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View of Lockport, New York, drawn about 1840 by W. Wilson.
Courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association

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Lyman A. Spalding, The Samuel Pepys of Lockport, New York

by John Janitz

The Spalding Family Papers in the George Arents Research Library span the nineteenth century in the lives of the Ellicott, Evans and Spalding related families of western New York State. The correspondence, diaries, legal and financial documents and miscellaneous materials add historical data to agrarian and commercial ventures, the Holland Land Company, the Erie Canal and the temperance and anti-slavery movements.

Mr. Janitz, who also wrote the article on the Osborne Family Papers in the last issue of The Courier, was an assistant archivist in the Manuscript Reference Department of the Library. In this capacity he arranged and described both the Osborne and the Spalding Family Papers for the use of researchers.

Time changes the most mundane entries of a diary into fascinating glimpses of the past. One line by a superior diarist—

“Plowing for Corn,—Maple handsomely leaving out” (May 8, 1835)

—will call up scenes from a vanishing landscape and may tie us with bonds of sympathy and understanding to a man we never met. So it is with the journals of Lyman A. Spalding, nineteenth-century businessman, Quaker, abolitionist and experimental farmer who lived along the Erie Canal in western New York. His journals engage the casual reader who struggles with the handwriting, and several passages may reward the historian who searches with a purpose.

Spalding was born in Scipio, New York, in 1800. He settled in Lockport in 1822, married Amy Pound a few years later, and embarked on a career of sixty years as a storeowner and miller. His journals, which begin in 1832, contain a jumble of reflections, insights and trifles about farming, canal commerce, politics and social life to within a fortnight of his death in 1885.

Together with some of his correspondence, these journals form a substantial part of the Spalding Family Papers at Syracuse University.¹

Like Samuel Pepys, Spalding kept journals for his private use, without any intent of achieving literary distinction through their subsequent publication. Some passages remain veiled behind a half-forgotten shorthand—again reminiscent of Pepys with his ciphers. But a spare style may be artfully appropriate for the recording of everyday occurrences, and the very artlessness of Spalding’s chronicle lays bare his genius at limning a picture of rural life in the early days of the republic. Spalding knew, met, or saw from a distance many prominent Americans of his day—Benjamin Lundy, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martin Van Buren, Theodore Weld, Gerrit Smith, Horace Greeley—and he gave each at least a line or a paragraph of description. To our eyes his times overflow with color.

Here is a selection of entries from the first and smallest of the journals, which covers the period 1832-1837. The spelling, grammar and line breaks have been retained from the original. Editorial insertions and ellipses are indicated by the customary signs, and the entry dates have been set off in a consistent style.

1832 February 13

Visited Rochester, with Amy,² Mother,³
Caroline⁴ & Nathaniel⁵ & Alice Jane Spalding⁶
return 16th at night.

1832 March 11

Started a drove of Hogs to Canada
Charles Spalding⁷ went with them.

¹ Spalding Family Papers, 1796-1901 (3 boxes), George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University. Another group of Spalding papers is held by Cornell University. These are cited in a description of Lyman A. Spalding’s youth by Ronald E. Shaw, *Erie Water West: A History of the Erie Canal, 1792-1854*, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press [1966], 137-139. Other sources are available from the Niagara County Historical Society, which published Spalding’s *Recollections of the War of 1812 and Early Life in Western New York*, Lockport, N.Y., 1949, edited by Raymond F. Yates, a former president of the Society. A few passages from the Spalding journals were worked into the *Recollections* but until last year when the George Arents Research Library announced the availability of more Spalding papers at Syracuse University, the existence of nine journals was not generally known.

² Amy Pound (1806-1876) married Lyman A. Spalding in 1824.

³ Jennet Mack (1780?-1836) married Erastus Spalding (1775-1830) in 1798. Lyman was the oldest of their twelve children. The family moved to Lockport in 1822. Samuel J. Spalding, *Spalding Memorial: A Genealogical History of Edward Spalding of Massachusetts Bay and His Descendents*, Chicago, 1897, 246, 436-437, 687-688.

⁴ Caroline Elizabeth Spalding (b. 1820), the eleventh child of Jennet & Erastus Spalding.

⁵ Nathaniel Mack Spalding (1822-1868), youngest child of Jennet & Erastus Spalding.

⁶ Alice Jane Spalding (b. 1826), first of Amy P. and Lyman A. Spalding’s four children.

