A WITNESS TO DEATH: THE JOURNAL OF EMILY NASH, NINETEENTH-CENTURY GEauga COUNTY PROFESSIONAL MOURNER

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by

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This project remains very dear to me because of the association of the Nash family to Geauga County and my home campus. The first time I drove around the “circle” in Burton toward the Geauga Campus, I was struck by the quaint, New England atmosphere. Emily Nash opened my eyes to the people and culture of nineteenth-century Ohio. It is not difficult to imagine Emily Nash living in that area today. I am especially grateful to my husband Vincent Sergi and daughter, Isabella Rose Sergi. I dedicate this dissertation to both of them since they listened to my stories about nineteenth-century Ohioans and helped make Nash a household name. I also dedicate this work to my parents, Dennis and Christine McNamara, who enjoyed hearing the stories and visiting sites in Burton.

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Finally, I hope this dissertation does justice to the personality and character of Emily Nash.
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INTRODUCTION

In 1812, a young Emily Nash traveled by wagon train with her family from Plainfield, Massachusetts, to Burton, Geauga County, Ohio. Nash kept a personal journal of memories and events beginning in 1812 and ending shortly before her death in 1888. Emily’s parents John and Polly (Thayer) Nash longed for land in the newly developing region of the Western Reserve in Ohio. Exchanging their land in Massachusetts for territory in the West, the Nashes began the arduous journey across the country. Emily, along with her family, were some of the first pioneers to settle in Geauga County.

Emily Nash’s commitment to keeping a personal journal over the next seven decades proved to be a priceless decision describing early settlement in Ohio, birth records, marriages, and deaths. She gave a first-hand account from a female perspective of nineteenth-century socio-cultural mourning behavior. Her unique journal is an invaluable resource documenting the Age of the Beautiful Death in rural Geauga County. It also shows the need for further research on this topic in America. Although she began her journal in 1812, she likely added information over the years conveying those early days reflecting back on her family’s migration and the settlement of the county. Later entries in the 1820s reflect a more mature woman providing details of historical events and vital statistics. As a teenager, Nash described other families living in the county, and especially focused on births, marriages, and deaths. Her first death notice was written in the summer of 1813. The entry set the pattern in her future death notices. Emily always recorded how the person died, (ailment, disease, or accident), and personal characterizations. One of her most valuable contributions was the historical documentation of local residents and sequence of chronological events in the county. Few
primary sources can claim the same value and significance as Nash’s journal for Geauga County. Not only did Emily record crucial facts about her neighbors, she learned to prepare and lay out bodies for burial. Trained in childhood by her parents, Emily continued to prepare bodies and lay out the dead for the remainder of her life. Her journal provides details of the deceases’ life and death and vividly reveals the actions of a professional mourner and layer of the dead.

“A Witness to Death: The Journal of Emily Nash” examines the role of a female layer of the dead and her occupation in preparing bodies and mourning behavior in the Age of the Beautiful Death. This study seeks to explain the role of professional mourners and laypersons, by using her voluminous journal, recording births, marriages, historical events, and funerals in the county. This dissertation contends that women provided valuable labor to the household and community in rural nineteenth-century Ohio. Part of traditional domestic duties included caring for the sick and dying and preparing bodies for burial. Emily Nash trained as a layer of the dead by accompanying her own parents, and later, developed relationships with local residents. This study examines gender roles, and the evolution, and transformation into a layer of the dead. The central theme of this study is death and how the institution became feminized through participation and action within the Congregational Church. Emily witnessed death, documented events in her journal, and prepared bodies for burial.

In addition to examining gender roles, the Second Great Awakening, its origins and impact on Geauga County, plays a significant role in Emily’s perception of death and the larger nineteenth century attitude toward the Age of the Beautiful Death. Women assumed more central positions within the Congregational Church, allowing them to
direct social reforms and mourning etiquette. Nash’s journal, written over seven decades, contains valuable information on nineteenth-century mourning and funerary behavior viewed through the eyes of a professional mourner and witness to death.

Not only does this dissertation examine the position of a female layer of the dead, but it also provides a unique perspective on changes in funerary behavior during and after the Civil War and the eventual emergence of a male undertaking profession. Contemporary scholarly studies exclude women layers of the dead, or only marginally credit their service. This study seeks to fill an important gap in the historiography of a female professional mourner and layer of the dead, and the changes in funerary and mourning behavior over the entire century.

Historiography

Historians have written numerous books about Ohio’s frontier history and the creation of the state. R. Douglas Hurt in The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830, provides one of the most comprehensive studies on the settlers, Indians, and the established state. Similar in content, Andrew Cayton and Peter S. Onuf address cultural topics, community life, and political development. None of the above mentioned historians focuses exclusively on conflict between settlers and Indians in Ohio. Both R. David Edmunds and Patrick Griffin provide more Indian centered histories and examine the conflicts over land and removal. Edmunds and Griffin create a more balanced understanding pertaining to indigenous people on the Ohio frontier.

3 R. David Edmunds, “A German Chocolate Cake with White Coconut Frosting: Ohio and the Native American World,” in Ohio and the World, 1753-2053, Geoffrey Parker, Richard Sisson, and William Russell Coil, editors (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 2005), Patrick Griffin, “Reconsidering the
Emily’s journal reveals many of the same struggles in creating a community like those described by Hurt, Cayton, and others. Her perceptions tell what a women on the home front thought about issues of race, and political figures such as John Brown and Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War.

Extensive sources exist on the topic of gender and women’s history in nineteenth century America and early Ohio. Linda Kerber, Jane Sherron DeHart, Gerda Lerner, Jeanne Boydston, and Stephane Booth all explain the importance of female labor and contributions made by women to the household and community. According to Lerner and Boydston, female gender roles remained fluid, and the farm economy required a variety of tasks. Both women agree that rural areas like Geauga County, relied and depended on female labor. Since Emily Nash labored both in the traditional domestic sphere, and outside the home, she presents a complicated example of women’s work. In many ways Nash conformed to expected gender roles and took care of her family and farm. On the other hand, her economic responsibilities extended beyond the household into the community. Similar to the women chronicled in Laurel T. Ulrich’s essay “In the Ways of Her Household,” and A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Nash fulfilled both domestic tasks and created important social and economic connections within the community.

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Several other gender historians address the role played by women in religion and the cult of true womanhood. Since females influenced their own families, they managed to feminize the household and dominate the moral training of children and their religious upbringing. Ann Douglas and Barbara Welter both stress the cult of true womanhood in shaping women’s activities in religion, caregiving, and even death. Because all of these activities fell within the traditional realm of influence, women continued to maintain control over them throughout the nineteenth-century. Emily typified the cult of true womanhood, and also challenged the definition. She managed her own household and family, but worked outside the home.

Surprisingly little scholarship exists on the history of obituaries or death notices. Emily Nash wrote personal death notices about each individual she buried. Although not true obituaries, these unpublished notices resemble tributes discussed by historian Janice Hume in her *Obituaries in American Culture*. Perhaps the most useful book in explaining the purpose of death notices, and the changing nature of tributes, Hume’s book provides fascinating support in understanding Nash’s death notices. Influenced by religion and historical events, Nash penned hundreds of death notices of those she buried. A more recent work by Mushira Eid, *The World of Obituaries*, examines published obituaries of Middle Eastern women. This useful study compares to Hume’s work by examining gender and the amount of space females were accorded in death notices. Both books support and complement the information in Emily’s journal.

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There are numerous existing studies that address the origins of the Second Great Awakening. Barry Hankins, Whitney Cross, and Paul E. Johnson, interpret the influence of the Second Great Awakening and the historical impact it had on nineteenth-century America. Founders of the religious movement and theological differences with traditional Protestant sects in New England, help explain the origins of this phenomenon.\(^8\)

Numerous religious revivals like those held in Kentucky and New York also existed in Geauga County and Emily eagerly attended and participated. As more recent historians have shown, women played a very significant role in the Second Great Awakening with social reforms, and even developing new ideas about mourning behavior. Susan Hill Lindley and Mary P. Ryan examined the lives of women in Utica, New York, and other rural communities demonstrating a connection between female involvement in religion and social reforms such as temperance and anti-slavery. Both Lindley and Ryan examine gender and important roles women gained within the church as a result of the Second Great Awakening.\(^9\) Consistent with Lindley and Ryan, Emily’s experiences were formed by church events and active participation.

Two influential reform movements were shaped by female participants. Although Ruth Bordin and Jed Dannebaum use urban areas and cities such as Cincinnati for their research, the same concepts of meetings and temperance lectures applies to Geauga

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County. Emily Nash regularly attended temperance meetings and staunchly supported alcohol reform. However, Nash had little interest or participation in the other reform movement; anti-slavery. The state of Ohio played a pivotal role in both reforms associated with the Second Great Awakening.

The Second Great Awakening also provided Nash and other women with the opportunity to feminize or domesticate death. Ann Douglas in *The Feminization of American Culture*, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s *Disorderly Conduct*, identify the powerful and influential role assumed by women over the institution of death. They argue women came to control this process because it fell in the realm of traditional female domestic duties. Certainly religion helped shape Emily’s role and prepare her to control and influence mourning behavior. However, Ann Douglas, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Barbara Welter insist the power and authority experienced by women in the Second Great Awakening and their control of mourning rites, ultimately set the stage for women’s rights. Although this is a fascinating and logical connection, Emily Nash had little interest in women’s suffrage. Their views on women provide an intriguing contrast to Nash.

The Second Great Awakening provided the background for the elaborate, and excessive mourning behavior of the nineteenth-century. To understand mourning behavior, historians Martha Pike and Janet Gray-Armstrong used the disciplines of

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anthropology and sociology to explain the visible expressions of grief. Funerals became more elaborate and more sentimental throughout the era. Black garments, mourning jewelry, funeral portraits, and even new gravestone designs, symbolically identified death. General histories on funerary preparations, and reactions to death in this era are examined by James Ferrell and David Stannard. The Age of the Beautiful Death encouraged mourning, Romantic attitudes toward death, and elaborate funerals. Regional studies and comparisons with Geauga County can be found in Robert Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, a study of Schenectady, New York, and Pat Jalland’s *Death in the Victorian Family*, a study of death in nineteenth-century England. Expressions of mourning and death even extended to new cemetery designs in the Age of Beautiful Death. David Charles Sloane in *The Last Great Necessity*, and Stanley French’s “The Cemetery as a Cultural Institution,” looked at the establishment of garden park cemeteries and the peaceful, Romantic nature of landscaped burial grounds in nineteenth century America. The visible, tangible examples of grief all help explain the connection to religion and attitudes toward death in this era.

Keeping in mind the unique position Ohio held during the Civil War, various historians examine the role of United States Colored Troops (USCT) and their contributions. The history of the USCT still seems a relatively new area of Civil War

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research. Providing general histories of black soldiers and their experiences include works by John David Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue*, Noah Andre Trudeau’s *Like Men of War*, and Bob Luke and John David Smith’s, *Soldiering for Freedom*.16 Understanding how and why black men chose to join the Union Army is the subject of many of these sources. A more precise focus is offered by Versalle Washington’s *Eagle’s on Their Buttons: A Black Infantry Regiment in the Civil War*. Washington states few historians have examined the important role played by black soldiers in securing their own freedom. His focus is on the 5th Infantry Regiment of the USCT from Ohio.17 This information supports Ohio’s prominent role in the Civil War and questions moral and political issues found in Nash’s journal.

An interest in the psychological behavior and an understanding of why men fought in the Civil War, is another area of historiography explored by recent historians. The trauma of the war, death, disease, and emotional responses to battle is addressed by Eric T. Dean, James Geary, Reid Mitchell, and James M. McPherson.18 This information relates to Emily Nash because she wrote about the death of eighteen soldiers in her journal. She often pondered why men fought and described horrible injuries and the consequences of death on the community.

Nash’s journal suggests that the Age of the Beautiful Death ended with the Civil War. She provides first-hand accounts of bodies shipped home, and the trauma of battle left on the corpses. Nash’s view of death contrasts sharply with historian Drew Gilpin Faust in *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. Faust concludes that the “good death” continued throughout the war. An important part of mourning behavior was witnessing death. The Civil War permanently altered this situation. Gary Laderman in *The Sacred Remains*, also provides a critical examination of the same era. Like Nash, Laderman believes the Age of the Beautiful Death ended with the devastation of the Civil War. Other primary sources, including letters by soldiers and women on the home front, support Nash’s attitudes.

Comparisons between Emily Nash, Betsy Mix Cowles, Kentuckian Frances Peter, physician Esther Hill Hawks, and southerner Mary Boykin Chesnut, provide perspectives from a female point of view about the Civil War. Each woman experienced her own version of the conflict and felt the personal loss of those killed. Robert Wells’ extensive research on *The King of Terrors* also provides a reasonable comparison on the home front in Schenectady, New York, with that of Geauga County. Each source contrasts, compares, and supports Emily Nash.

Because of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, several outstanding recent sources add to the historiography of death, commemoration, and memory of the war.

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John Neff’s *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation*, and William Blair’s, *Cities of the Dead*, are perhaps two of the best examples. At the war’s end, questions remained about how the dead should be remembered. Reburial and Civil War cemeteries is the topic of Susan Mary Grant’s essay on “Patriot Graves.” She acknowledges the numbers of soldiers who lay unburied and unidentified years after the war’s conclusion. Historians question the recognition of Decoration Day and Memorial Day. These same issues surface in Emily’s journal after 1865. In addition, David Blight also examines attitudes about African Americans and race following the war. Neff, Blair, Grant, and Blight each offer insight to understanding the process of reconciliation and memory of the Civil War, affecting various groups, and the war’s legacy.

The history of funeral homes and the professionalization of the industry is outlined in Robert Habenstein’s 1955 book, *The History of American Funeral Directing*. Although a comprehensive and voluminous work on embalming and the modern funeral home industry, next to nothing is revealed about female layers of the dead, or the transition from a female occupation to an exclusively male, professionalized, institution. Even Gary Laderman’s more recent scholarship on *The Sacred Remains*, and *Rest in Peace*, failed to explain the gender transition and professionalization of the

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funeral business. In the last two decades of her life, Nash reveals the changes taking place and the process of slowly being removed from her position as a layer of the dead. Habenstein and Laderman do acknowledge scientific innovations and new technology in mortuary science introduced at the end of the nineteenth-century.

Twentieth-century historians writing about death, grief, and mourning, tend to criticize the modern funeral industry. Jessica Mitford’s *The American Way of Death*, condemned the anonymous, impersonal, business-like attitude adopted by modern funeral directors. Mitford also stressed the exorbitant and needless costs associated with funerals. Nash witnessed some of the same changes in her lifetime. Philippe Aries, in two sensational histories, *The Hour of Our Death*, and *Western Attitudes Toward Death*, discussed the anonymity of death in the twentieth century. Instead of personal care at home and a circle of mourners, people die in nursing homes and hospitals. Death is no longer a natural part of life. The process of dying is remote, distant, and removed from the family and home. These changes began in Emily’s life and continued after her death. The changes Habenstein, Mitford, and Aries write about had lasting and permanent consequences for Emily Nash and the funerary business.

