

A Guide to the Frances Stuart Smyth Music Book, 1821

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A Collection in Special Collections, Kegley Library 2001.10
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Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

2001.10

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

1 item.

Repository

Special Collections, Kegley Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Donated by Ruth Ann Chitwood as part of the W. R. Chitwood Collection in 2001.

Preferred Citation

Frances Stuart Smyth Music Book, Mss. Collection 2001.10, Kegley Library, Wytheville Community College, Wytheville, VA

Biographical Information

Born in 1806, Frances Stuart Smyth was the daughter of Alexander Smyth and Nancy Binkley. Her father was a prominent attorney in Wythe County and served as a general during the War of 1812. In 1819 he invited school teacher Julia Hieronymus (later Julia Hieronymus Tevis) to live with his family; she also taught his daughters in a school adjacent to the Smyth house. One of her favorites was Frances Smyth whom she described in her book *Sixty Years in a School-Room* as being "so natural and without disguise that she soon became the sunshine of my daily existence, helping to dispel the clouds that sometimes gathered around my heart." The young teacher soon discovered the existence of a few pianos in Evansham (Wytheville) and promptly offered musical instruction to a few girls. She wrote that Frances Smyth and Nancy Smyth both learned music rapidly. She also writes of copying music staves, taking "the copy-books of the whole school at night to my room, which were first ruled and then the copies set. I was often obliged to sit up till twelve o'clock at night, copying, of which there was not a printed sheet in the village."

Frances Stuart Smyth married James Hays Piper on 9 February 1824. In 1826 Piper moved to Tennessee where he sought to recoup financial losses through teaching and academic administration. He returned to Wythe County around 1835 at the urging of his wife and brother-in-law John P. Mathews. He taught school for several years and eventually turned to civil engineering, working on several turnpike projects in the area including the Southwest Turnpike Company. Piper died on 8 September 1854 from dysentery and is buried in Speedwell, Virginia. Frances married Rev. John Montgomery McTeer, a Methodist minister, in 1857. Until 1866, the couple lived in the Piper house in Speedwell where Frances assumed care of McTeer's two sons, Canaro D. McTeer and James Piper McTeer, from his first marriage to Eliza C. Kelley. Frances Stuart Smyth Piper McTeer died on 27 February 1882.

Scope and Content

Frances Stuart Smyth, a student of Julia Hieronymus, copied music into this book with pen and ink drawn staves. An index of songs may be found at the end of the book. On the cover of this cloth-bound book with a leather spine is written "Frances Stuart Smyth, Wythe, Sept. 13th 1821." The book pagination is [i-v], 1-71, [i-iii].

Songs copied into the book include many by Robert Burns including "Burn's Address" and "From Thee Eliza I Must Go." Other songs include "Bonaparte's March," "Circassian Rondo," "Water Parted from the Sea," "Caledonian Hunt," "Roslin Castle," and "Rickett's Cotillion." Lyrics may be found to some songs. Lyrics to "Bruce's Address" and "Sweet Annie Frae the Sea Beach Come" are found in the front of the book on unnumbered pages (i-iv) while the unnumbered end pages (i-iii) contain the index and lyrics to "Gilderoy."