



Transcript of Petty Diary Entries

Diary of J. Thomas Petty 1861
406 D St. bet. 6th & 7th
Washington, D. C.

Warren Rifles Co B.
17th Regt. Va. Vol. C. S. A.

Notes: Brackets indicate changes to text. All underlining and parentheses appear in the original.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 1861

Arose at 7.30 – Called on the President (Buchanan) and bade him “a happy New Year.” Poor Old Buck! He looks careworn, and the effects of “Secession” are visible in his countenance.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 1861

Arose at 7.40 – I drank tea with Mary yesterday – called on the Bradys and also on my friend Miss Fowler – Sent a declension of the honor of installing Friendship Lodge I.O.O.F. to the Grand Master.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3

Arose at 7.15 – Rec a letter from Mattie. Attended the installation of Columbia Lodge I.O.O.F. and acted in the capacity of R.W.G.S.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 1861

Arose at 7.45 – This is the day of “National Humiliation & Prayer,” appointed by Pres Buchanan in behalf of the “union” – Attended Services at the Capitol, when Rev. D Stockton preached to an overflowing house.

SATURDAY 5

Arose at 7.10 – It is rumored that the “Crittenden Committee” agreed upon a compromise at midnight last evening and the whole city is jubilant thereat. A mountain seems removed from every heart.

SUNDAY 6 – WEDNESDAY 9—all entries read:

Arose at

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1861 – SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 1861 – no entries

MONDAY, MARCH 11, 1861

Billy Gray died at 3 this afternoon I closed his eyes.

TUESDAY 12

Sat up with Billy’s remains last night. With W.H. West, W.A. Thompson & Benton Linton.

WEDNESDAY 13

Sat up again with Billy last evening – I never saw a corpse that so nearly preserved the appearance of life as his – We buried him in Glenwood (vault) today. I promised to write his obituary for the Star.

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1861 – no entry**FRIDAY 15**

Arose @ 7 – Inserted Billy Gray's obituary in the Star – paid \$1.75 for it. Attended meeting of the lodge and then called at Mrs. Brady's.

SATURDAY 16 – THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 1861 – no entries**FRIDAY 5**

Arose at 6.30 – Attended Lodge – Called at Brady's – Had a tragic scene with [name erased] in which "thunder" participated – Walked home with Bettie H. – Things are getting worse in the political world fast.

SATURDAY 6

Arose @ 6.30 – Poor Violet Hinton died at 1 a.m. – Met the Milburns, and the Lees and the Stanleys – Mary Lee introduced me on cor. 6th & Fth Sts. to Miss Jennie Green of Baltimore. Amelia Stanley introduced me near same place to Frank Larkin of this city.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1861

Sat up last night with Violet's remains. Engaged the pall-bearers last evening – D F.W. Mead, F. Larkin, C. Stanley, W.A. Thompson, J. G. Thompson, & myself. Funeral at 3 to-day. Drank tea with Jennie Green at Lee's – Her father & myself told "stories" til 11.30 p.m.!

MONDAY 8

Arose at 7.30 – Late to breakfast – Didn't attend Sunday school yesterday but slept from 7 to 10.30 a.m. – Spent the evening with Miss Jennie G. at the Lee's. Staid til 10.30 and wiled the time away in chit-chat and yarn-spinning.

TUESDAY 9

Arose at 6.30 – Examined Lodge Books at Elvan's tonight – Went to call on Miss Jennie and lost courage as I touched the door-bell-knob. The "coercive" preparations of the Lincoln government create intense excitement – The South is in a blaze.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 1861

Arose at 6.30 – Exciting telegrams, &c from Charleston – D.C. Militia Volunteers called out to the number of Seven Companies and mustered into Service of U.S. to guard pub. buildgs. (Called at Mrs. Milburn's this afternoon. Spent evening with Jennie Green at Lee's & got "salted").

THURSDAY 11

Arose at 6.30 – City is rife with warlike rumors from Confederate States. (Spent last evening with Jennie Green at the Lees. Had a pleasant time). Called on Mrs. Fowler, Mary & the Brady's this evening – Heard "photographic" news!

FRIDAY 12

Arose at 6.45 Late to breakfast – Called at Lee's & escorted Miss Jennie & the girls to Milburn's where we spent the evening – startling telegrams from Charleston! War begun! Sumter attacked & defended! 2 Guns silenced & breach made in Sumter's walls! Glory enough for one day.



SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1861

Arose at 6 – Thrilling news from the South! Major Anderson surrendered Sumter unconditionally at 1 p.m.! The city is ablaze with excitement! – Called on Jennie and staid till 11 p.m. Enjoyed myself notwithstanding many of the company were antipodes to me in politics.

SUNDAY 14

Arose at 7 – To S. S. & church in morning. News from Sumter is doubted by the Black Republicans – I believe it – Have resolved not to discuss politics – Drank tea with Jennie at Lee's – Escorted her to D Sunderland's 4 ½ St. Presbt Church – Much company & I staid at Lee's till 11 p.m.

MONDAY 15

Arose at 6 – News from Sumter is true – Lincoln has issued a proclamation calling out 75,000 men! Wrote a joint letter to father and mother defining my position on the "crisis" - [writing scribbled out] Spent the evening at Lee's [writing scribbled out] (We played "consequences" to-night).

TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 1861

Arose at 6 – All my friends nearly condemn me but believing I'm right I still cry hurrah for Old Virginia! Wither she goes I'll follow. Jennie & Mollie called at store & got weighed – [erasure] Jennie got a letter telling her to come home immediately – Spent evening with her, got her address and bade her good-bye with a kiss-

WEDNESDAY 17

Arose at 6 – Oh! that God might save us yet from civil war! My country! O my country! I could weep tears of blood if it would avail to restore the old, the true "Union" in peace! War will never, never do it – Have had the "Green" fever terribly to-day – Spent the evening with Mollie Lee and all we said was deeply tinged with green.

THURSDAY 18

Arose at 6.10 – My best friends are unable to discuss politics with me without getting angry, so I keep cool & still but determined Called on Mary & the Bradys – Met Mollie Lee & her mother on the street & went home with them. Went to the Long Bridge to see the U.S. Artillery there – Had a talk with Char. Hancock.

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1861

Sat up all last night with the corpse of old Mr. Taylor. The Mass. Troops were assaulted in Balto. today & there was a bloody time – This is the first blood spilt and today is the anniversary of the first battle of the Revolution! Have resolved to respond to Gov. Letcher's call & go to Virginia to volunteer. Saw Mrs. A. Lincoln. Drank tea with Mollie Lee & remarked sitting in her front door: "Where will I be three months from this time?"

SUNDAY 20

Arose @ 5.30 – Have been packing & getting ready to leave – Walter Frankland & I will go to Va. To-morrow. Bade Mrs. Harrover & the family "good-bye" to-night. Spent the night with Walter – Was presented to Mrs. Tamar at Mrs. Holmead's. Was presented also to Walter's mother.

SUNDAY 21

Arose at 4.50 – Walter & I & three others chartered Brown's Hotel Omnibus & rode to O. & A. R.R. depot in Alex. We gave three cheers when we got across the Long Bridge from old Va. Got acquainted with Almira Lake's husband & stopped at Recertown all day & night. Saw Smith Harding there also.