

**David Brainerd diary, July
14, 1745 - November 20, 1745
1745
Mss.B.B74j**

American Philosophical Society
105 South Fifth Street
Philadelphia, PA, 19106
215-440-3400
manuscripts@amphilsoc.org

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Background note	4
Indexing Terms	5
Other Descriptive Information	5

Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Brainerd, David, 1718-1747
Title	David Brainerd diary, July 14, 1745 - November 20, 1745
Date	1745
Call number	Mss.B.B74j
Extent	1.0 Volume(s) 1 volume, 46 p.
Extent	1 volume, 46 p.
Location	LH-MV-E-14
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	This diary records David Brainard's sermons and travels among the Indians of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Background note

Missionary David Brainerd served the Indians of western Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Diaries
- Diaries.
- Sermons.
- Travel Narratives and Journals

Subject(s)

- Indians of North America--Missions
- Indians of North America--New Jersey
- Indians of North America--Pennsylvania
- Missionaries
- Native America
- Religion
- Travel

Other Descriptive Information

This journal from 1745 recounts David Brainerd's time in western Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. The vast majority of the journal depicts Brainerd's time in the Upper Susquehanna River Valley. Brainerd's journals and autobiography were published after his death. They were used as tracts to promote missionary efforts to Native Americans. Historians have determined that these published accounts were largely written by Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards in 1747 before Brainerd died of tuberculosis. They hoped to edit Brainerd's actual journals to make his efforts sound like a greater success, thus spurring others to follow in his footsteps. The APS journal is an original journal that differs from the one published by Jonathan Edwards.

The differences are sometimes small – a word or phrase changed – and sometimes large – whole entries in the APS journal were not published. For instance, the published journal states that Brainerd “baptized my interpreter’s children” but omits the subsequent sentence from the journal stating “some of whom were not present.” In that respect, it offers Brainerd’s real time account of his activities and can be used alongside the published version to track how Edwards edited the journal and why he may have made the decisions he made.

The journal at the APS offers insight into a number of different aspects of colonial America. In general, the journal captures the life and views of a missionary in the 18th century. Brainerd recounts his daily missionary activities, sermons preached, and reactions to them. His journal can also expose aspects of Native American life in colonial America; of course colored by the impressions of a missionary who at times held Indians in very low regard. Finally, Brainerd occasionally recounts his encounters with colonists as well as Native Americans, and can thus provide insight into the colonial experience, particularly its religious dimension.

David Brainerd lived a short but controversial life. Brainerd was born in Connecticut, part of a long line of Congregationalist ministers. He was orphaned as a teenager, which played a formative role in his life. He felt a calling to the ministry in 1739 and entered Yale. In 1742, he was expelled from Yale for challenging a teacher and later the administration. His expulsion was extremely controversial at the time. After failing to be readmitted, Brainerd traveled throughout New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania trying to proselytize Native Americans. In 1747, he returned to Connecticut ill from what historians believe was tuberculosis. He stayed with Jonathan Edwards where he died. But before he passed away, Edwards and Brainerd worked to create a diary of his life to promote missionary work amongst Indians. Historians now believe this account, which was published widely, was fictionalized.