

Toler, Henry Diary

Henry Toler Diary
1782-1786, 1992-1993



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Title Statement

Toler, Henry DiaryGuide to the Henry Toler Diary Mss. MsV D2

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

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1782-1786, 1992-1993

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Extent

158 p. ; 15 cm.

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Henry Toler Diary, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Administrative History:

Henry Toler was born on 3 January 1761 in King William County, Virginia. At an early age he became a Baptist and began encouraging others to join him. He was brought to the attention of Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, also a Baptist convert. Carter was impressed with Toler's talents and provided funds for him to study for three years under Baptist educators in Philadelphia. In December 1782 Toler returned to Virginia and took up the life of an itinerant preacher. He rode circuit in eastern Virginia from James City County to Northern Neck and as far west as Goochland and Louisa. In April 1786 he helped establish Nomini Church in Westmoreland County. He settled there, became the church's minister, and started raising a family. Toler was an able preacher who succeeded at making converts and attracting new members. Under his leadership Nomini Church became the largest Baptist congregation in Virginia. By about 1816, however, Toler joined a migration of Baptist ministers to Kentucky. This likely was related to a general inattention to the financial support of ministers by Virginia Baptist churches. Toler served as pastor of a church in Kentucky until his death in 1824.

Sources: (1) Simpson, William S., ed. "The Journal of Henry Toler: Part I, 1782-1783." *The Virginia Baptist Register*, no. 31 (1992), pp. 1566-1595. (2) ----- . "The Journal of Henry Toler: Part II, 1783-1786." *The Virginia Baptist Register*, no. 32 (1993), pp. 1628-1658. (3) Morton, Louis. *Robert Carter of Nomini Hall*. Charlottesville: Dominion Books, 1964. (4) Taylor, James B. *Lives of Virginia Baptist Ministers*. 2nd ed. Richmond: Yale & Wyatt, 1838. (5) Ray, Thomas. "Henry Toler: The Danger of Bitterness." Baptist Bible Tribune (<http://www.tribune.org/?p=1852>)

Scope and Contents

This small diary was kept by Henry Toler from December 21, 1782 through October 20, 1783 and from April 21 through November 6, 1786. The diary begins with Toler leaving Philadelphia, where he had received his training as a minister, and traveling back home to Virginia, where he took up the life of an itinerant Baptist preacher. Funding for his education and his first horse had been provided by Baptist-convert Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, whom Toler frequently visited. Toler rode circuit through Tidewater and Piedmont Virginia,

from the Lower Peninsula to Northern Neck and as far west as Goochland and Louisa counties. The 1786 section of the diary includes the establishment of a church in Westmoreland County, where Toler became a more settled minister.

Accompanying the diary are issues 31 (1992) and 32 (1993) of "The Virginia Baptist Register", containing a two-part transcription of Henry Toler's diary, edited by William S. Simpson, Jr.

Keywords

Diaries

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Baptists--United States--History--18th century

Baptists--Virginia--History

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Diary and transcription

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Scope and Contents

Toler begins his diary as he is preparing to leave Philadelphia and take up his career as an itinerant Baptist preacher in Virginia. His education had been funded by Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, who also provided the horse Toler rode from Philadelphia and on his circuits in Virginia. Toler records his travels and the occasions when he preached or heard other preachers, usually citing the Biblical texts of the sermons. He often notes the doubts, anxieties, and hopes that occupy him as he pursues his career. In 1786 he helps establish a church at Nomini in Westmoreland County, where he becomes a more settled minister. His first child is born. 4 x 6 in., with a loose, paper cover. A few pages are missing, and the section covering 1786 begins and ends in mid-sentence. Accompanying the diary are issue 31 (1992) and issue 32 (1993) of The Virginia Baptist Register, containing a two-part transcription of Toler's diary.

General

A PDF of the transcript is available.