⁷ Charles Hanford Spalding (1816-1844), a brother of Lyman A. Spalding.



Lyman A. Spalding at age 82. Courtesy of the Niagara County Historical Society

1832 March 12

The Race way Broke away at the place where Buell commd diging last fall. Removing the earth took away the support to the wall & the unusual flood swept away the Side of the race and passed the water into basin below— damaging flour & other property & doing injury to Foxes House. The ruin was stayed by forcing open the Lock gates.⁸

1832 March 15

Some of the lock gates getting loose were Swept through the locks by the water & the pair attached to the foot of the upper easterly lock closing attempts were made to open them and the riging broke, the gates were forced together & by the pressure of the water burst through— the balance beam of the easterly gates as it swept around Swept off W^m M Doty & two others—
— only one of whom were seen afterwards—

1832 March 16

Great exertions are making to recover the lost bodies, by dragging the basin— first having cleared the ice away.

1832 April 23

Started Saw mill

1832 May 11

Set out Onions, Sowed peas, radishes, lettuce

⁸ The illustration on the cover, drawn by W. Wilson about 1840, shows the double locks of Lockport. Canal boats moving west were raised sixty feet in their passage through five successive chambers at this point. The jump was accomplished within fifteen to twenty minutes, and traffic could be doubled by using the adjacent lock or could be opened to eastbound and westbound traffic simultaneously. John W. Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New York* (New York, 1841), 351-352.

The raceway mentioned by Spalding runs from the topmost lock and swings left and down to the basin in the picture. Many of the manufactures which nestled in the basin were powered by this current of water. Spalding's flour mill is the tallest building to the left of the locks.

The illustration was provided by Mr. Richard Wright, Director of the Onondaga Historical Association, to whom the author is indebted for hours of help in searching through local histories, and map and photograph collections.

1832 May 29

Planted Mothers garden,
Beans, Peas, Corn, Potatoes, Onions, Pumpkins
Squashes, Cucumbers &c.

1832 June 7

Filled the kiln with pine lumber
from Canada & commenced heating it at
night.

1832 August 28

Crank of Saw mill broke.

1832 August 29

Water turned through the "improved" race.
and now excavating a new race.

1832 November 10

Commcd Sawing in the mill in daytime

1832 November 12

Stopped—

1832 November 13

Pointing Stone Tavern, roof on & cornice finished⁹

1832 November 28

H & Elijah & Swift left for Canada with Oil Yards &c
John Pound¹⁰ died at 20 m before 9. PM.

1832 November 29

J. P. buried at 3 O.C. P.M. by Side of Alice
Pound¹¹ his wife in burial ground on Thomas farm

1832 December 1

Winter appears Set in.

1832 December 7

Went to Rochester

1832 December 14

Negro here from Georgia.

⁹“Central House,” Spalding’s hotel which was later named the “American,” on the corner of Main and Locust, one block from the double locks.

¹⁰ John Pound (1779-1832), father of Amy P. Spalding.

¹¹ Alice Smith Pound had died the previous March.

1832 December 22

L.A.S. Jr.¹² born at 1/2 past 2. O.C. Am.

1833 March 21

digging foundation for Stone, Smith Shop
Hanging Door in front of Stone Stone Stors laying
floor— Plastering & painting Stone Tavern.
Teams returned this day from Rochester— bad roads
High Water— in Canal

1833 March 22

Started Saw mill.¹³ Stopped Same day—
This night tackles taken to open upper Lock
gate— great flood

1833 April 1

Commcd framing overshot Saw mill

1833 May 25

Commcd raising the overshot Saw mill.

1833 June 7 & 8

Lots Sold at Auction.

1833 June 10

Charles & Martha Ann Spalding set off
for Canada with my horse & buggy—

1833 August 10

Started the overshot Saw mill— runs
rather stiff— Straps too weak

1833 August 14

Commcd regular Sawing— She does her work
Strong.

¹² L. Austin Spalding, the last of Lyman and Amy's four children and the only son. He became a leading manufacturer in Lockport, working under his father, then assuming the duties of president and treasurer of the Pound Manufacturing Company in the Lockport basin. He mastered French and German and in 1882 sold out his Lockport interests to invest in a French firm contracted to build the Panama Canal. He withdrew in 1884, was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1886, and in the following year President Cleveland appointed him Consul of the United States in Germany, where he remained until 1892.