Emily’s writing and journal entries changed significantly in the last decade of her life. These differences reveal her increasing age and illness, and a growing awareness of social changes in the county. She began writing about less personal, and more sensational and anonymous stories. Likely influenced by the media, Nash described violent deaths, tragedies, murders, and accidents. Carolyn Kitch and Janice Hume also write about

collective mourning and violent, mass deaths in *Journalism in a Culture of Grief*. Sensational stories grab our attention, but the reader has no connection to the victims. Almost a form of entertainment, violent deaths capture our attention, if only momentarily. Similarly, Richard A. Kalish takes the same approach when examining catastrophic deaths in a variety of cultures. Perhaps because her role as a layer of the dead was replaced by modern funeral homes, Nash spent the last few years of her life focusing on these more anonymous and sensational death stories.

This dissertation draws on an array of primary and secondary sources to support and argue against Emily Nash’s journal. This work combines elements of social, political, and gender history. By using the wide range of sources available, we can better understand how Emily Nash viewed society, women, and death, in nineteenth century Geauga County. At the same time, contemporary historians provide perspective and structure for understanding the broader American society.

**Chapter Overview**

Organizationally, this dissertation is divided into five chapters. Each chapter contains subheadings identifying important themes and topics. Chapter 1 describes the Nashes and other New England families settling in Geauga County, Ohio, in the early nineteenth century. Gender roles for both men and women tended to blur and intersect in early Ohio. Emily acquired traditional domestic responsibilities as well as training and preparation to become a layer of the dead. This chapter also delves into her death notices.

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and interprets her writing as compared to other scholars. Emily observed and chronicled death. She learned to lay out bodies and became a professional mourner.

Chapter 2 focuses on the origins and background of the Second Great Awakening. This religious movement shaped Emily’s actions and motivation for joining social reform movements and attending revivals within the Congregational Church. The Second Great Awakening also set the stage for women participating in religious activities and the opportunity to domesticate and feminize death. Revivals, temperance, anti-slavery meetings, and sophisticated death rituals, all stemmed from this religious movement. This chapter closely examines the religious movement and behavior of women within the church. More precisely, it encompasses the relationship between women, religion, and the institution of death.

Chapter 3 identifies the cultural and visible expressions of grief related to the Second Great Awakening. Romanticism and other cultural aspects of mourning helped define the Age of the Beautiful Death. Emily expected to witness death and be part of the circle of mourners. Nash embraced many of these cultural requirements while recording her death notices, and preparing bodies for burial. This chapter illustrates her activities as a witness to death.

Chapter 4 traces Nash’s viewpoint on the Civil War, not just from a female perspective, but as a layer of the dead. Nash provides first-hand knowledge on the deaths of eighteen soldiers from Geauga County. This chapter also argues that the war ended the “good death.” In contrast to the research from several other scholars, Nash’s journal entries demonstrates the “good death” and the Age of the Beautiful Death ended with so many soldiers dying far from home.
Finally, chapter 5 explains the changes in technology and the professionalization of the funerary business in the 1870s and 1880s. Science, innovative technology in preservation, and new undertaking businesses, essentially ended Emily’s role as a layer of the dead. She lived long enough to see these transformations occur. Along with losing her position, Nash began writing about sensational and traumatic deaths in the county. These notable alterations in journal entries reflect an interest and influence by the media. A drastic change from the individual and personal care provided by Emily, this chapter concludes by centering on the anonymity and impersonal nature of the modern funeral institution.

Nash’s substantial journal contains birth, marriage, and death records of hundreds of local residents. She provides a personal account of nineteenth century mourning and funerary behavior from a female perspective. Her unique journal and profession, allows for an unprecedented and significant glimpse into women’s social roles, and funerary customs of that era.
CHAPTER 1: DEATH MOVES TO OHIO

“Sept 2, 1834 Julia Olivia Smith died to day of mortification. I have been there most of the time this week to help them out she is living with Mr. John Baretts been there going to school...she had morterfied [sic] alive...I went to day to help Louis Beals lay her out and put her into the coffin farther [father] made the coffin...Alden Nash went with them to carrey [sic] the corps over there and attend the funeral.”

Introduction

Shortly after settling in Burton, in 1814, Emily Nash penned a tragic story of her infant brother’s death. She wanted to preserve the baby’s memory and brief life of only five weeks. Named Edwin Nash, the feeble and deformed infant struggled to survive a pre-mature birth. Emily described women from the town taking care of her mother and the sickly child. Surrounded by family and neighbors, the Nashes held a funeral for the child “here in the woods.” This sentimental and important passage reveals the significance of the community, and meaningful death rites emerging in nineteenth-century Geauga County. Emily Nash continued to record and write her death notices in her personal journal over the next seven decades.

The historiography of Ohio history includes classic works by Douglas Hurt and Andrew Cayton. Two leading Ohio frontier historians, Hurt and Cayton examine early settlements, the development of the state, and conflicts with Indians. Kim Gruenwald addresses trade along the Ohio River and the growing communities. Various historians

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30 The Journal of Emily Nash Patchin Halkins Pike 1813-1888. Two transcribed copies belong to Molly Sergi, another copy resides in the Chardon Public Library. The original journal (over 500 hand-written pages) is stored in the Chardon Public Library. Hereafter referred to as the Nash Journal.
provide close examination of Indian-white relations, conflicts, and the resulting removal of indigenous people from Ohio. Patrick Griffin and R. David Edmunds, provide two different perspectives on conflict over land in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ohio.33 Aside from issues over land, historians have examined topics on gender.

Gender studies and the role of female contributions in nineteenth-century America include the works by historians Jeanne Boydston, Linda Kerber, S. J. Kleinberg, Gerda Lerner, and Stephane Booth.34 Each book explains the various gender roles and expectations held by society regarding women’s proper behavior. Barbara Welter and Ann Douglas explain the “Cult of True Womanhood” and the domestic spheres of influence in the home, family, and church. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s indispensable history on midwife Martha Ballard serves as a comparison to Emily Nash and her experiences in labor, domestic work, and household chores.35 Each book offers insight to understanding the important positions held by women in the home and community.

A comprehensive study of recent scholarship on published obituaries and the history of death notices includes Janice Hume’s *Obituaries in American Culture*, and the

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work of Mushira Eid, and Desiree Henderson.\textsuperscript{36} The study of obituaries and death notices is still a relatively new discipline in the area of death and mourning behavior. Each author focuses on general characteristics and descriptions emphasizing important accomplishments of individuals. This information helps explain and illustrate the significance of Emily Nash’s journal entries and death notices by comparing them to content found in newspapers.

This chapter covers three important themes: Ohio’s frontier history and settlement, the Nash family, and the significant role played by women in nineteenth-century Ohio, including the training and preparation of a layer of the dead. And thirdly, this chapter explores Emily Nash’s journal entries and death notices that describe the deceased in Geauga County. The Nash family embodies many of the ideals regarding cultural values and religion transplanted to Ohio from New England in the nineteenth century. In many ways Emily met societal expectations considered appropriate and proper for women. Trained as a layer of the dead, she assumed this important position as part of typical caregiving and domestic duties. Her death notices resemble the occasional published obituary found in newspapers. Yet the hundreds of death notices written by Nash, reveal personal attributes and qualities deemed important in nineteenth century Geauga County. This chapter provides the foundation for understanding the evolution and transformation of Emily Nash into a layer of the dead.

Early Ohio History: Conflict and Settlement

Following the American Revolution and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, Congress permitted western settlement and development in the Northwest Territory. Initially, Congress recognized eastern states’ claims to the territory as extensions of their own land. Eventually four states; New York, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut surrendered their claims to Ohio. Connecticut retained a portion of land, called the Western Reserve, which it intended to sell. In 1803 the first state formed out of the old Northwest was Ohio. Congress approved governmental sales of land in the Northwest Territory, and also planned to pay off veterans from the American Revolution who lost property during the war. The remote western land called the “firelands” or “sufferers” land compensated veterans, and settlements began after 1812. In the years after the Revolution, Ohio became a virtual land bank, allowing sales and compensating those who wanted to move west. The Connecticut Land Company sold or exchanged 500,000 acres of land throughout the 1780s and 1790s. Later, The Ohio Land Company formed in Boston and surveyed over 3.2 million acres in the Western Reserve. Land was plentiful, which attracted many settlers from the East.\(^{37}\) The opening of the West and Connecticut Western Reserve, brought pioneers and their families into this new territory, largely emphasizing a New England heritage in the region and laying part of the foundation of Ohio’s social, religious, and cultural heritage.

There were practical reasons for settling in Ohio. Congress recognized the land and resources were valuable and the area could be opened for westward migrations.

Faced with a number of problems in creating the territory, Congress acquired land from Indians, and removed land claims by eastern states, namely Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Most of the states relinquished their “western land reserves,” except for Connecticut. At the same time, Indians conceded land in Ohio, forcibly removing them from the territory by the early nineteenth-century. While land speculators viewed Ohio as a source of potential revenue and economic gain, immigrants and Indians clashed on the frontier. The Delaware, Shawnee, and Wayndots were some of the last Indians to be removed from the Connecticut Western Reserve.38

Several historians have examined the contentious and volatile relationship between settlers and Indians in the Ohio country. This background information provides a basis in understanding Emily Nash’s experiences in nineteenth-century Ohio. In The Frontier Republic (1986) Andrew Cayton described the Ohio Company’s fascination with ancient Indian mounds in Marietta. However, new towns were simply built over the ruins, often obliterating the evidence. Indian land was either taken by squatters who simply moved into Ohio, or later by Congress. In this early work on Ohio, little discussion or analysis of attacks on Indian villages or the displacement of indigenous people is addressed. Conflicts occurred and violence escalated, resulting in the loss of land for Ohio Indians. For a more comprehensive examination of anti-Indian attitudes, Patrick Griffin wrote a persuasive essay identifying the role of the state and government in Indian removal. Because the Ohio Company had a stake in selling land, the lines between civilian and military interests blurred considerably. Government officials, such as Secretary of War Henry Knox owned stock in the Ohio Company and wanted Indians

38 Hurt, The Ohio Frontier, pp. 157-167, 200-201.
removed off of the land. The state made every effort to provoke and entice Indian-settler conflict in Ohio.\(^{39}\)

Griffin identifies the state’s responsibility and motivation behind aggressive acts, including bloodshed. In a similar essay, the diversity of Ohio’s people is emphasized by R. David Edmunds in “A German Chocolate Cake, With White Coconut Icing: Ohio and the Native American World” (2005). A more Indian-centered history, Edmunds asserts the Wyandots, Miamis, and Shawnees had their own strategies and manipulated Europeans and Americans on the frontier. Indians were not simply pawns controlled by colonial powers. In fact, Edmunds uses a bolder approach stating that Indians were active players on the frontier and engaged in trade and interactions as willing participants. Like Griffin, Edmunds focuses on the warfare and violence among those living in Ohio. Because Indians viewed the land as the center of their world, warfare shaped their lives as it did white settlers. Edmunds and Griffin call for a broader approach in examining Ohio frontier history. Both historians widen the focus and include the multi-layered diversity of Natives, and white Euro-Americans in Ohio history. This more inclusive approach acknowledges the role played by other people in Ohio and consequently helps to explain the origins of racial tensions, removal, and violence.\(^{40}\)

With the state’s intervention, Indians were removed from Ohio paving the way for a flood of white settlers. When skirmishes and raids occurred, the federal government


encouraged revenge and recognized the value of eliminating the “impediment” of Indians from the Ohio country. Quite simply, if they were removed, land was readily available. Once this vision was achieved, early settlements thrived along the Ohio River because of trade. Merchants sold and bartered various products such as flour, hemp, corn, textiles, and whiskey along the river and its many tributaries.\footnote{Griffin, “Origins of Indian Removal,” 25-31, Gruenwald, “Space and Place,” p. 33, Andrew R.L. Cayton, “Artery and Border: The Ambiguous Development of the Ohio Valley in the Early Republic,” Ohio Valley History, (Winter 2001), pp. 19-20.} With territory secured, the first settlers and pioneers from New England began arriving in Ohio.

The Western Reserve had a very New England appearance. The first settlers to the area included surveyors and land speculators who divided shares according to the Connecticut Land Company. Moses Cleaveland and his surveying party platted Cleveland along the Cuyahoga River. The Reserve comprised of present day Ashtabula, Trumbull, Portage, Geauga, Lake, Medina, Lorain, Huron, Erie, and Summit counties. Settlers founded towns and cities throughout the frontier. Many urban and rural areas contained institutions such as schools and churches similar to those created in New England. Settlers tended to model and replicate those same institutions that were familiar to them in the East. In an interesting study on Ohio’s place in the Midwest and nation, Andrew Cayton examined the importance of communities and family on the frontier. Settlements organized around extended families, households, and neighbors. Frontier life emphasized the need and dependency of the community. People from the same geographic region tended to settle near each other, thus creating a network of friends.\footnote{Andrew Cayton, and Peter S. Onuf, The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region (Bloomington: Indiana State University, 1990), pp. 44-48, David Stradling, “Cities of the Valley,” Ohio Valley History, vol. 1, no. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 37-38.}
The first party of settlers arrived in Geauga County in the spring of 1798. By 1804 the township of Parkman, Geauga County was founded, followed by Claridon in 1808, and finally Troy in 1811. Those first pioneers settling in Burton, Geauga County included Isaac and Eli Fowler, Reed Beard, A. Baird, and Thomas Umberville and family. Along with wagons loaded with supplies, the settlers brought cattle, oxen, and boats. The first family to arrive in Burton was the Umbervilles, later changing its surname to Umberfield. Creating make-shift camps, the New England settlers recognized Indian villages in the areas. Thick forests and streams made clearing the region for farms difficult. By the summer of 1798, residents planted seeds for the first gardens and temporary dwellings turned into more permanent residents.

The Nash family settled in Geauga County in 1812. Emily Nash was nearly seven years-old when she travelled with her parents, siblings, and cousin from Berkshire, Massachusetts, in 1812 settling in Ohio. Not unlike other pioneer families, the Nashes transplanted ideas and institutions from New England to Ohio. Emily Nash kept a personal journal from 1812 to 1888 documenting historic events and deaths in Burton, Troy, and Claridon Townships. Her journal is a valuable witness to the role of women on the frontier and the chronicling of death-notices and funerary behavior in nineteenth-century Ohio.

By 1800, additional families settled near their New England brethren in Ohio. Their reliance and dependence on one another is documented throughout Emily Nash’s lengthy journal. Households shared farm animals and constructed dwellings together.

Most residents were from the same areas in Massachusetts and Connecticut and easily formed lasting bonds. Shortly after their arrival to the county, the Nashes built a log house with a chimney from felled timbers and boards from sleds, adding to the settlement.

