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Selected Entries from the Journal of Elizabeth Jacobs 1790-1800

The following entries are from the Journal of Elizabeth Jacobs. She lived on a small farm on the western side of North Carolina, at the eastern base of the Appalachian Mountains. Her parents had moved there from Rhode Island because there was no more land available; they also wanted to move to a warmer climate. She was born in 1775 and was the third child of her parents to live past one year. In all her mother had eleven children and seven of them survived past one year. Her mother died from complications from child birth after giving birth to her last child, a son, Jeremiah. After her mother died Elizabeth was the only girl in the house since her older sister, Jenny, married three months prior to her mother's death. Her father and her mother were very well educated and shared all of their knowledge with their children. Elizabeth's life goes through more troubling times before getting better.

August 9, 1790

Today Father came home from town with a present for me, my very own journal. It is bound together with real leather! It must have cost a fortune! I will write sparingly in it so that it will last a long while. I think that this gift is the best gift I have ever received. He went to town to get supplies and turn in the census paper.

September 20, 1790

Today was a difficult day. Mother has fallen very ill and I as only daughter still living at home have had to take over her duties. I asked Josiah to watch the little ones and to keep them in

my bedroom. He did a wonderful job for being only six years old. Levi had to take Father's place in the field because Father left this morning for town to get the doctor.

I wish Jenny hadn't got married in July and moved so far away! She would still be here to help me with all of these chores. I asked Father if he would go get her and bring her back. He said no because it was too long of a trip and she now had her own house to take care of and would not be able to help us.

November 1, 1790

Today makes one week since mother left us and went to heaven and three weeks since Jeremiah was born. Jenny came home for the funeral and then she and John left to go back to their home. She told me that I was fifteen years old and should be able to run things smoothly in the house. She told me that it would be good practice for someday when I get married. But that could only happen if Father remarried, I don't think that he will because he is extremely broken hearted at the loss of mother. If I left there would be no women in the house, Jenny and I were the only girls that lived.

Jeremiah is a good baby; I wish that he would start sleeping through the night though. That would make my day easier. Joshua who is now two years of age has started to crawl and is starting to find more trouble to get into. I asked Josiah to watch the children in my bedroom at least until lunch but Father insists that Josiah spend the mornings with him learning to read. That leaves me with Joshua crawling around everywhere, Jeremiah who needs fed and changed regularly and Matthew who is very curious at four years of age.

February 25, 1791

We are learning to survive without mother but now that father has fallen ill with a bad cold and chest pain; I am not sure what Levi and I will do. Levi went this morning to town and

was going to get the doctor and mail the letter that I wrote to Jenny explaining our situation. He did not know when he was coming back.

March 17, 1791

Today was a sad day. Father gave up living and went to be with Mother in heaven. Levi arrived home yesterday from being gone for nearly three weeks. There was a bad snow storm on the last day of February. We got quite a bit of snow which is unusual since we rarely get that much this late in the winter.

I asked him why the doctor did not come and he said that the doctor would not help us until we could pay him for Mother's treatments. Levi told me that we owed the doctor five dollars and he tried to work off the debt while he was stuck in town, but could only get two dollars paid off.

April 25, 1791

Levi has been in the fields planting all week. For the last two weeks he has been clearing more farm land so that we can grow more crops. He is hoping that we will have a good harvest this year and be able to sell the excess. Since Father's death Jenny and John have moved closer home, but John refused to live in the same house and built his own about one half mile away. It has become apparent to me that John wants nothing to do with us, and Levi has never gotten along with him and doesn't want him to be involved in our lives. The only reason they moved closer to us was because Jenny insisted so she could help me with the children. That was until she started her own family and had her own baby, John then said that she could no longer help me.

May 15, 1792

Today Levi's friend Thomas came over to help finish the planting. I have not seen Thomas since last spring and he was looking at me strangely. Levi informed me that Thomas wanted to call on me. I told Levi that I was not ready I couldn't go courting a man knowing that I would be leaving Levi behind to watch the little ones. Levi said that he would be alright for a few hours with the little ones since Jeremiah was two now almost three and that I was seventeen time to start thinking about courting. Thomas would be coming back tomorrow to help him in the fields and court me. He told Levi that he would take me out for a walk around our property tomorrow afternoon since it was such a long trip into town. I still have not taken a liking to the idea of leaving Levi with the children. After all he's twenty-one and should be out courting young women not having his friend court me.

June 13, 1792

Since the crops are all in the field and do not need much attention, I sent Levi into town with some things of Mother's and Father's to sell or trade off so that we would no longer be in debt to the doctor. I also said that he should stay for a spell and start courting the young women in town. He insisted that if he was going to be gone for more than a few days that Thomas would be staying with us. I asked him how it would look if someone found out that Thomas stayed with the children and me alone. He agreed and sent for Jenny and John to come and stay with us. Jenny, John and little Johnny came to stay with us while Levi went to town.

September 25, 1792

Today Thomas asked for my hand in marriage from Levi. Levi of course said yes as long as Thomas agreed that he and I would stay in the house with Levi and the children. Thomas agreed and I was happy that I would be getting married but not be leaving my family. Especially

since I feel that they are my children. Thomas and Levi will start adding a room to the house and that will be where Thomas and I live. Thomas and I are set to be married the next June.

August 13, 1792

Thomas and I have been married for two months now. Being married is wonderful! Not much has changed as far as my chores have been concerned I'm still doing all the things mother would do but soon I will have my own children. Thomas and I are expecting our first child. Levi couldn't be happier for us. I did not know that Thomas' family was very successful in farming and his grandfather owns one of the largest farms in the state along the Virginia boarder. Thomas when we were married paid for a new floor put in our house and paid off our debts in town. Levi is still single but now that I am married and Thomas stays here with me, Levi has been going to town calling on young women in town, but has yet to find the right one.

November 4, 1792

Thomas and Levi left this morning at dawn to go to town. Today is Election Day and they were going to go vote to reelect Mr. Washington to President. They stopped by Jenny's house and brought home some larger clothes. My clothes are barely fitting around my swollen belly. I can't wait until our baby is born!