part, pages 47 -81, of the journal contain the private accounts of Francis Brisbane Dick as sexton and locksmith between 1837 and 1843, when he was employed by the First Presbyterian Church. Most of these financial records describe jobs such as attendance on funerals, digging graves, and installing and repairing locks in private homes. The rest of the account book contains entries up to 1847, but has many blank pages and does not seem to be in chronological order. This section of the journal includes ledger accounts for particular individuals [M. P. Salvador?], a receipt indicating that Francis took courses at the Athenium Institute, as well as several pages of entries made by A. Frazier. On the back cover are more sketches, as well as signatures of Francis B. Dick, his older brother, John B. Dick, and his wife, Sarah C. Dick.

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The first 33 pages of the journal were also used as a scrapbook, most likely by members of Francis B. Dick's family. On the spine of the book is a label that states "Scrapbook No. 57". The scrapbook contains a series of articles that appear to be from around the 1850s or 1860s, which are pasted over the accounts of the First Presbyterian Church. However, many of the newspaper clippings have deteriorated over time, so only parts of them are legible. The primary articles in the scrapbook include a poem about the Civil War titled "Never! Never!" and a historical account of Native Americans in the Delaware Valley during the colonial period (most likely the 1600s), with facsimiles of early illustrations.

A microfilm copy of this journal may be found at the [Presbyterian Historical Society](#)

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INVENTORY

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