It was not just the rustic rural setting of Geauga County making life difficult, early settlers also feared attacks by Indians. Before the War of 1812, Wyandots, Ottawas, Delaware, and Chippewa natives were a common sight living and hunting along the rivers. It was not unusual for violence to erupt between Indians and settlers once the population began to expand in the county. Emily Nash relayed several violent episodes involving local Indians near her family’s homestead. Shortly after their arrival in Ohio, Emily’s father John Nash was summoned by Colonel Jedediah Baird to travel to Cleveland and “help with the defense.” Emily did not describe any personal encounters with Indians, but she indicated tremendous fear. In two entries dated 1814, a pioneer named Mr. Morrow found five Indian graves along the river near his home. Apparently the Indians wanted alcohol from some of the local settlers and eventually their relationship turned violent. Settlers shot and killed the Indians and left them in shallow graves along the riverbank. Her story reveals that attacks were common and reprisals expected. Consistent with Griffin, and Edmund’s essays, lawlessness and open hostility toward Native peoples was tolerated. Emily appears to have a conscience regarding the actions of the settlers. “I fear the Indians will remember it [the death of five people] for a long time and seek revenge for being driven from their hunting grounds,” she wrote in

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46 Nash, *Journal*, (1812-1813), p.8. Emily was reflecting back on this event so the dates are unclear. Most likely this event took place at the end of 1813. She described her father John Nash summoned from Burton to Cleveland by the military.
1814. Emily never mentioned Indians again in her journal after these early episodes. Burton residents chose to resolve their problems with Native peoples by subduing and removing them. Without a doubt descriptions of life on the frontier was harrowing, dangerous, and arduous. The Nash family, along with other settlers had to adjust to living in rural Ohio.

The Nash Family

A fifth generation New Engander, Emily Nash could trace her heritage to passengers on the Mayflower and a soldier in King Philip’s War, 1675. Her parents John and Polly Thayer Nash married in 1798 and parented eleven children. Emily was born October 1806 in Plainfield, Massachusetts, the third daughter and one of six children to make the journey to Ohio. Emily began her “little book to write things that happened” in 1812. It is obvious that her decision to keep a journal occurred at a later date because the original handwriting is that of a young adult rather than a child. It is likely she kept notes and reflected back on these early events until she was old enough to keep a chronological account.

Emily’s first entries describe in surprising detail events in 1812 and 1813. Mostly grouped by years, these first entries describe the family’s decision to leave Massachusetts for Ohio and the struggle to establish a homestead. “He thought that [Ohio] was the land for him and children so he [father] swaped his farm in Massachusetts for land in Ohio in

48 Ibid, (1812) p. 1. The Puritan Manuscript: Francis Nash of Braintree Massachusetts and 1550 of his Descendants, August 1933. The Genealogy Room, Chardon Public Library, Chardon Ohio. This document is a family history based on the Nash’s ancestry in America.
patches one patch in Bricksville another in Euclid and another in Wadsworth Medina County and the patch in Geauga County where he selected his home. 49

Historically, Emily reported that the family traveled during “the time of war”, meaning the War of 1812. At one point while passing through Buffalo, New York, she described American soldiers filling the roads with “things to the war” frightening their horses with cannons. At night the Nashes could not find adequate lodging because the “taverns were so filled up with sentinels we could not find a room to lay down.” 50

By late February 1813 the Nashes finally reached their destination in Burton, Ohio. There they met up with other “Plainfield Massachusetts friends.” John Nash constructed a birch cabin while the women and girls set to work spinning and weaving. There were already two families residing in Burton; the Fords and Hickocks. Emily reported in her journal that goods and products such as flax, wool, cows, and sheep became a means of exchange between the families. Sensing the difficulties of pioneer life, Emily commented in 1813, “If it had not been for the womens work we could not get along for provisions is very high.” 51 Even as a child Emily recognized the valuable role women played on the frontier and their indispensable contributions to household and community. Burton blossomed into a regular community.

In many ways Emily Nash conformed to traditional gender roles and ideas involving appropriate behavior for young women. Even at a very tender age she worked away from her family’s farm helping to cook and look after children on a neighboring homestead. Not surprising, she engaged in spinning, weaving and cooking. Almost immediately after arriving in Burton, the women and girls commenced weaving and

51 Ibid, (1813), pp. 3-4.
producing flax and wool for clothing. Some of the established families offered compensation in the form of cattle and sheep. As an enterprising young lady, Emily revealed that she and her sister Clarissa both received cattle as a result of their labor.

Bartering and trading for goods on the frontier was in fact very common. Few dry good stores existed in proximity, and traveling to Warren or Cleveland regularly was not an option. The Nash girls supported their parents’ household by providing much needed domestic labor. 52

**Women on the Frontier: Gender roles and expectations**

Emily Nash personified the nineteenth century female and the Cult of True Womanhood. Barbara Welter applied this popular concept to daughters, wives, and mothers in the nineteenth century focusing on their virtues, piety, and domesticity. A true woman’s place remained in the home supporting her husband and raising children. Yet, her labor within the household contributed to the overall success of the farm. A pioneer household in early nineteenth century America could hardly expect to function without the contributions of women. 54 Welter adds that home, family, and caring for others became the female realm of influence. Associated with these domestic responsibilities came religious and spiritual pursuits. Unlike other social activities, religion and church work did not take women away from their domestic duties and became an acceptable sphere of female influence. 55 Emily certainly embraced these

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55 Welter, *Dimity Convictions*, pp. 22-23.
ideals of womanhood, which shaped her behavior regarding a woman’s place and role in society.

By the summer of 1813, the communities of Geauga County thrived. A small log house was built for both meetings and school near a natural spring and newly constructed road. The first school teacher was Abner H. Fairbanks of Parkman who took the position in 1813 for $17.00 a month. At one point Nash catalogued a list of books she read as a child. Her list included a combination of secular and religious works such as Robinson Caruso, Charlotte Temple, Slavery as it is, and Pilgrim’s Progress. An impressive list, Nash was well versed in popular literature as well as religious texts. Emily’s education and interest in literature reflects her journalistic abilities, as well as her role within her family. Emily found the time to complain in her journal about the endless lessons and memorization of facts she deemed useless. Ironically, those same lessons honed her with the intellect and ability to document her life and history of the county over the next seven decades. Even her views on politics were fashioned and shaped by what she read in local newspapers. Whether she read about announcements for upcoming meetings, the death of national figures such as Stephen A. Douglas, Charles Gutineau, or Abraham Lincoln, Emily was keenly aware of America’s political situations and struggles. Denied the right to vote in nineteenth-century America, Emily still offered her own preference in politicians, hoping at one point a Democrat president is chosen over a Republican. This pronouncement was made when Grover Cleveland was elected in 1885.

In many ways Emily’s world as a young women living in rural Geauga County followed tradition. Social requirements at the time demanded endless tasks linked to the

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maintenance of the home and family. Her domestic world was isolated and separate from politics and economic systems outside the home. Gender spheres were indeed separate, and Emily’s father, brothers, and later husbands worked outside the home as farmers, carpenters, or justices of the peace. At the same time, Emily’s journal reflects the contradictions she experienced in society. She reports dutifully working at home, or for other families, but still expected to assume a submissive role to male figures in her household and community.

Historian Gerda Lerner argues that separate spheres of gender influence allowed men to work outside the home in industry and businesses and women to remain active within the home. Two occupations outside the home permitted women some economic opportunities: nursing and teaching, but even these areas were limited and women received lower pay compared to their male counterparts. Discrimination regarding pay was evident even in the early nineteenth century. A male school teacher from Bedford, Cuyahoga County, made $20 a month for teaching twenty-two students, while a female teacher from Geauga County, made $4 a month for teaching the same number of pupils. Although gender spheres did exist, the rural nature of Geauga County meant contributions by women were more diverse and valued as compared to urban areas in the nineteenth century. There was less restriction in gender roles and occupations for women. Part of this existed out of necessity; it was nearly impossible for women to remain inside the home secluded from work and labor associated with a farm economy. Lerner

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confirmed that social class and gender distinctions were highly diversified on the frontier, and in fact rural areas actually depended on the labor of women.\textsuperscript{62}

Emily’s own accounts reveal that her life was far more complicated and gender roles much more fluid in nineteenth-century Ohio. Although she had brothers, Emily boasted that her father wanted to make “boys out of his girls—me the most of any one.”\textsuperscript{63} While her older sisters labored over the looms and spinning wheels, Emily yoked up the oxen and learned to drive them with a plow, clearing plots of land for growing crops. Within her own family, gender roles were not rigid and in fact blurred together.

An important part of the economic arrangement and households, female labor played a vital role in survival in rural Ohio. Economic responsibilities extended beyond the immediate household and tied women to the larger community. One of the best comparisons to Emily’s experiences comes from Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s seminal book \textit{A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard Based on her Diary, 1785-1812} (1990). Although Ballard preceded Emily Nash by several decades, her experiences on the Maine frontier paralleled Nash’s. Ballard’s daily routine included cleaning the rooms and yard, milking the cows, tending chickens, caring for her extended family and of course, delivering babies. As Ulrich affirmed, Ballard’s actions on a daily basis provide a consistent record of the operations of a female-managed economy.\textsuperscript{64} For Emily, her early childhood training allowed her to experience and engage in a variety of tasks, duties, and demanding jobs. Her skills shaped her future role preparing bodies for burial. Women worked, toiled, and labored together, all the while creating lasting and meaningful bonds

\textsuperscript{63} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1814). p. 8.
with each-other. 65 Adding to the value of women’s work, Jeanne Boydston emphasized the contributions made by the wife and daughters to a household. Childrearing, cooking, cleaning, tending the sick and elderly along with farm animals all fell within the realm of her domestic duties. Planting crops, canning, sewing, and toiling in the fields required her labor beyond the farm house. Women were capable laborers on the frontier. Male labor outside the home may have been compensated with pay, but the farm could hardly function without her support.66 On their initial arrival to Ohio, Emily sarcastically observed that this new land was not made of milk and honey, but full of wild beasts and a difficult environment. Life was harsh on the frontier, and only by pulling resources together and mutual dependency did settlers survive.

Women also provided a number of other tasks and occupations on the frontier, mostly out of necessity. One of the most significant roles was that of a healer. Although one doctor, Erastus Goodwin is mentioned occasionally in her journal, it appears that he was summoned only for critical injuries. Most local women shared experiences and knowledge with each other, attending sick family members and treating illnesses. Martha Ballard also manufactured salves, ointments, pills, and other remedies to treat a variety of illnesses from blisters to toothaches. Education and experience came from trial and error. Like Nash, Ballard believed in the curative powers of urine mixed with other ingredients to cure the ill. Folklore and homeopathic medicines were associated with healing.67

When she was only eight years old Emily Nash recollected seeing a neighbor’s baby born and helping to care for the mother. Many services and exchanges took Emily outside her own household and she directly engaged in transactions with other residents.

Women served as midwives and rarely was a trained physician present. Emily was even compensated for her services by receiving calicos for sewing. Women in the community worked together to deliver babies and Emily was no exception. She helped her own mother after she gave birth to twin girls in 1817; Emily complained about caring for the newborns and working on the family farm at the same time. It was not uncommon for women and girls to work on a neighbor’s farm, helping to feed or care for young children. Although many women did not receive monetary compensation, they contributed their skills and expertise to their neighbors and community. This system of exchanging girls for labor was a vital part of the frontier economy. In 1788 Martha Ballard described her daughters exchanging labor with neighbors. The girls learned to weave, making towels, bedding, blankets and clothing. Single and married daughters were part of this exchange. The necessary dependency and camaraderie of female nurturing and healing was essential for friendship and support on the frontier.

It was not just childcare or midwifery assigned to women. Pioneer women also dried herbs and administered remedies. Their success and failure was probably based on what other women taught them. Homeopathic treatments applied to snake bites. In consultation with several other women, Emily’s mother, Polly Nash, wrapped a woman’s snake bitten finger in a tobacco bandage and covered her entire hand with dirt. The doctor arrived after the treatment and commended the women. Surprisingly, Mrs. Russell’s injured finger healed. Local women nursed residents for “worms and ague.” Not entirely successful, they still shared their knowledge and experiences. These episodes of

69 Nash Journal, (1817), p. 13-14, Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale, pp. 81-85. Ulrich uses the concept of a “network of exchange” regarding the shared labor of girls and women. This same concept is applied to Emily Nash in the nineteenth century.
treatments and medical expertise gave Emily the necessary exposure to both the community and formidable knowledge of the human body. She would rely on this information gained in childhood throughout her life and prepare her for the role of layer of the dead.\textsuperscript{70}

\textbf{Evolution of a Layer of the Dead}

In July 1813 Emily documented the first of over 400 deaths in the county. Reed Burroughs, the five year-old child of Simon and Ruth, “died to day of the inflammation of the bowels caused by a woodtick…He was their oldest boy and they were left to mourn for him as the first death in this place or town of a white person.”\textsuperscript{71} Not only does Emily tell who the child was, but his manner of death and the funeral service that followed. Considering Geauga County was only established in 1805, this death record provides important information about the earliest settlers. Few deaths were recorded in the county between 1805 and 1813.\textsuperscript{72} This style of reporting death in the county would be one of her most valuable contributions to history. Only in 1867 did the county officially begin to record deaths. Emily Nash’s journal and complete list of death notices spans 1813 to shortly before her death in 1888. Equally important, there is an indication of her family’s significance to the community. “Farther [father] makes a coffin and the people all go to weep…”\textsuperscript{73} John Nash was a carpenter, justice of the peace, and choir master. It is likely Emily’s introduction to documenting the deceased and being present during death-bed scenes resulted from her accompanying her father.

\textsuperscript{70} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1815), p. 12, Ulrich, \textit{A Midwife’s Tale}, pp. 51-52. Ulrich provides a lengthy list of remedies and cures used by Ballard.


\textsuperscript{73} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1814), p. 6.
From 1814 to 1818 Emily recorded deaths in her journal and provided short biographies of the deceased. After 1817 she began documenting specific days and months of the year. She tells of her father performing marriages and presiding over funerals. Perhaps because of her age, or newly acquired domestic responsibilities, Emily became more precise in her documentation. By the 1820s, Emily continued to accompany her father to funerals where she learned the trade and likely assisted him. Interestingly, in this decade she began describing the final moments of the deceased. It is probable, if not certain, that Emily was witnessing death first-hand and was a member of the intimate circle of relatives and friends that presided during death-bed scenes. In August 1820 Emily wrote, “the wife of Robert B. Parkman [Lucy] died to day at the age of 37 years after a long and distressing illness of consumption her last moments presented to her friends a most perfect blending of the two worlds …the acute distress which she in her last moments experienced she submitted to without a murmur…”74 Afterwards Emily attended the funeral with her father.