¹³ Lyman A. Spalding opened many lines of business: milling, farming, selling all types of goods from a general store, dealing in coal, banking, insurance and real estate speculation. In the late 1850's the bottom fell out of his enterprises and he took the job of postmaster in Lockport. City directories show him venturing forth into manufacturing and finance again in the seventies.

1833 August 29

broke the Crank wheel to my
Saw mill-wheel costs \$38.
Eye too weak— idle 4 days
Commenced plowing & wheat comes in freely
at 7/— per bush

1833 September 7

Crank wheel broke again idle 3 1/2 days

1833 September 9

Board Kiln burnt, from charcoal
on the outside, igniting—

1833 December 25

Thawing, little ice in the canal & quite muddy
roads— rec^d wheat—

1834 February 28

My birth day— mud continues— & some snow
heard Burchard^{1 4} the great revivalist preach in L.

1834 March 2

Continued Snowing from the N.E. Heavy, wet Snow.
The Revival fairly under weigh— and much
commotion— Burchard is a master Spirit in
getting up these excitements & knows that his powers
of exciting the human mind are great.
His discourses are incoherent— full of
interesting Storys & anecdotes & much declamation
with some thunder & forked lightning accompa-
nied by fire & brimstone.
Burchard arrived 2^d mo 23^d—

1834 March 11

W^m Mack Set off for Canada
Burchard is on Continues to rage— no
business but attending meetings— It is
apparent that many are properly Stored up—
& I hope effectually.

^{1 4}Samuel Dickinson Burchard (1812-1891), the same clergyman who in 1884 embarrassed presidential hopeful James G. Blaine with the remark: "We are Republicans, and do not propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with those whose antecedents have been rum, Romanism and rebellion."

1834 April 9

Set out the following apple trees on Lot— West
Side of Locust St. in front of N— [?] — Darling House

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| No | 1 | Yellow Harvest | |
| “ | 2 | White June Eating | |
| “ | 3 | Large Early Bough | |
| “ | 4 | Black [?] Gilly flower | <u>10m 20. 1834</u> |
| “ | 5 | Rhode Island Gr[een]ing | Set out 10 R.I.Greening |
| “ | 6 | Red Spitzenburgh | bought of Michael Robinson |
| “ | 7 | Monstrous Bellflower | |

1834 April 16

Set out row of maple trees on High St
North Side

1834 April 17

Set out Apricot, peach and quince trees
transplanted lettuce sowed last fall— Sowed
Peas, Lettuce, Radishes, Beets, Onions Sowed 1/4 acre
Marrow fat peas on high street— Canal navigable

1834 July 4

A very fine celebration of this day
in Lockport

1834 July 5

The day celebrated by the coloured people

The Walls of my New Brick dwelling¹⁵
finished, chimney topped out— & the
roof partly on—

1834 September 1

L.A.S. Jr very Sick with Dysentery
Cholera raging in Buffalo, Detroit &c.

1834 September 10

Patrick Ryan, died.

1834 September 20

P. Baker taken—

¹⁵ On the corner of High and Locust Streets. In 1859 Spalding sold this house to Abel Minard and moved into a smaller house at 471 Market Street in the “Lower Town.” Before 1834 Spalding had lived in a wooden dwelling on the corner of Main and Locust, on the same property on which the American Hotel was built.

1835 March 24

Placed the Sign on the Furnace, Machine Shop
& Plough Factory, today.

1835 March 25

Set out a rare ripe Peach tree, which I budded
in 1831, with buds taken from Robt. Prindinales farm,
Also Set out an Apricot, budded in 1831 on a
Peach stalk— both trees set in the 1st row South of
my rear piazza.

1835 March 29

Amy Sat up yesterday for the first time in 6 wks
— sat in my lap about 10 minutes.
Corn— See Vol. V. N^o 13 G. Farmer,¹⁶ planting corn—
with Ashes & Plaster

1835 April 22

Set out 25 Butternut Trees on
various part of the lot on High Street—
rain & hail— quite muddy— the apricot
& peach are not yet in blom—
Plants in the Hot bed are doing very
well except mellons & cucumbers near
each end— Cold air is too much for
them— altho' all the other plants appear
healthy & of good colour. Raddishes fit to pull.

1835 April 23

Broke the wheel on E. end of Saw mill

1835 May 2

Grafted 10 Williamson apple grafts in
the apple trees on the Nelson lot— the grafts
were sent to me by the Ed of the Genesee Farmer
& rec^d by him from Bath.—
Rec^d from John A. Thomas 12 peach trees &
6 nectarines— Set the nectarines in
the South row East of Garden

Set 12 peaches north of the apples in the
apple orchard. . . .