Aside from attending death bed circles and funerals, Emily performed other domestic responsibilities. Throughout her childhood she referred to working for various families. In April 1821, at the age of fifteen Emily lived and worked for the aged Jacob Welsh. She lamented about the chores and missing her mother, yet conceded, “children must help their parents.”75 Emily’s mother also mentored her daughter in tending the dead. In 1822 Emily wrote, “old Mrs. Thankful, wife of Nathaniel Weston died to day…they came to get someone to go there to help mother [Polly Nash] lay her out.

Mother was there and saw her die.”

By November 1822 Emily acquired a new responsibility: choosing funerary clothing and dressing the corpse. Emily was becoming a professional mourner. In their daily lives women concentrated on illness and death. Emily’s mother instructed her on how to dress a body and lay out the dead. An adolescent girl’s training included this type of instruction. The task of preparing bodies for burial was part of the domestic responsibility taught to girls and women in the nineteenth century, asserted Ann Douglas in *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977). Douglas skillfully examined many institutions which became domesticated by females. Education, religion, and of course death fell under the female sphere of influence. Death became a female prerogative by preparing bodies for burial and laying out the deceased. The process began with midwives and healers, and transcended to female layers of the dead. It was necessary to prepare for the inevitable crises of sickness and death and the rituals that surround these events.

Even in the eighteenth century Martha Ballard assumed this responsibility. She delivered Mrs. Clayton’s child in August 1787, and instead found both mother and child dead. She prepared both for burial. And again in 1788, Ballard recorded the death of the Coleman child in her journal. She dressed the baby, laid him out and attended his funeral. Similar to Emily, Martha Ballard completed multiple tasks of caring for the sick, delivering babies, choosing funerary clothing, and laying out bodies.

Being exposed to both male and female gender roles and responsibilities, Emily’s family shaped and prepared her for her future role as a layer of the dead. Because nineteenth-century girls and women were already charged with domestic care-giving

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duties and funeral preparation, laying out the dead became customary women’s work. On two occasions, in the mid 1830s, Emily acknowledged laying out the dead without the assistance of her parents. She wrote in September 1834, “I went to day to help Louis Beals lay her out [Julia Olivia Smith] and put her in the coffin.” And again in 1835 she helped “make grave clothes and get ready for the funeral tomorrow.” Nash earned a notable reputation by personally consoling and preparing hundreds of the deceased she described. She evolved into a professional mourner who was trusted with one of the community’s most sacred duties—laying out the dead. Considering the frequency at which she was called upon to provide her services, and the fact that Emily never mentions anyone else laying out the dead, it is likely she was the most prominent figure.

Many cultures allocated the task of preparing the body for burial to women. Indians expected female family members to wash, dress, and position the body after death. The body was dressed in its best clothing and village men constructed a coffin. Similarities existed with burials in the colonial period and the role of women. When a death occurred, female family members washed and dressed the body. Since the same women took care of the sick in the home, it was not unusual to charge them with this duty. Gender seemed to be the deciding factor in determining who took care of the sick and prepared the body after death. As previously mentioned, even midwife Martha Ballard described delivering babies in one passage and laying out the dead in another. One woman assumed both domestic roles. In America’s formative years, women in the

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community functioned as layers of the dead. She may have been the wife of a trusted, well-known family, or a widowed woman. Long before undertaking was a formal business, women were sharing the task of preparing bodies for burial. In larger cities such as Philadelphia, early nineteenth-century ads in newspapers listed specialist categories such as “Layers Out of the Dead.” In an 1810 Philadelphia registry at least three women were listed with this distinctive occupation. Emily’s position and role as a layer of the dead follows many of the examples and patterns established in earlier eras.

Given her family’s position and notoriety within the community, Emily seemed a likely candidate for the role. Even before she was widowed in 1840, she was trained in preparing bodies for burial. Women already cared for the sick and elderly at home and practiced nursing and healing. They learned to administer drugs, herbs and medicines to cure illnesses. Midwives learned their skills through observation and participation. Layers of the dead developed their skills through the same process. Geauga newspapers did not carry ads for layers of the dead like Philadelphia. However Emily’s reputation was earned through personal relationships, social networks, and word of mouth.

One of the most revealing examples of the Nash family’s reputation in the community involved Emily’s account of the murder of Zopher Warner in 1823. The hanging took place on May 15, 1823 and resulted from the stabbing death of a local resident. Emily detailed the events in her journal. Mr. Benjamin Wright went to the home of Zopher Warner demanding repayment of money. In a fit of rage Wright stabbed and killed Warner in front of his wife and young son. Wright was apprehended and sentenced.

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to death. Aside from describing the first recorded hanging in Chardon, Ohio, Emily and her father John Nash served as eye-witnesses to the execution and burial of the criminal. On May 15, 1823, Emily observed, “he [Benjamin Wright] sat and heard his own funeral sermon...he looked real pail...the criminal and the minister and the sheriff followed after the coffin...”

Emily was satisfied with the punishment. Even though a number of women fainted at the sight, Nash still felt Wright deserved to be hanged. Wright was placed in a coffin and buried by his friends and family. Emily’s vivid account of the execution is valuable for documenting Wright’s crime and the details of his death. As justice of the peace, John Nash provided religious council to the condemned man. Father and daughter served in the capacity of tending to the dead and preparing bodies in the community. In a letter to her husband Peter, Burton resident Abigail (Nabby) Hitchcock acknowledged the execution on the gallows. She confirmed the presence of John and Emily Nash, mentioning the justice of the peace and his daughter at the May 1823 hanging.

It is clear that the Nash family secured a reputation in Geauga County for laying out the dead and funerary preparation.

Nash was groomed by her parents to assume the role as a layer of the dead. Perhaps her other siblings also played a role and accompanied their parents, John and Polly, learning to prepare bodies for burial. Emily’s experiences began within the sphere of domestic work, but challenge Lerner and Boydston’s image of the proper role of women and appropriate women’s work. Emily worked outside the home for most of her life. Granted she was still working in an area allocated to women, care giving, and laying

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84 Abigail Hitchcock Letter, May 1823. Abigail (Nabby) wrote this letter to husband Peter Hitchcock who was an Ohio Supreme Court Judge. The original letter is stored in the Hitchcock File in the Shanower Library, Century Village Museum. Hitchcock acknowledged the Nashes among some 5,000 people present at the execution.
out the dead. What was so extraordinary about Nash’s role was her continuation and ability to function as a layer of the dead and professional mourner and the long-term service she provided. Emily began preparing bodies as early as 1820 and continued until 1888. Emily challenged gender roles by having a compensated occupation outside the home. Although she never disclosed the amount of payment received for her services, she continued to work and lived independently for most of her adult life without the support of a husband.

Throughout her early adult years Nash continued her funerary duties while keeping company and finally marrying a local man. In her journal, Emily described keeping company with a number of young men including Erastus Sawyer, Jacob Welsh, and Peter Beals. She attended church meetings, dances, and balls with various beaus. On several occasions Emily gave her date “the mitten” because he drank excessively and she “feared he will die a drunkard at some time.”85 She complained of being sick of school and working hard to prepare dinner for over one hundred young people on the Fourth of July in 1826. Her life included many domestic responsibilities, not unlike other nineteenth-century women. At the same time she continued to tend the dead. Shortly after her twentieth birthday, Emily shared her company with David Patchin and married him on August 28, 1828. The following year Emily gave birth to her only child a daughter, Philancia Patchin, July 6, 1829.86

Between raising a family and funerary obligations, Emily suffered from a sickness that brought her to the gate of death. Self-described as a “paraletic shock,” she likely suffered a stroke. Her father and husband even “sent to the store to get cloth for my burial

85 Nash, Journal, (1824), p. 27.
clothes.” Although she slowly recovered, Emily had life-long paralysis and complications from her illness. The stroke debilitated the left side of her body and she regained little use of her arm. By 1837, Emily employed a young girl (Elizabeth Haver) to assist her with chores. It was obvious that her illness caused her tremendous stress. The community practice of hiring young girls to work in the house continued with Elizabeth Haver. For practical reasons, Emily needed the domestic help in her own home to complete chores and care for her family. Although Emily rarely acknowledged the presence of helpers or other women preparing bodies for burial, it is very likely that Elizabeth Haver shared those responsibilities.

Although her illness continued to cause problems, Nash resumed laying out bodies and recording death notices in her journal within two months of recovering. Another child, Mercy Reed lived with Emily and her family for several months before returning to New York. If she could not personally attend or administer the proper funerary rites, Elizabeth or Mercy may have prepared bodies under her tutorage. Finally by 1838, Emily once again resumed her role as a layer of the dead. Still physically impaired and her physical actions limited, Emily resumed her activities and responsibilities.

In July 1840, David Patchin died. As she mourned her beloved husband, Emily asked, “How can I live without you[?]” Unfortunately, Emily became familiar with the tragic loss of loved ones throughout the remainder of her life. She buried two more husbands; John Halkins in 1854 and Elijah Pike in 1867, along with her daughter Philansia in 1879. Although she married three times, Emily remained a widow for many

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87 Ibid, (1836), p. 47.
decades. Since she did not have a husband and children to consume her time she instead spent most of her life preparing bodies for burial. Her siblings may have received similar training in childhood but they married and had large families and many household responsibilities. Emily chose to remain in the community providing her services as a widow, often alone on her farm, and independent for most of her life. Her motivation came from family training and opportunity. Yet it is likely she needed the income and work associated with her position. Personal tragedies and continued illness did not deter her from witnessing death and recording notices in her journal. Perhaps because of her widowed status, Nash was able to witness death and prepare bodies for decades in Geauga County. Her occupation remained virtually undeterred and unchallenged from the 1820s on.

Few historians have examined the role of a female layer of the dead and her contributions to a rural community in Ohio. Significantly, Nash kept a journal documenting her services and at the same time provided insight into gender roles, mourning behavior, and the history of the funeral industry in nineteenth century America. Her journal enhances and contributes to existing studies on gender but also adds to the field of mourning behavior from a female perspective.

**Emily’s Death Notices: Men, Women and Children**

Emily did not simply record vital statistics of the deceased. Rather, her journal entries contain death notices about the individual and their contributions to society. There is a decisive connection between Nash’s upbringing, the Second Great Awakening, and the description of a person’s death notice in her journal. Emily wrote meticulous and descriptive death notices about each person she prepared for burial. True obituaries rarely
appeared in newspapers in the early nineteenth-century, which makes Nash’s contributions even more valuable. Several themes involving values emerged in her journal: personal attributes of the individual, repetition of phrases defining the social status of the deceased, and the cause of death. These themes represent the collective memory of nineteenth-century Geauga County as relayed by Nash. Far from being simple obituaries, Nash provides valuable connections between death and historical-cultural themes in American life. The purpose of Nash’s notices was to record death and also to commemorate the person’s life. She kept a death record for her own personal use and memory. Only late in life, did she recognize the value of her own work and donate the entire document to a historical society.

One of the most outstanding histories on obituaries was written by Janice Hume in 2000. She explains that obituaries have always been part of American media, but were rare in the early nineteenth-century. Often only high-profile significant national figures were mentioned in the news and obituaries. Most common farmers or industrial workers did not have a death notice published. Hume suggests over time America became more inclusive and information on the “common man” and sometimes woman, appeared in newspapers. This inclusion shows a change in values and illuminates cultural history. For example, the Civil War proved a turning point in recording the death of soldiers. More obituaries appeared in local and often national newspapers. Commemoration of individuals often followed a major historical event, war or era. Nash’s death notices were never published and cannot correctly be identified as proper obituaries. However her writing and journal entries represent similar themes presented by Hume. Nash explains the value and contributions offered by the deceased. Taken altogether, her death

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entries reflect the lives of individual citizens and form a collective memory about values and culture of nineteenth-century Geauga County.

Obituaries serve the dual purpose of chronicling a person’s accomplishments and providing a source of collective memory. Published obituaries offer insight and understanding into American values and culture. Because they serve as an idealized account of a person’s life and legacy, obituaries reveal a great deal about collective memory from that era. Specific values and ethics are revealed in obituaries, not only commemorating the person, but describing a cultural period in history. What is remembered about a person reflects that era.

Similar to Nash’s death notices, published obituaries can best be defined as accounts of the deceased, or a commemoration of what was worthy about that person’s life. For example, association with a public figure was important to note in published obituaries. General Andrew Jackson was a popular figure as the “hero of the Battle of New Orleans” and symbolically represented a new age of democracy. Not surprising, the relatively few published obituaries from the Jacksonian era identify soldiers who served under the general. Jackson’s popularity extended to the common man. Even the National Intelligencer, which published from 1800 to 1865 contained obituaries of public figures and high-profile people of the nineteenth century. Other newspapers copied the Intelligencer’s style and character. Without a doubt obituaries reflected the nineteenth-century preoccupation with death and dying. Deathbed scenes, a circle of mourners, and witnessing death were customary behaviors associated with death. Elaborate

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preparations, funerary art and literature were common characteristics. Obituaries, along with elaborate mourning behavior, provide a glimpse into nineteenth century values for both the individual and public.

Most nineteenth-century national obituaries emphasized the name of the deceased, longevity, and his military service or contributions to society. Military personnel or public official were often stressed. When women were mentioned, it was in terms of wives, partners, or perhaps nurses or teachers. Early obituaries exemplified and honored Revolutionary War veterans and servicemen. They served as a written account of accomplishments while reflecting the public memories of America. Early nineteenth century obituaries commemorated people deemed worthy of memory by connecting their roles to famous persons or events. Mushira Eid’s research tends to support Janice Hume’s categories and classifications of published obituaries. Eid’s information is rather limited, only examining the role of Middle Eastern women and their marginalization in society. Like Hume, Eid confirms obituaries reveal a great deal about culture, values, and what is important at that time in history.

Emily Nash’s death notices reflected similar cultural values about nineteenth-century Geauga County. Of course, the difference was Emily’s death notices were not published and she knew the deceased personally. It is likely Emily witnessed the death of each person, laid out the body, and recorded their personal attributes in her journal. What makes Emily’s death notices unique is they reflect both the cultural values of nineteenth-

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\begin{align*}
92 & \text{ Hume, p. 20, p. 30} \\
93 & \text{ Ibid, p. 32.} \\
94 & \text{ Mushira Eid, } \textit{The World of Obituaries: Gender Across Cultures and Over Time} \text{ (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), pp. 65-75. This is a good companion and comparison to Janice Hume’s work. Few histories examine the role of obituaries. Eid’s work focuses on women in the Middle East, but is a decent gender study of obituaries.}
\end{align*}
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century Geauga County and were not intended for public view. Nash’s death notices do resemble published obituaries because they included personal attributes and cause of death, but they were in her personal journal, meant for her use only.

Nash’s familiar writing style and information contained in death notices may have been attained from reading several daily and weekly newspapers circulating in the county. Although larger cities such as Painesville and Cleveland had more voluminous and informative newspapers, Geauga County had its own—the Chardon Spectator, the Jeffersonian Democrat, and Geauga Gazette. Nash mentions reading one or several of the papers during elections, and especially during the Civil War. Each one of the Geauga papers was established in the 1830s and contained political essays, editorials, local, and national news. Rarely, however, were obituaries published. Nash used comparable phrases as those circulated in American newspapers such as the National Intelligencer and Niles Weekly Register, both of which began publishing obituaries irregularly in the 1830s. Nash’s writing style was possibly influenced by nineteenth-century oratory, newspapers, and funeral sermons. Since funeral sermons commonly praised the dead and tended to memorialize the person for good deeds, Nash may have incorporated these ideas into her own journal and death notices. Funeral sermons spoke of the ideal person and described the deceased in terms of perfection. Society praised men for their political and civic accomplishments. Women were judged for their moral behavior and religiosity. Emily attended most of the funerals of those she prepared for burial. Hearing positive attributes offered by ministers about the dead influenced her views. Certainly Nash sometimes deviated and had her own ideas and derogatory comments about the deceased,

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but she never intended anyone else to read her descriptions. The likelihood that Nash was influenced by published obitaries in the media and funeral sermons explains her similarity in writing death notices.

Few local newspapers carried obituaries in the nineteenth-century. When they do appear they are more or less announcements stating that the deceased had passed away. Several death notices or announcements appear as early as 1834 in the *Spectator Gazette* of Chardon. Occasionally a famous person or high-profile individual would have a longer tribute such as the death of Chief Justice John Marshall in 1835.97 In the same paper edition was a notice for Polly Nash’s demise. Polly was the mother of Emily Nash and a prominent figure in the local community. Although she died in June 1835, her death announcement appears in the July 17 edition of the newspaper. Credited with dedication to her husband and children, Mrs. Nash was a member of an important pioneer family. Thus her death notice reaffirms the family’s significant role in the community. Although the death notice is relatively short, less than a paragraph, important information about Polly Nash’s contributions to her family, is gleaned. Little attention is paid to how or why she died, and more emphasis is placed on her maternal behavior. In a recent study comparing obituaries cross-culturally, Mushira Eid emphasizes the importance of space and obituary size. Although Eid writes from a contemporary perspective, she insists that obituaries reflect the cultural context of an era and the status of the deceased. Applying this to early nineteenth century death notices it seems obvious that the important and well-known deaths received a published notice. Even small, relatively short death notices had a degree of visibility and announced the person’s identity and contributions to the community. Published obituaries or announcements are written for an audience to let

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family and friends know about the departed.\textsuperscript{98} Information in obituaries would become more significant throughout the nineteenth century. Published notices, announcements, and obituaries in Geauga County had many of these qualities. The principal meaning of death notices was visibility, a reflection of the deceased’s status, and family significance.

Emily’s journal entries and death notices added to one of the most complete lists of death records in the county. Instead of containing actual obituaries, the *Pioneer History*, 1880, contains itemized years with lists of deceased. Significantly, the earliest names and years are provided by Emily Nash. In July 1813, Nash recorded in her journal the death of the first “white person” in this place. The child, named Reed Buroughs, died of a bowel inflammation.\textsuperscript{99} County records were not officially kept until several decades later and Emily’s journal was the critical primary source used to compile facts and information on the deceased.

Nash’s death notices share traits found by other historians and authors. Gary Laderman is one of several historians who wrote about the cohesive, symbolic, and social meaning of the body of George Washington who died in December 1799 at his residence in Virginia. His death symbolically identified America and collectively united people. Large, symbolic funerals were held throughout the country to honor the dead president. Upon his death, Washington’s funeral united Americans in a collective act of grieving.\textsuperscript{100} Even Martha Ballard attended a service to “commemorate the death of General George Washington” in Hallowell, Maine. Some of her friends and neighbors served with Washington during the Revolution and the service symbolically united local residents.

\textsuperscript{98} Mushira Eid, *The World of Obituaries*, p. 65.
together. In the same way, Emily Nash wrote about famous figures from Geauga County with the intention of honoring them. She praised and glorified the actions and behavior of “founding figures” and local residents. These men symbolically and meaningfully represented the pioneer, adventuresome, American spirit in the county. Nash attempted to immortalize various male figures for their pioneer spirit, business success, and Christian fortitude. The collective behavior and identity was valuable in describing the community. Her comments honoring the men of Geauga County allowed a degree of public mourning practiced in the community that was not unlike the respect given to Washington. Emily’s death notices commemorated the deceased and is one of the many strategies for interpreting and understanding mourning behavior of the nineteenth century.

Nash’s death notices have many similar characteristics shared by published death announcements or obituaries. Eid discovered through her research on modern obituaries that the identity of men has been glorified, confirmed, and represented even in death. The importance and contribution of men to society is not questioned, even when reading their obituaries. There is a strong bias emphasizing male accomplishments and their very visible presence in society. This general bias applied to nineteenth century obituaries and even death notices written by Nash. There is a general overall gender bias and heavy support for male accomplishments. This bias points to a social perception of gender and how it was viewed in the nineteenth-century. The socio-cultural view stressed male identity, title, and occupation. The occupation of any man was always noted first in his

101 Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale, pp. 31-33.
102 Ibid, pp. 15-17.
103 Mushira Eid, The World of Obituaries, pp. 15-17. Eid compares modern obituaries in several cultures. She focuses on cultural traits and attributes of males and females. Her main focus is gender inequality even in contemporary obituaries.
death entry. “Mr. Oliver Pool died to day a tinker while he lived.”¹⁰⁴ Men were breadwinners, worked outside the home or farm, and contributed most of the economic resources to the household. Even in death these standard gender views and assumed importance were included in descriptions and framing categories for men. Obituaries and death notices then, reflect prevailing views toward gender in the nineteenth century and reveal social aspects of tribute, identification, and value to the community.

It is easy to identify certain themes pertaining to characteristics of men in Emily’s death notices. Unlike the occasional published obituaries in local newspapers, Emily provided vital, social, and cultural characteristics of the deceased and reflect views on gender. On July 16, 1838 Emily recorded the death of Ebenezer Hopkins who died of cancer on his liver. “I went to the funeral to day at the meeting house he leaves a widow Rachel Hopkins and several children to mourn….he was a Revolutionary soldier and suffered a long time.”¹⁰⁵ Hopkins’ role as a veteran was certainly noteworthy, but also his lengthy illness and status as a husband and father. In nearly all of her notices, Emily mentions preparedness of the soul, or state of mind prior to death. This concept alludes to the importance of Nash witnessing death and observing the person’s attitude and behavior.

Similar to national newspapers, Emily emphasized veterans and soldiers in her writing. In the first part of her journal she refers to men being veterans of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and much later the Civil War. The country was still in its infancy when the nation fought for its independence and veterans made many strides. Most of the Revolutionary War veterans came from New England and later

migrated to Ohio. Emily took pride in mentioning the number of veterans and the wars they fought. She noted the death of three former Revolutionary War soldiers in her journal. Emily’s third husband, Elijah Pike died in 1867 at the age of seventy-eight. He served during the War of 1812 and Emily provides details about conflicts on the Ohio frontier between settlers, Indians, and the British.\textsuperscript{106} Although her information commemorates the dead, she reveals the history of Ohio and the value placed on servicemen.

Because male occupation was more visible and title and identity important in describing men, it was not uncommon for Emily to focus on occupation, aside from military service. Women served the church and family, but few if any occupations outside the home were ever listed or identified for any females in Emily’s journal. Once again these discrepancies and inequities in gender point to cultural values of the era. Whether he was a tinker, sailor, or minister, men were known by their positions in society. In January 1869, Emily recorded the death of “old Doctor Erastus Goodwin” in Burton. It is unclear whether she witnessed his death or attended his funeral. Her lengthy death notice described Goodwin settling in Burton as one of the early pioneers in 1814. She praised his sterling integrity and confidence in his work as a physician. “He was my doctor” Emily confided, “with a very extensive practice whenever I was sick of my family he was a skillful doctor for over 50 years he was a devoted member of the church in Burton and faithful till death his examples are worthy of initiation by every follower of the redeemer…”\textsuperscript{107} She praised the doctor’s ability and competency. His profession defined and identified him even in death. In fact Dr. Goodwin was only one of perhaps

two physicians ever noted by Nash in her journal and his name occasionally accompanied an entry about a sick friend or his treatment of an ailment in the community. Emily knew the doctor on both a personal, friendly level as well as a professional.

Hard work, occupation, and labor reflected prestige and indicated a strong work ethic for male role models in nineteenth century America. Emily promoted the same ideals of male conduct and merit in her journal. In another notice, Emily described the death of a Baptist minister, Elder Clark. He served as an example, being pious and highly esteemed in the community. His accomplishments and service were both noteworthy. Nash’s comments reflect the significance of male occupation and values of nineteenth-century culture.

Social inclusion of the “common man” continued to appear in obituaries and death notices. This inclusion largely related to President Andrew Jackson’s election, encouraged the notion of equality and a more egalitarian society. By the late 1830s more published obituaries appeared in national newspapers including more common men, and sometimes women and racial-ethnic minorities. Individualism, personal attributes, and changes in cultural values, imply more acceptance of average Americans and commemoration of their accomplishments in the death record. Emily’s notices reveal similar trends. Described as a “good moral man” Daniel Pratt died in 1844. John Brant and Harvey Pratt, “brave men and church members” should be remembered for their faithful attitudes, not necessarily their occupations. The nation valued features and contributions of the average man and even Emily recognized the significance.

Emily’s entries also reveal historical events and eras. Whether she recognized it or not, she included information on prominent figures in the county and their deaths tell of historically relevant events. As early as 1832 the death notice of Robert B. Parkman credited him with founding the township (Parkman) and creating a legacy of leadership in society. Parkman died while away on business yet Emily confirmed his greatest contribution was the legacy of his name and building a solid society for his children.\textsuperscript{111} Leaders like Parkman received special accolades in Emily’s journal.

On a national level, Emily recorded the significance of Seabury Ford’s death in 1855. Born in Connecticut in 1801, Ford hailed from Burton and married into one of the early pioneer families. He rose to prominence being elected governor of Ohio in 1849. Emily knew Ford personally and she added in her journal, “he possessed a noble mind and generous soul.”\textsuperscript{112} Ford served as an example and represented the pioneer spirit of early Ohio. He was a successful politician and good friend to Emily.

Nash’s death notices foretell political views and historical events of a nation on the edge of social change. One of the first consequential political comments made by Nash gives an account of the abolitionist John Brown’s death on December 2, 1859. “A man by the name of John Brown was hung to day in Virginia for trying to liberate the slaves there…I expect the judge of all of the earth will do right…they must give an account I am sure.”\textsuperscript{113} Although it is difficult to tell in this passage where her political views lay, Nash would later supply more than thirty pages of comments, discussions, and views on the impending Civil War. Emily’s entry about John Brown is written a full

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, (1832), p. 43.
\textsuperscript{112} Nash, Journal, (1855), p. 79.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, (1859), p. 96.
week before the story appeared in the local newspaper, *The Jeffersonian Democrat.* It is possible that sympathetic stories about Brown’s anti-slavery views were published in this pro-Republican paper weeks before his execution and eagerly read by the young journalist. It was obvious that Emily relied on local newspapers for a great deal of information throughout the Civil War. Thus Emily may have been informed and aware of Brown’s capture, trial, and abolitionist cause. Geauga County also had numerous anti-slavery organizations and Brown had visited the county on several occasions in the early 1850s promoting his radical ideas. Interestingly, Emily was more concerned with Brown’s death and the proper treatment of his corpse rather than abolitionist views. Similar to other Americans, Nash was fascinated by this sensational story that grabbed attention in 1859 underlying tensions in the nation.

John Brown failed at Harper’s Ferry, but his death galvanized the nation. His death signifies one of the first national figures executed in America and the enormity of his actions recognized on a grand socio-political level. Suggesting that the ultimate disgrace be carried out on his body: dissection by medical students, alarmed Nash. Nineteenth-century mourning behavior called for viewing the corpse and proper burial no matter what the circumstance. The idea of disrespecting the body and dishonoring the dead cast shame on Brown and extended to his family. It is no wonder that Emily focused on this aspect of Brown’s story. She feared the defamation and ultimate embarrassment to John Brown’s body. No matter what his sins, Emily did not think the infamous abolitionist deserved this disrespect. But Brown’s corpse was delivered to his widow,

There were other national figures and historically relevant deaths recorded by Nash. In 1861 she recorded the death of Senator Stephen A. Douglas, calling him a highly valued politician. Nash claimed that many hearts sighed with sadness upon hearing of Douglas’ demise. Considering her growing dislike of Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans, Emily’s comments on the death of Senator Douglas are hardly surprising. Although she did not attend the funeral of the late president of Oberlin College, Charles G. Finney, Nash read an account of his death in the local newspaper. She referred to Finney as a “glorious example and a legacy to others.”\footnote{Nash, *Journal*, (1861), p. 106, (1879), p. 175. For a more thorough discussion of embalming see the chapter on the Civil War and Dr. Thomas Holmes, and the last chapter regarding new technology and professionalization of the funerary industry.} Her own personal views of both men are provided as well as ideas shaped by cultural expectations and gender standards. Both men were prominent leaders and Emily felt they deserved recognition in the form of a death notice in her personal journal.

Nash’s death notices report change over time and differed with various historical occurrences. One of the most noted historical events detailed by Nash was the death of President James A. Garfield in 1881. Not unlike Seabury Ford and John Brown’s widow,
Emily likely wrote about Garfield’s death because of his local and personal connections to Geauga and Portage Counties. It is unclear whether Emily attended Garfield’s funeral in Cleveland, or if she described the event from second-hand accounts. Her comments are those of a professional, providing details of the “coffin” or casket and embalming process. Historically important is the assassination of a U.S. President, but equally relevant is the process of preparing the body for burial. Garfield was embalmed and placed on public display. Embalming was a relatively new form of technology in 1881, Emily states that it was used to preserve the body and make it life-like for viewing. She focused on the casket’s appearance, including an ornamental inscribed silver plate indicative of the late president’s social hierarchy. Garfield’s body was embalmed and transported to Cleveland where it lay in state for several days. Over one million mourners paid their respects and he was finally entombed in Lakeview Cemetery in Cleveland. Describing his final hours as calm and peaceful. Emily called Garfield’s assassination a “cruel death.” Similar to John Brown and Abraham Lincoln’s deaths, she likely read accounts of Garfield’s death in the local newspapers. She was concerned with leadership in the country and who would be the next president to die. She concluded, “it is God’s business to take away our idols if we allow ourselves to have idols [then] they must be taken away.”\footnote{Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1881), p. 188. Emily writes several lengthy paragraphs about Garfield’s assassination, and burial, \textit{Geauga Republican}, “President at Rest!” Wednesday, September 28, 1881.} Nash approved of Garfield’s politics, possibly because of her personal connection, but her death notice also contains a tinge of trepidation and warning about ostentatious displays of wealth and funeral finery such as the silver plate and inscriptions on his casket.
Just as Nash described the death of men in terms of cultural and gender expectations, she recorded hundreds of deaths of local women. However, there were noticeable differences in personal attributes and framing categories describing women. Local and even national newspapers rarely mentioned or wrote about the death of women. In fact, if taken for its historical and cultural value, published obituaries omitted women and reflect a society without females. Certainly women were present and played an important role, but are most definitely excluded from published obituaries and death notices. The identity of women is almost hidden and most certainly suppressed, even in death. Socio-cultural expectations did not identify women by their occupations or economic contributions to society.\textsuperscript{118} The male identity was honored and acclaimed through his title, status and occupation. These positions followed men even in death. Nineteenth century culture valued women for their caregiving and nurturing of the family. The female domain was within the home. Although she did make valuable contributions to the family and home, her labor was unpaid and devalued by men and society in general. Gender inequality was more substantial in urban and industrial settings rather than rural areas such as Geauga County. Even Emily reports in her journal that women multi-tasked, worked alongside their husbands on the farm, and did domestic chores. Women were not specifically relegated to the domain of the home in rural areas. Despite these variances in gender expectations, women received different treatment in Emily’s death notices. Emily was still a product of nineteenth-century America and despite the blurred gender lines, her record of female identity in death notices often conformed to traditional views. Yet her journal and death notices regarding women is

priceless because she does in fact include them and she does interpret the importance of
gender on the Ohio frontier in the nineteenth century. Women are very much present and
accounted for in her journal. If women were excluded from public space (written
obituaries), then her journal proves to be a critical source in examining the female voice
and contributions in death written by a layer of the dead.