¹⁶ *The Genesee Farmer and Gardener's Journal*, a weekly published by Luther Tucker in Rochester. Spalding refers to an article which recommended ashes and plaster as a fertilizer for corn, in the issue of March 28, 1835.

Sowed raddishes on the asparagus beds
Sowed Onions, rad & potatoes.
Levelling in front of House & making Side
walk on West Side of Locust St. from High
St.

1835 May 11

Sowed Barley, white Clover & Timothy—
dragged & rolled the ground—/ on Yard
around dwelling

1835 May 23

Bees Placed a Hive of Bees on the New Hive in
the Barn this evening— Bo't them of Rich^d Small
4 1/2 \$— The Hive a straw one, I fear has worn
as two [bees] were on the blanket which was wrapped
around the Hive.

1835 June 2

Planted Watermellons— mushmellons
Citrous mellons— Nutmegs, west of
the woodhouse, on heaps of manure
4 ft across covered 5 inches with earth—
Black Garden flea has destroyed all the Radishes
Sowed on the asparagus beds— the maggots
& cut worms have made Sad havock amng
the Cauliflowers & Cabbages—
Raddishes sowed on Sand are doing well
So far—

1835 July 26

Priscilla Cadwallader held a meeting
in the Methodist Chapel— which was filled
to overflowing & many went away for want of
room— Her discourse exceeded any thing
of the kind I ever heard & was listened to with
great attention.

1835 August 6

Tomatoes begin to ripen.
Amy rode out for the first time in 2 yrs
Cucumbers bear finaly.

1835 August 14

Dug the well in Barn Yard— See the method in the Genesee Farmer.¹⁷

1835 August 15

Cows are from Zoological Garden, Baltimore.

1835 August 29

took up the Hive of Bees which I placed on the long hive on 23^d, 5 mo, and found it well filled with Honey & the long Hive 1/3 full The Straw hive weighs about 5 5th. the Cap is full of the last comb. We took the hive & turned it bottom Side up after taking off the Cap & placed one empty hive over it & the Bees left it in about one hour— I have now placed a glass jar on the long hive in place of the Straw Hive.

1835 September 23

The Anniversary of our Wedding day.

1835 September 27

First day: Amys birth day, and a very beautiful day— with a bright clear sky and dry atmosphere— Amy out in the dining Room at 9 O.C. — a fine Watermellon & nutmeg picked and on the Server ready for use—

1835 September 28

Placing my Trellis /12/ in the Garden for the grape vines.—

1835 September 29

Bought 3 fine Hives of bees & 2 Skips \$12: placed them in the East Room— in barn— One of them in 5/8 Box is nearly full of Comb White & fine— this one is on the west end of the 12 ft. hive— one of the weak skips is on the middle & the other on the east end of the West hive.— on the west end is a fine Swarm. & on the E. end of the long box is an old one, well filled with old comb.— it is the Parent hive.

¹⁷ Spalding apparently anticipates the appearance of his letter in the issue of August 29. There he described his method of “Digging Wells in Sand.”

1835 October 15

Benj Lundy¹⁸ arrived at my house—
from Mexico—

1835 October 17

left for Utica, Anti-Slavery State
Convention— Philadelphia & Mexico.

1835 November 11

Snow Storm & Violent Wind— Hamilton
& Jacksons new brick building blown down
partly & Ja^s Carpenter fell 40 ft & was
buried in the Rubbish in the cellar, badly
hurt— Several chimns blown off & roof &
gable ends blown in.

1835 December 5

This morning froze up solid with
a tremendous Snow Storm from the N.W.
In the Sudden closing of the Canal
Boats are caught in full freight— goods
between this [place] & Albany to an immense
amount Scattered along the Canal
My ice house begun is in an
open predicament.

1836 January 1

Dined at home— Mother better than
She has been— Amy improving— Caroline
Whippy quite Sick— took supper at
A. H. Spaldings¹⁹ — quite a party of married
people—
Excitement among land speculators in Village
lots— No Sleighing— roads smoother

1836 January 2

Sold 28 ft w[?] in with Gilberts Store 5000\$
1/3 in hand— tho't a good sale—

1836 January 6

the Young Sow has 9 pigs—

¹⁸ Benjamin Lundy (1789-1839), abolitionist lecturer and publisher.