Nash’s journal reflects the cultural views of the era. Two characteristics were
important for describing deceased women: their religious/spiritual commitment, and
motherhood. Both concepts meshed ideals of the Second Great Awakening and the “cult
of true womanhood.” This belief stated that a woman’s primary purpose in life was
her family and household. Popular views, such as those offered by the Congregational
Church, envisioned children as a gift from God and a mother’s domain was to shape and
courage them spiritually. Maternal roles in childbearing, instruction and religious
participation fostered domesticity as a female haven. The nineteenth-century world was
divided between the domestic and business spheres, with women firmly inhabiting the
former and men the later. Even though these gendered differences and cultural
expectations permeated society, not all women could or would comply. Working-class
women and slaves could not conform to laboring only within the confines of the home.
Certainly rural areas and farming communities undermined the “cult of true womanhood”
and saw more flexible duties and roles allocated to women.

119 S. J. Kleinberg, Women in the United States 1830-1945 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press,
Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860.” She examines societal expectations for women and also literature
directed at young men in the nineteenth century.
120 Kleinberg, Women in the United States, pp. 54-57.
Although she demonstrated some variation, nearly every death entry regarding females discussed their role as a Christian wife and mother. Even Geauga County valued these qualities among women and they appear often in Emily’s journal entries. In 1825, Emily relayed the death of Mrs. Emily Pratt and remarked, “they have lost a kind mother and loving wife.” And in 1839 Mrs. Poole died of palsy but was a “good woman and looked upon as a rare specimen of Christian piety.”\textsuperscript{121} Phrases describing women as loving mothers and wives devoted to their children and the “service of God was her delight” became regular and repetitive throughout the 1830s and 1840s.\textsuperscript{122} These concepts and descriptions identify women according to traditional nineteenth century standards. Personal attributes of women defined them as meek, gentle, pious, loving, kind, faithful, patient, virtuous, and devoted; all qualities recognized the ideal female personality. Society expected women to be pure and serve as role models for the young. They were teachers of culture, etiquette, and religion.\textsuperscript{123} Emily’s death notices and framing characteristics of women solidified these ideas. Although Electra Beals suffered a long time from cancer in 1843, “she was a faithful servant of God [and] died with her armour on waiting for the master.”\textsuperscript{124} Women were pure and beautiful in life and society expected these attributes to follow them in death. Although most of the women were devoted and kind mothers, none of their domestic traits are mentioned in Emily’s death notices. In one instance a young lady was identified as a school teacher, but few if any other occupational or status traits were provided. Arguably, only a few women held formal positions so this information is absent from Nash’s death notices. However, even

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid, (1843), p. 55.
\textsuperscript{124} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1843), p. 54.
Emily conforms to gender standards of the time and focused on societal expectations of women: personality traits not profession. Although many of Emily’s friends suffered distressing illnesses, she was comforted by knowing that they were faithful servants to God. Women then, served not only as examples in the way they lived, but also the way they died. Perhaps this descriptive language offered some comfort to Emily as it did for other nineteenth-century Americans. There was a promise of immortality for Christians and those women who lived exemplary lives.

Emily noted a difference between single and married women in her death entries. When Mary Ann Burroughs died Emily wrote that she was worthy and intelligent, a flower of her family. Personality traits were once again emphasized. Nearly all death entries of single women provided this information; first names and adjectives describing their personalities. It appears single women did not have the prestige and status attained by married women with families. Single women are easily identified in the journal by first names and adjectives such as “good girl,” and “worthy and intelligent.” Married women rarely have first names mentioned. Clearly nineteenth century culture defined women by their relationships with husbands, fathers, or children. It was not uncommon for Emily to write entries like, “the wife of Joseph Kingsbury died today” but never offers the woman’s first name. In two other examples dated November 1855, the wife of Olsen Richards died of dropsy and Mrs. Dexter Witter passed away. Neither entry hints at a first name. What Nash emphasized was their marital status, readiness to die, and Christian fortitude. Female accomplishments and identity were based on her relationships, not occupation. Although hundreds of women’s deaths were witnessed and recorded by Nash, the prevailing view defined women as being owned by men—

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personal identities nearly anonymous. Although her journal contains a substantial number of death notices on local women, societal and cultural standards did not value female work and domestic labor. Even Emily affirms the female identity existed in relation to their male counterparts.

Emily’s writing style reflected the values of nineteenth-century culture. Her definition of women including the anonymity of their identity, was common for that time period. Female virtues required women and girls to be submissive, modest, and passive. Obedience and accepting male authority was part of female training, according to Barbara Welter. Emily recognized the supposed moral superiority of women but accepted the view that females were controlled by their fathers and husbands. Emily certainly did not question this authority and likely believed in a “natural order” of male power and female subordination. Even Ulrich asserts that Martha Ballard was not truly affected by the republican ideology following the American Revolution. Ballard’s journal reflects a traditional view of women and men. As independent and self-sufficient as Ballard was, she still conformed to traditional views. Ballard’s diary confirms much like Nash, that men monopolized and controlled business. Households and society were patriarchal. The proper way to address a married woman, according to Ballard, was in terms of her husband. Female identity in the eighteenth century was clearly tied to her husband. Although both Ballard and Nash contributed greatly to household and community life, and indeed their labor mattered, they acknowledged political control and male authority within society.126

Just as Emily identified women by certain characteristics and framing categories, the death of children included specific metaphors and narratives. The model family of

126 Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions, pp. 4-6, Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale, p. 32, 75-77.
nineteenth century America included a large number of children. Considered an
economic asset, children were desirable and contributed to the rural farm economy.
Unfortunately, infant mortality rates were very high in America. Surrounded by
disease and other afflictions death took a physical and emotional toll on the residents of
Geauga County. The metaphors used by Emily to describe the demise of infants seemed
appropriate in an agricultural community. Children were “flowers cut down in their
youth.” Writing in 1862, Nash stated, “I saw the corps it was a lovely flower nipped in
the early morning hours.” Older residents were sometimes described in terms of seasons
or agriculture. “Old age is the autumn of life the season of maturity a shock of corn fully
ripe ready for the masters use.” Her analogies reflect the dominant farm-based culture
of rural Ohio. Emily also acknowledged the child’s parents by name providing legitimacy
and parenthood for each individual. Often she included how many other children
survived or if the deceased was an only child. The information is culturally valuable
because she provides vital statistics and facts on family size and identity in the county. Of
course her goal was to create and provide a death recorded, but the journal entries also
supply details of family demographics.

Of all the death entries recorded, Emily was most disturbed by the untimely
passing of children. Her summary of an infant’s death always included the beautiful
appearance or face of the child. When a set of twins died in 1841 Emily reflected on their
“pretty appearance laying together in one coffin and remaining united in death.”
Seemingly morose at first, Emily’s descriptions consider the physical image of an

127 Nicholas Marshall, “In the Midst of Life we are in Death: Affliction and Religion in Antebellum New
York,” in Mortal Remains, eds. Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burnstein (Philadelphia: University of
adolescent since the personality had not fully developed. Children were pure and innocent. She lamented over the loss of life, but nineteenth-century thinking argued death led to a better existence.

Although some national newspapers began including obituaries or death announcements of children in the 1840s, few are found in local newspapers. Perhaps obituaries of children were infrequent because death rates were so high, infant mortality very common, and careers, occupations, and Christian behavior had not matured. Emily emphasized bereavement and personal sorrow felt at the loss of a child. She could not focus on a child’s preparedness to die, or morality, so she focused on innocence and beauty represented by childhood. Her sentimentality expresses a fear of death and loss of future promise for the community. As with other death notices, Emily observed whether the child died as a result of disease or accident. Her accounts reveal an agricultural society willing to express the pain of loss and emphasized the grieving survivors left behind.

**Conclusion**

The attributes penned by Emily serve to commemorate the value of the individual as Americans moved westward after the turn of the century. As Ohio evolved, those characteristics changed and became more inclusive and descriptive acknowledging common men, and sometimes women. By mid-century citizens were known by their devotion, kindness, religiosity, and achievements. Personal accomplishments for men and personality traits for women would continue to dominate her writing. Religious views and high death rates also influenced a person’s memory. Nash’s death notices are particularly valuable because she does include women and children. She was not
selective in writing only about the dominant gender. She gave equal space to both men and women. What is essential is how she defined the genders and ages sometimes conforming to nineteenth-century prevailing views, sometimes defying them. By recording her death notices, Emily Nash reflects the dominant culture of nineteenth-century America, but also reveals attributes deemed worthy of individuals in Geauga County. Her private narrations also disclose collective memory and important values in society as the new United States expanded.
CHAPTER 2: THE FEMINIZATION OF DEATH

“the Lord has sent Mr. John Barrett here to preach to us we are a needy people
we need preaching I think…” Emily Nash March 1830

Introduction

The religious movement called the Second Great Awakening shaped Emily’s Nash’s attitudes and views on nineteenth-century funerary behavior. An active participant in the Congregational Church, Nash’s writing reflects revivals, social change, and reform movements associated with religion. Devoutly religious, Nash’s journal contained countless examples of religious Scripture and biblical references. She was deeply moved by this religious movement called the Second Great Awakening. Beginning in the early nineteenth-century, the movement began in New England and spread west, rapidly reaching the Ohio frontier. Nash joined organizations and assumed leadership roles with in the Congregational Church. At the same time she recorded religious and spiritual accounts of the deceased. She provided a history of the church, its origins, circuit ministers, and religious revivals held in the county. Emily’s religious experiences shaped her outlook and views on mourning behavior and elaborate rituals associated with death and dying.

Traditional historical and religious sources on the Second Great Awakening include Barry Hankins, Whitney Cross, Richard Shiels, and James Rohrer. Each provides scholarship on the origins and impact of this nineteenth century religious

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movement, founders, and reformers. Although these works provide the historical foundation for this chapter, Mary Ryan and Susan Hill Lindley identify gender and the significant contributions by women in the Second Great Awakening. Both Ryan and Lindley focus on temperance and anti-slavery movements. In addition, their collective research recognizes the varied roles assumed by women within the scope of the church. Other scholarly works by Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900*, and Jed Dannenbaum’s *Drink and Disorder* combine semblance of religious reform in Ohio’s cities with aspects of politics in the nineteenth century. Both Bordin and Dannebaum show the complex and broad based influence the temperance movement had on American society. Similarities are found with rural Geauga County and women’s activities.

Barbara Welter, Ann Douglas, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Mary Ryan all identify the “feminization of religion” during the Second Great Awakening as the process which allowed women more power and control within the Congregational Church. Their histories affirm the domestic responsibilities and relationship between ministers and women, extended domestic duties from the home to the church and included areas such as healing, nurturing, caregiving, and death. One aspect of feminizing religion meant women played a substantial role in preparing bodies for burial and created elaborate mourning rites.

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Primary sources include the religious testimony of farmer Goodwin Wells, contemporary newspapers, and church records. The letters of abolitionist and women’s rights advocate Betsy Mix Cowles, serves as a useful comparison to Emily Nash’s attitudes and experiences involving temperance and anti-slavery in Ohio. Comparing Nash and Cowles provides a useful contrast between two women who lived relatively close to one another in geography, but differed greatly in their views on slavery and women’s rights.

This chapter introduces three main themes associated with the Second Great Awakening. First, a historical background on the movement in nineteenth-century America and Geauga County is provided. Geauga Congregational Churches used revivals to stimulate a renewed interest in church activities and enhance membership. Emily actively participated in numerous revivals throughout the county. Her behavior reflects the important role open to women through church affiliation and activities. No published articles or books on the nineteenth-century Geauga County revivals exist at this point. Valid connections are made between activities in Geauga regarding the Second Great Awakening, and New England, and New York. Secondly, this chapter examines two reform movements both shaped and attended by women: temperance and anti-slavery. This chapter connects these two reform movements to religion and the journal of Emily Nash. A comparison between Nash and Betsy Mix Cowles, serves to contrast the two women and the various choices made in their lives regarding social reform and other benevolent associations. Finally, this chapter links religion and nineteenth-century mourning behavior and elaborate funerary rituals together. New opportunities emerged within Protestant churches, generating innovative roles and positions for women. Female
responsibilities such as care-giving, healing, and preparing the dead, became enhanced because of religion. Emily’s religious experiences shaped her outlook and views on mourning behavior and the elaborate rituals associated with death and dying.

**Origins of the Second Great Awakening**

In order to understand the connections between Emily Nash’s journal and the Congregational Church in Geauga County, it is imperative to analyze the origins of the Second Great Awakening in New England in the nineteenth century and its spread west. Nash was shaped by the Congregational religion by both participating in and identifying with various social groups within the church and the supportive community it provided. Her journal helps define the complex changes associated with spirituality and the important connections between religion, mourning behavior and death notices. By the late eighteenth-century, the Congregational churches in New England were faced with challenges of western migration beyond the thirteen original states, forcing pioneers to leave their churches and pastors behind in the East.134 Inevitably, there would be alterations and changes in the church because of the migrations. New England Protestant religious views were challenged in ideological ways. Traditional protestant denominations promoted conservative, organized church behavior without a demonstration of conversion. Church elders emphasized God’s absolute authority and rejected the idea of free will or change in the intended path set for humans. The Second Great Awakening began to erode these conservative beliefs and reshape the religion. Living in a new environment, Yankee pioneers embraced economic opportunities in the West and enlightened religious ideas such as those offered by the Congregational Church.

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Promoting emotional participation and a calling by the Holy Spirit to join the church, this new ideology held a strong appeal for settlers on the frontier. The Congregational Church, along with Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Unitarian faiths, appealed to the common people. These more progressive Protestant churches became established on the western frontier promoting free-will decisions and public conversion as a test of church membership. Instead of replicating an identical religion in the west, pioneers in Ohio rejected the hierarchical structure of the New England churches and staunch conservatism. The Second Great Awakening stressed personal responsibility for one’s own destiny, and followers could join the church when they felt worthy. This movement involved an intensely emotional atmosphere within the church. Although the Western Reserve was basically populated by New Englanders, the religion began to noticeably change as it spread from Connecticut to Massachusetts, to New York, and into the Ohio Valley.

Congregational ministers sought to reach the hearts of parishioners. Spending less time memorizing and reading sermons and more time applying real-life situations to their followers, Congregational ministers attracted more and more converts. It was not uncommon for ministers to travel and preach in another minister’s church. They also held “conferences” during the week in meeting houses. These informal gatherings gave preachers the opportunity to talk more casually and respond spontaneously to church

137 Ibid, p. 12.
members in an informal setting.\textsuperscript{138} This new style of preaching during the Second Great Awakening allowed for casual and open communication.

There was not a permanent preacher in Geauga County until 1812 and circuit ministers tended to make rounds to various churches. The personal connections made between preacher and followers encouraged church attendance and a variety of social meetings. Ministers catered to the average farmer and appealed to the ordinary person who was not college educated.\textsuperscript{139} The Second Great Awakening had its roots in the preaching and doctrine of the most famous Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher. By 1800 ministers such as Beecher began to use revivals as a way to encourage and convince listeners to repent and seek God. The “Great Revival” of Cane Ridge Kentucky occurred in 1801 and hundreds were converted. Many of the largest revivals were preached on the frontier.\textsuperscript{140} Revivals existed in southern Kentucky, Tennessee, New York and eventually Ohio.


\textsuperscript{139} Geauga Leader “Burton Congregational Church,” Burton Geauga County, Thursday October 3, 1895.
\textsuperscript{140} Hankins, \textit{The Second Great Awakening}, p. 9-11. 16. Hankins describes the Methodist minister James Finley attending the revival at Cane Ridge. Finley was so impressed by the crowds of people and excitement that he vowed to attend other revivals.
and salvation.\textsuperscript{141} The preachers of the Second Great Awakening stressed human control over their souls. Beecher also helped redefine death and the meaning of an afterlife. Although fearful, death was the door or window to Heaven. To Beecher, death was a natural process, a state everyone had to endure in order to reach immortality. If life was a struggle, Heaven was the ultimate reward. Beecher’s religious views and preaching served to challenge older Calvinist notions of death which held a terrifying realization of pain, suffering, and confusion as to the soul’s destiny. Beecher instructed his followers to imagine Heaven before falling asleep at night. The ultimate reward of immortality reshaped and changed the definition of death.

The famous New England minister helped shaped views on funerary and mourning customs. Critical of excessive grieving, Beecher envisioned death as a celebration of life. He criticized wearing black clothing and the extended mourning period observed by Americans. When he died in 1887, Beecher’s family held a celebration by hanging wreathes of flowers over the door rather than black crepe. Personal grief should be set aside and collective Christian rejoining should commence at funerals.\textsuperscript{142} Many Protestants embraced his progressive doctrine, but rejected the minister’s conservative approach to funerary behavior. In fact, throughout the nineteenth century funerals and mourning behavior became more expressive and symbolic related to the concept of everlasting glory in the afterlife. Mourners expressed their grief in very public ways through clothing, services, and other symbolic measures. Many of these same concepts applied to Geauga County.


\textsuperscript{142} Ferrell, \textit{Inventing the American Way of Death}, p. 81, 93, Whitney Cross, \textit{The Burned Over District}, pp. 27-29.
Henry Ward Beecher’s modification on religion and spiritualism helped define the Second Great Awakening. In addition, Romanticism and sentimentality became deeply engrained in American funerals. With hopes of resurrection and sharing their pain, the funeral offered a collective way to celebrate life and relieve anxiety about death.\textsuperscript{143} Nineteenth-century mourning customs embodied collective behavior allowing family and friends to grieve together.

One of the most significant ministers associated with the Second Great Awakening was Charles Grandison Finney. Finney’s views on religion further added to spiritual changes by offering conversions, free will, and inclusion of minorities into the Protestant denominations. Finney who was an attorney, underwent a conversion experience that changed his life forever. In 1824 he began preaching in western New York in tent gatherings and schoolhouses, emphasizing that anyone’s soul could be saved if he or she converted. Finney’s Presbyterian revivalist views promoted benevolent groups such as missionaries, anti-slavery societies, and temperance advocates. Finney and other ministers of the Awakening rejected pre-destination and supported public conversions for both men and women from various religions.\textsuperscript{144} Similar to Beecher’s philosophy, Finney rejected strict Calvinist doctrine and embraced a more progressive view of religion. Everyone was responsible for his/her salvation.

The Reverend Finney’s powerful message captivated crowds with a millennium prediction and stressed free moral will for reformers. Many nineteenth-century Americans were eager for his message and chose conversion in times of adversity. Those who flocked to Finney’s revivals sought answers to rapid urbanization, migration,

\textsuperscript{143} Ferrell, \textit{Inventing the American Way of Death}, pp. 40-41.
\textsuperscript{144} Hankins, \textit{The Second Great Awakening}, p.2, Cross, \textit{The Burned Over District}, pp. 151-161. Cross compares and examines both Finney and Lyman Beecher’s doctrinal differences.
immigration, and economic challenges. The phrase “Burned-over District” applied to western New York describing the fire-storm or religious fervor of Finney’s preaching and the Second Great Awakening.145

From New England and especially New York in the 1830s, the revivalist awakenings spread into northeastern Ohio. One of the most important institutions associated with the Congregational Church in the Second Great Awakening was the Connecticut Missionary Society. The Connecticut Missionary Society’s main objective was to support missionaries on the frontier in Vermont, western New York, and Ohio.146 The Society also provided books, pamphlets, and literature to aid migrants on the frontier. They attempted to mold a moral character based on New England Congregationalism. Because many New England settlers moved to territories without established ministers or official churches, the Missionary Society made every effort to keep pioneers connected through a supply of religious literature and prevent them from drifting away from the church.147 The Connecticut Missionary Society created a board of directors including six laymen and several clergy. All residents could join in prayer meetings and sermons as long as they paid a fee for membership. Many of the preachers sent through the missionary society were circuit ministers temporarily serving a community in Ohio and eventually transferred elsewhere.148

As early as 1801, the Connecticut Missionary Society sent Reverend Joseph Badger to preach in Burton, Ohio. An additional circuit minister, Reverend Thomas Robbins, preached between 1804-1805 in the county. By August 1808 the Connecticut

145 Hankins, The Second Great Awakening, p. 3.
Missionary Society sent evangelist Reverend Enoch Burt to the “territory called New Connecticut [Burton, Ohio] to organize a church.”

Eight Congregationalist lay members attended this first meeting. Although meetings were held in 1808, settlement of Geauga County was not large enough to constitute the building of an official church or provide for a permanent minister until 1815. In fact, services were held on the public square in Burton, schoolhouses, and even the ballroom of Peter Beal’s tavern.

Influenced by the Second Great Awakening, revivals, and the formation of the Congregational Church in Burton, Emily Nash provided a detailed account of events that led to her own conversion in 1832. Emily’s journal documents the church’s origins and various ministers and events that helped to shape her life. Her earliest entries from 1812 provide historical narratives of her family’s arrival in Geauga County and descriptions of other homesteads in the area. But beginning in 1813 she began recording the formation of the church. “Now and then a missionary minister would happen along and give a sermon as people settled around we began to think we could hire a minister…we hired Mr. Luther Humphrey a part of the time…he [is] preaching in Burton.”

Emily Nash’s entry and church records confirm the Reverend Luther Humphrey as the first regular minister established in Geauga County by 1815. Reverend Humphrey’s ministry lasted until 1828. This preacher had a powerful impact on the young Emily Nash. With his plain talk and staunch prohibitionist views, Emily’s personal outlook and social relationships were shaped by his messages. Emily had considerable contact with Reverend Humphrey since she refers to him in nearly every journal entry.

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150 Burton Congregational Church Records, August 22, 1808. The church records are weekly written accounts of activities for various years. Usually they list attendees and often topics discussed at meetings.
from 1815 to 1828. His preaching consoled and influenced her, helping her make the decision to join the Congregationalist Church on her own.

Religion helped Emily prepare for unexpected events in her life. In 1824, Emily was eighteen years old and recorded a terrible measles epidemic surging through the county. In February of that year she concluded, “…I have got a reprieve [from measles] after drinking a gallon of cider thickened with sheeps dung and being bled most to death in the bargin…it is hard for me to be so sick so hard sick…the doctor says there is but hairs between me and death…it is a loud call…I do not feel prepared to die.” Several weeks later she described the death of her nephew Lorenzo Floyd Colson, age one year five months. He died on February 26, 1824, “with the measles…he took them of me when I had the black measles…he is a good boy.” Two days later she attended the funeral and “Mr. Luther Humphrey preached the sermon.” In each entry, the Reverend Humphrey was present, either providing comfort to the living or final words at the grave.

From 1824 through 1825, Emily recorded additional epidemics, deaths, and funerals preached by either Reverend Luther Humphrey or another Presbyterian minister who served in Troy, Reverend John Barrett. In June 1825, Emily noted the deaths of three children in Parkman from dysentery. “It is a distressed time…they are all dying,” she lamented, adding, “I went to a [religious] meeting to day…the Reverend John Barrett preached…he is a good preacher and a good man.”

By July 26, 1825, Emily stated, “there has 28 people died in Parkman in less than two months with disentary.” While attending the funeral of Mrs. Pratt, Emily commented, “I saw her die…it is hard to die. I went to her funeral to day they had 2

153 Ibid, (1825), p. 28, Claridon Church Record Book, August 7, 1825, p. 4, there is a reference in the church minutes or supplying grain and hay to the sick, but warns of visiting because of illness.
ministers, Mr. Luther Humphrey and Mr. John Barrett...I feel sorrey for the children...they have lost a kind mother and loving wife.” For Emily, religion and the minister’s words provided solace and comfort. Following a funeral, Emily recorded the words of Reverend Humphrey, “call upon me in the day of trouble…I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me.” Not only was Emily affected by disease, but she knew the residents of Burton and Parkman personally; they were her relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Nineteenth-century culture required an individual’s death to be witnessed by family and friends. Those present at a death scene provided evidence that the deceased faithfully honored God before expiring. As early as 1821 Emily witnessed deaths, helped her mother prepare bodies, and “went to help them for the funeral [and] fix the children’s clothes.” Each funeral recorded in Emily’s journal detailed the cause of death and which preacher attended. Occasionally she included passages from the funeral sermon, reflecting on the minister’s final words. Religion became a coping mechanism for Emily. The pious preaching of Reverends Humphrey and Barrett helped her understand the pain and sorrow of so much loss. Surrounded by constant death, coupled with the minister’s messages, Emily moved closer to converting to the Congregationalist Church.

Of all of the deaths in the period 1824 through 1836, none affected Emily more than the demise of her younger sister Julia Ann Nash in 1826. After attending a religious meeting on July 31, 1826, held by Mr. John Barrett, Emily fearfully wrote, “Julia Ann was sick today with the rattles…she is hard sick… I fear she will die…she is in great

agon...she will choke to death...must she become food for worms...she is a lovely sister...oh God save her wilt thou?" Julia Ann died the next day. Emily’s entry commemorating her little sister is one of the longest death notices in her journal. She vowed, “I shall never again hear her voice nor see her pretty playes nor kiss her smiling lips no they are taken from me never to return but oh may they never be forgotten in my memory.” Emily held true in her promise to remember her younger sister. She would live another sixty-two years and each August 1 she recalled the death of Julia Ann. The Reverend Luther Humphrey preached the funeral sermon. For Julia Ann. “May heaven be our dwelling place Mr. Humphrey said.” Despite his words of comfort Emily wondered, “I do not understand why such a lovely child be taken from the earth to be food for the worms...I never can forget her she is a angel now I hope...she is on my mind when awake and when I sleep I dream of her...”

How does a person rationalize the death of a loved one--especially a child? Emily found relief from her despair and grief by attending services, and funerals where she could hear words of comfort and hope from Reverend Humphrey and Barrett. Instead of rejecting her faith, Emily devoted herself to Christianity and sought answers through spirituality. This was a step in her decision to join the church.

There was a notable change in Emily’s death entries following Julia Ann’s death in 1826. From August second on, Emily began including a religious comment regarding the deceased. When Mary Hide died on August 24, 1826, Emily confirmed, “she is now carryed [sic] to the silent grave never more to rise till the Archangel sounds the trumpet

and wake all the dead that sleeps in the ground."  

Influenced by Congregational preachers and grappling with heart-wrenching deaths, Emily turned toward religion for answers.

One campaign of the Second Great Awakening, and Congregational Churches was abstinence from liquor: the temperance movement. This message had an appeal in the Burned-over District where preachers criticized middle-class workers for consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. This type of benevolent reform encouraged abstinence as a way to change the environment. What appeared to be a religious and social reform took on a political agenda. Although temperance began in urban areas, the movement had a powerful appeal in Geauga County. Churches saw a link between alcohol, violence, and corruption, and preachers emphasized sobriety.

Nineteenth-century society defined a woman’s role within the home, tending children and domestic responsibilities. But because of their influence and newfound role in religion during the Second Great Awakening, women became involved in ethical and social activities based on Christian morality. One of the more notable reform activities addressed by women was temperance. This movement propelled women into public arenas and social networks with other women. Lyman Beecher played a prominent role in making temperance a moral issue and concentrated on abolishing alcohol. In the 1840s, the issues associated with temperance switched from just a moral persuasion to creating legislation and political solutions to the problems. Susan Hill Lindley points out women still did not have the opportunity to speak in public and were often criticized for doing so. Society viewed public speaking and political action by women as “unfeminine”

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159 Nash, Journal, (1826) p. 34.
161 Booth, Buckeye Women. p. 90.
and inappropriate. Yet women such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Betsy Mix Cowles supported temperance first and later became active in other social reforms, like women’s rights. Those leadership positions helped prepare and train them for future roles. Susan B. Anthony was not permitted to speak publicly at a temperance convention in Albany in 1852 so she and some other attendees left to create their own organization.162

Similar to Lindley, Jed Dannenbaum focused on the serious economic and social ramifications associated with alcoholism in the nineteenth century. Dannenbaum also associates the religious revivalism of the Second Great Awakening with temperance reforms. Although women created their own auxiliary temperance groups, the involvement gave them the opportunity to socialize and gain valuable experience in moral campaigns. Lindley and Dannenbaum identify the theme of social disorder caused by alcohol and the important roles undertaken by women in addressing the problems. Moreover, temperance is connected with other significant moral campaigns, primarily anti-slavery and suffrage. With the temperance movement, women challenged gender roles by speaking in public and organizing themselves in social-political crusades.163

Alcohol abuse was a real social problem in Ohio by the early nineteenth century. Whiskey was common on the frontier at weddings, funerals, and other social functions. Drinking was considered a male prerogative but women and children were often the victims and suffered the effects of an alcoholic husband and father. Ruth Bordin aptly

called temperance “a maternal struggle” because it described the attention women paid to this social movement. Temperance was clearly dominated by women. By the mid-nineteenth-century with the influx of immigrants from Ireland and Germany, alcohol consumption in the state was a regular practice and problem. Even in rural Geauga County, alcohol abuse concerned Emily Nash and other residents. She frequently ended relationships with young men because of excessive drinking. Urban growth in the county also contributed to more alcoholism. With more people living in cities, saloons, grog-shops, and taverns became common places for entertainment, and made liquor readily available. The Second Great Awakening associated alcohol with immoral behavior and a derogatory effect on the family. Not surprising, women became active supporters of limiting the use of alcohol or prohibiting it altogether.  