¹⁹ Alexander Hamilton Spalding (1807-1838), a brother.

1836 January 25

Mother quite sick with Something approaching Appoplexy.

1836 January 31

Mother Continues Very ill Thermom 30°

1836 February 10

Amy rode out in a sleigh

1836 March 8

Lockport Anti Slavery Society formed

1836 March 11

L. M. M—[?] — delivered a lecture & 50 joined the Society, Hunt Field & Reynolds [?] Jackson. Douglass & Regan [?] tried to excite a mob.

1836 March 13

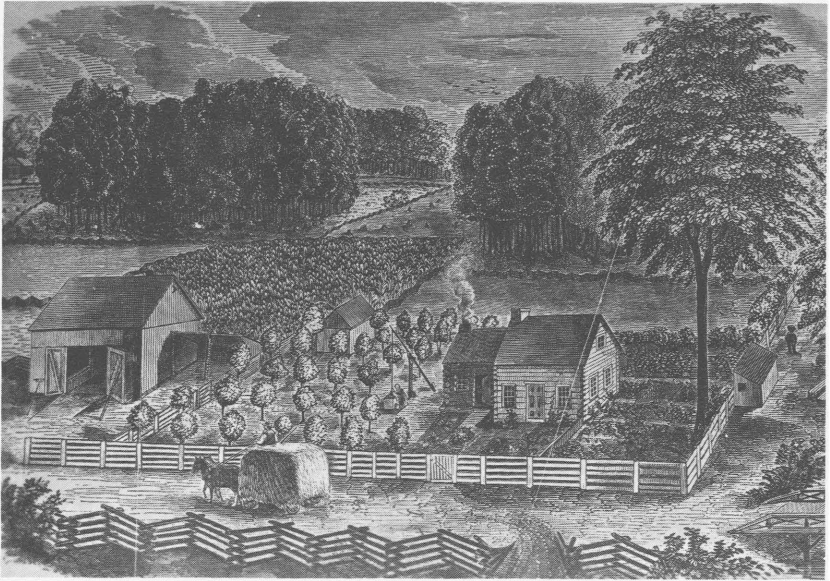
Mother appears to be dying at 1/2 past 11 A.M. — Expired at 3 1/2 O.C. P.M.

This morning about 6 O.C. I was in the dining room & heard her call me from the room over it— I went up & she asked for something to ease her— I had Martha give her Some laudanum & she Said it made her feel better and Said She knew I would give her Something that would ease her.

During her Sickness She expressed great peace of mind and a readiness to leave this world— She Said she was once supposed to be on a dying bed and then felt great reluctance to leave the world— but it was not So now. She was very thankful to those who waited upon her and appeared at peace with all.

1836 March 14

Mother was buried this afternoon at 4 O.C. in Friends Burying Ground, & at the foot of Mother Pounds grave— a very large funeral attended at my house. Hannah Mitchell had much to say & was very edifying.



Mid-nineteenth century pastoral scene in western New York State. Woodcut from O. Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York* (Buffalo, 1849). Courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association.

1836 April 11

Theodore D Weld²⁰ lectured in the Presbyterian Meeting house this afternoon at 3 O.C. to a large audience on the Subject of Slavery— It was with difficulty that either of the churches could be had— and when the permission of the trustees of this church was obtained J. M. Parks, a pew holder, protested against its use, while the meeting was assembling, for as he Said a political object. Such is the cant and Subserving of the times so far has Slavery encompassed its victims throught the whole U. States— that objections of many here are rained against descryng the enormity of american slavery.

1836 April 23

Formed the Niagara County Anti Slavery Society— after a great tumult & the most high handed encroachments upon upon [sic] private rights.

²⁰ Theodore Dwight Weld (1803-1895), abolitionist preacher and pamphleteer.

1836 May 1

Fruit not yet in blom yet— tho' the weather is
now fine & the fields green,— roads dry—

1836 May 4

Apricots in bloom

1836 May 12

The red cherry D^o

1836 July 4

Niagara Co Anti-S Society met. 101 joined.

1836 July 8

Sowed Ruta Baga.

Placed a hive of Bees on the Box in the
East bnroom— where the Bees starved to death
last winter.

1836 September 28

Snow fell last evening to the depth of an inch
The appearance of the trees this morning was
beautiful—

1836 December 20

Saw mill stopped to put on new Segments
on a new rim on the water wheel

I went to Queenstown to join the stockholders
of Suspension Bridge Bank, which commenced
operations this day.

A complete gang of hands at the Gang
mill wages from 9/ to 14/ day
Intend to Start it by 1st March

1837 January 1

New Years day—

Snows fast & Sleighing we shall have now
altho we have had none this winter—

1837 January 2

Thermometer 8° below 0

1837 January 3

D^o 8° " 0

1837 January 4

D^o 10 above 0 Sleighing fine.

1837 February 28

Amy & myself went to Sam^l Pounds^{2 1} to dine on Turkey & no Turkey cooked— came home & dined— Crandall^{2 2} & Dr Carpenter stayed with us last evening. Sleighing excellent. Saw mill running— Gang Saw mill nearly finished— Furnace in good operation— Money never so scarce— children all well.

1837 September 9 - 11

Edw^d Hopper of Philadelphia with us on a tour to the falls.^{2 3}

This is the last entry from the first of Lyman A. Spalding's journals. Eight others provide a continuous record to the end of his life. Until all the journals are transcribed and annotated, casual readers may browse a while and turn to the final passages in the last journal. Spalding in his eighties is again involved with the mill industry but in this industrial age there are no references to planting and the orchards. Almost unaware, he is finally overcome by the infirmities of old age.^{2 4}

1884 November 18

Met Mrs Hiram Gardner & daughter Ashley in their carriage in front of Post Office, talked over old times. She was very well & for one over 80 Very active. . . . The Engine & Boiler at the Foundry is nearly ready to run— put in to run the Machinery while repairing the race or when the water is short out. Chester & Wilson are putting up Machinery to furnish Electric light to those who want it & the city.

1884 November 22

Winfield [,] Son of Sister Caroline E. Smith^{2 5} [,] died this morning at 9 after an illness of two days — an attack of Pneumonia, went to brain— he was unconscious the last 24 hours.

^{2 1} Samuel Pound, a brother of Amy P. Spalding.

^{2 2} Perhaps John G. Crandall of Brockport, second husband of Spalding's sister Jane Louisa Spalding (b. 1803).

^{2 3} Relatives and friends often stopped at the Spalding home on their way to Niagara Falls. There is a Lockport tradition which claims that Spalding's house was a station along the underground railroad.

^{2 4} Line breaks from the original are not transcribed for the remaining passages.

^{2 5} Caroline Elizabeth Spalding (b. 1820) married Lindley W. Smith of Canandaigua.

1884 November 24

Sarah Spalding Bellinger died of Inflammation of Bowels at Tonawanda leaving 3 children— She was the youngest of my brother N. Mack S.^{2 6} family— funeral 27th.

1884 December 25

Christmas. Ther. 16° Sleighing good No work this day at Foundry. Turkey for Dinner, Walter & Virginia with little Alice arrived from Tonawanda. Dined with us Alice, Kate Sm¹ Pound & myself at table Spalding Evans & Ann came at 7 P.M & spoke with us— Very pleasant evening—

1884 December 26

Walter took the 8 O.C. train for Tonawanda He gave a pretty musical Box to little Mary. Emma Spalding arrived from Philadelphia and dined & lodged with us & took the 4 P.M. 27th train for New York expecting to reach home at 11 A M the 28th

1884 December 28

this morning at 2 A M. I was so badly choked with phlegm that I called Kate.^{2 7} She came down immediately, and I took several drink[s] of Salt & water which caused me to throw up phlegm & put me in a fine perspiration & I slept at 3 I slept very comfortably till 6 & got up at 6 1/2 O.C. A.m & made fires— I felt very weak and concluded to Stay in the house until I fully recover. I cannot imagine how I got so bad a cold. Dr Davidson came in the afternoon & made a prescription— it had a very good effect & made me expectorate freely. Kate laid on the Sette getting up to give the medicine every 4 hours 'till 3 A.M. when I helped myself & She went to her room— She is a first class nurse.

1884 December 29

improving & regaining my strength— I merely took a little warm milk, Ja^s. Owens made the furnace & kitchen fire.

This is the last entry of Journal IX. Lyman A. Spalding died on January 7, 1885.

^{2 6} Nathaniel Mack Spalding married Sarah Elizabeth Ellicott of Batavia in 1845. Five of their ten children died in infancy.

^{2 7} Catherine Elizabeth Spalding (b. 1829) lived with her father at 471 Market Street.