One of the first formal temperance organizations was established in 1826 in Trumbull County, Ohio. Throughout the 1820s societies to prohibit alcohol supported by women appeared all over the state. Additional temperance organizations emerged in later decades. The Cleveland Ladies Temperance Union was founded at mid-century, as was Ohio’s Women’s Temperance Society. Each organization permitted women to organize in behalf of a moral cause and share their actions socially. After the Civil War, women continued to campaign, and protest alcohol in the state. Some of the more militant organizations held marches and parades in front of bars and saloons in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati. Often women received criticism for unfeminine and outspoken behavior. Seeing themselves as reformers and instigators of a moral crusade,  

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164 Ruth Bordin, Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), pp. 3-6. Although most of her book focuses on the 1870s, Bordin does examine the origins of temperance and emphasizes women and their roles.

165 Jed Dannenbaum, Drink and Disorder, pp. 4-5.
women used temperance as a way to network and gain public if not political recognition.\textsuperscript{166}

The temperance movement had a strong appeal in Geauga County. As pastor of the Burton Congregational Church, Reverend Luther Humphrey held the reputation of a “strong temperance man and earnest advocate of total abstinence.” Emily Nash incorporated his words into her life. In September 1825, Emily attended three separate religious meetings and concluded that her “courtship with Peter Beals has been adjourned for the present and perhaps forever…I have kept his company long enough for that one loves grog.”\textsuperscript{167} Emily continued attending meetings throughout 1825 and 1826. Her social activities appear to be those of a typical nineteenth-century young lady. She courted young men and went to parties; however, she rejected the company of another beau- Jacob Welsh because “he loves grog and make no mistake about it.” After listening to Reverend Humphrey preach about the evils of alcohol Emily justified severing the relationships with Beals and Welsh by “giving [them] the mitten because I fear they will die drunkard[s] at some time.”\textsuperscript{168} Emily’s decisions in personal relationships were strongly influenced by the temperance movement. She rejected the attention and potential relationship with more than one suitor because of alcohol.

In another entry Emily told the story of Mr. Philip Ingler’s death due to alcohol. “He is called a moderate drinker,” she wrote after attending his funeral, “he had been to the tavern in Mantua…he got some grog…and fell into a ditch…in this state [he] was mistaken for a bear and shot to death by one of his neighbors.” She concluded, “if this man had been brought up in the way of holiness perhaps he would not have come to an

\textsuperscript{166} Booth, \textit{Buckeye Women}, pp. 96-97, 100.
untimely end and died a drunkard.” More importantly, Emily heeded the religious warning: “I went to the funeral… I saw the bloodey coat he had on when shot… I heard the words of warning to the young people from this days event never taste or handle this soul destroying poison…” Emily learned a lesson from Mr. Ingler’s tragic death. She acknowledged alcohol was the source of evil and caused his demise.

Emily was clearly affected by the temperance movement. In 1835 she “heard two temperance lectures at the town house this afternoon… here is a chance for good going for the cause of temperance in town... we are needy… let me be found in the way of duty… we have formed a saving society here in town.” Eliminating alcohol was a logical solution in controlling society and establishing moral reform. The religious promotion of abstinence founded the American Temperance Society as an appendage of the Second Great Awakening. For Emily and the community, religion not only provided solace in the time of death, but also social control and moral guidance.

Out of the sixteen townships in Geauga County seven established temperance organizations (Chester, Russell, Bainbridge, Hambden, Clarion, Montville, and Burton). Claridon was the earliest to establish an anti-alcohol society in the 1820s. In fact it was the Reverend Luther Humphrey who preached a radical sermon against alcohol. More women than men joined the temperance union and this became an important cause of the Congregational Church in Claridon. By 1877 the temperance union society against alcohol was formed in six other townships. All seven townships boasted large membership in the Sons of Temperance Organization. Both men and women joined in Geauga County. Burton claimed the largest society of over two hundred members by

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171 Geauga County Historical Society, Pioneer History, p. 410.
1832. Many of Emily Nash’s friends and acquaintances held positions in the Temperance Society of Burton and Vicinity. Dr. Erastus Goodwin served as chair, and later Seabury Ford, future governor and, the honorable Peter Hitchcock served.\footnote{172}

In 1875 Mrs. Harriet E. Ford served as vice president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union of Geauga County. At one meeting held at the Methodist Church in Burton, a speaker from Pittsburgh called for residents to join the movement and take a “Murphy Card” as a pledge. The cards served a symbol of abstinence presented by new members at meetings. This successful venture registered five hundred new members to the temperance movement. By 1879 a demonstration was held on the streets of Burton, burning kegs and billiard tables taken from the town’s saloons and pubs.\footnote{173} As radical as these meetings and demonstrations were, they enabled women to get involved in moral reform and assume leadership roles.

Aside from its religious and spiritual function, the Geauga Congregational Churches served as a source of social control. Burton established a Congregational Church in 1808, Claridon in 1827, and Troy, 1832. Claridon’s church records contain Articles of Faith and a Covenant borrowed directly from the Burton church and used to organize the two later institutions respectively.\footnote{174} The Reverend Luther Humphrey and Presbyterian minister John Barrett helped to organize the new Claridon Congregational Church in December 1827. That same year, Emily reported in her journal, “Mr. John Barrett preached here to day he is liked here real well to preach.”\footnote{175}

\footnote{172} Ibid, pp. 498-501.  
\footnote{174} \textit{Claridon Congregational Church Record Book}, November 5, 1827-December 26, 1827.  
\footnote{175} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1827), p. 36.
The Geauga County Congregational Churches embraced the same standards of conversion as the New England churches. Sinners were called to openly confess their transgressions in church meetings and revivals. One of the early founders of the Second Great Awakening, Benjamin Trumbull of North Haven, Connecticut, stressed the need for conversions and higher moral standards in church membership. Trumbull insisted that initiates publicly confess their sins in front of his congregation. This moral discipline allowed one hundred and three converts to join his church. A total of seventy-three members confessed to fornication outside of marriage, and twelve confessed to public drunkenness. Other hopeful converts admitted to neglecting worship, swearing, lying, adultery, and one fathered an illegitimate child.\footnote{Richard D. Shiels, The Connecticut Clergy in the Second Great Awakening, (Ph. D. dissertation Boston: Boston University Press, 1976), pp. 109-110.} Clearly Connecticut souls were in need of redemption.

Revivals were used to encourage church membership. Preachers created an emotional atmosphere by encouraging people to admit their sins and be absolved. Public confessions unified the congregation and gave them a sense of community and belonging.\footnote{Hankins, The Second Great Awakening, p. 7.} Social control served to unify the church community. Part of the church covenant required prospective members to agree to “refrain from unnecessarily associating with the vicious and vain conversation… and watch over the other members of the church, and if necessary to reprove them.” If members violated the church covenant, they could be, upon recommendation, excommunicated. This form of social control and punishment was not unusual considering the number of affiliates excommunicated in 1831. Grounds for church dismissal included adultery, as committed by “Mrs. Sophronia Calkins, a sister of the church,” and “Brother Asa Cowles absent
from the church for more than a year and neglecting to commune with the Church.”

Church records indicate Cowles and others acted without Christian-like behavior in condemning local Free Masons in the community.\textsuperscript{178} Whether Cowles viewed the Masons as a religious and social threat, or simply a new element of competition to the existing religious order, his actions were a violation of Christian spirit associated with the Congregational Church. Cowles had erred and the church used him as an example.

Whether embarrassed by the charges of adultery with a man other than her husband, Sophronia Calkins refused to appear before the church council and was excommunicated in absentia.\textsuperscript{179} Both were excommunicated and detailed accounts of their trials before a church committee remain part of the Claridon Church records and history. All three Geauga County Congregational Churches required public conversion before a church audience. By 1828, Emily Nash had married David Patchin and continued to attend prayer meetings on a regular basis. In 1831, she described religious conversions in Troy: “The Lord has come by his spirit to Troy and some souls have been converted to God.” She longed for the same experience and wondered, “is there mercy for me for such a sinner as I have been?”\textsuperscript{180} Ministers of the Second Great Awakening believed conversion was instantaneous and resulted when the soul was touched by God.

Although she eventually became a church affiliate, Emily’s husband opposed and “discouraged [her] decision.” She does not explain her husband’s opposition, but Emily vividly relayed a dream in which she described her friends, including “Mrs. Freeman and others going to take the journey to the promised land and going by my house I put my bonnet on and went to the road till they came along… I started to go with them… it was

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Claridon Church Record Book}, (1827), p. 13.
\textsuperscript{179} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1827), pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{180} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1831), p. 40.
awful dark... I soon got stuck in the mud and could not keep up with them...Mr. David Patchin kept close to me between me and the light...they [the women] were starting along without me...I felt awful...I was being left alone.” Emily awoke and shared the dream with her husband. By her interpretation, the dream was a revelation: she needed to convert and join the church as her friends had. She explained her desire to join the church. He no longer opposed her decision and Emily stated “Sureley he is long suffering to me...I think the holy spirit is striving with my husband...he says he is sorry he opposed me so much...he says he wants me to pray for him...”

To Emily, this dream revealed the need to join the church, but she also wanted her spouse to become a member. The church, temperance movement, and socializing within this religious structure was an integral part of Emily’s life. She was willing to become a church member despite her husband’s wishes. On her birthday, October 28, 1831, Emily stated, “I have heard my husband pray for the first time...now we can pray together...now we can hold prayer meetings in our home.” Social acceptance within the institution of the church was held in highest regard by Emily. She had a place in the social structure of Geauga County. She was influenced by the preachers, attended meetings, and comforted friends and relatives at funerals. Emily was needed by the church, and she, in turn, needed its comfort and support. Naturally, she wanted her husband to become a member of this social network. After a year of struggle with David Patchin, Emily joined the Troy Congregational Church on May 6, 1832. “Will the Lord help me to be faithful in all my engagements to

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the church,” Emily pleaded after her conversion, “and God forbid that I shall be a stumbling block in the way of others…”

The Role of Women in the Second Great Awakening

Nash’s experiences within the church structure reflect a broader nineteenth-century American society. The great evangelist Charles G. Finney began his career in New York influenced by the Female Missionary Society. Women in the Congregational Church established a newfound role in conversion, revivalism, support, and social power. Not only did women become the largest percentage of converts in New York, but also the majority of attendees at revivals. Many women took positions of authority within the church in New York becoming active participants in temperance lectures. Often male members joined their pious female relatives. Church records from Utica, New York, indicate first family members to join the church were more likely to be female, and the percentage of converts during revivals was higher for women.

For the first time women assumed a very powerful and influential role in religious life. The Second Great Awakening included women and allowed newly created roles in prayer meetings and lectures. Women did not stop with their own conversions, rather they conducted revival campaigns and actively recruited both men and women to join the church. Nineteenth-century gender views assumed women were already blessed with pious and virtuous behavior. The domestic roles of women endowed them with spirituality and a natural religious piety. These newfound roles within the church,

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including leadership and social reforms fell into the realm of womanhood and the cult of domesticity. Women took advantage and opportunity of their positions with the church. The Second Great Awakening provided women position and status in society.\textsuperscript{186}

Similarly, Emily Nash influenced her husband’s decision to join the church. Emily revered and credited various ministers throughout her journal, but also acknowledged the role of women in the community and church. Mary DeForest, minister Witter’s wife, led a Ladies Sewing Society which furnished supplies for soldiers during the Civil War. Emily was an active member of this social organization. Sunday school classes were taught by Mrs. Sarah Hotchkiss, in addition to prayer meetings with an attendance exceeding two hundred members.\textsuperscript{187} The Congregational Church influenced Emily while providing a meaningful role and new found position of authority in society. Male ministers were still the norm but a female majority involved in religious and social activities became a steady force in Geauga County and across nineteenth-century America.

The year 1831 was crucial in the history of the Second Great Awakening. Middle-class revivals spread from New York into New England, and west into Ohio. Charles G. Finney, was perhaps the most prominent evangelist of the Second Great Awakening, holding revivals in New York where he converted thousands of souls. Finney preached that humans had the power to choose to follow God or not. Holding revivals called sinners together and permitted individuals the opportunity to convert. Evangelists depended on revivals as a way to call intended followers. Here, they could make a choice to join the church or not. Because of the 1831 revivals, New England church membership

\textsuperscript{186} Ryan, “A Woman’s Awakening,” pp. 110-115. 
\textsuperscript{187} The Geauga Leader, October, 5, 1895.
increased by one-third. Reverend Finney’s revival techniques included a drastic change from private to public conversion. Revivals became elaborate and anticipated social events.188

This same type of religious enthusiasm in the form of revivals spread into Geauga County in the late 1820s and 1830s. Mr. Goodwin Wells, a Claridon farmer, resident of Geauga County, and neighbor of Emily Nash, left a religious testimonial describing his conversion to the Congregational Church in 1829. His testimonial dates from December 1828 through August 1832. In those years Mr. Wells attended meetings, conferences, and Bible studies, deciding whether he was worthy of conversion. After much contemplation and discussion over his worthiness, Goodwin Wells wrote on “January 9, 1829, Sunday evening. I have just returned from a meeting of young people and many of my companions and friends were there…I hope they look upon me as one that is traveling that path that leads to heaven.”189

Determined to join the church, Goodwin Wells wrote on January 11, 1829, “Sunday evening the solemn day is at length past which I have taken forward to convert. I publicly profess that I had chosen the lord for my salvation forever…I have reason for thankfulness and gratitude.” The Claridon Church records list Goodwin Wells and thirty-nine other residents “duly examined and propounded, publicly received as members of the church this Sunday, January 11, 1829.”190 Similar to Emily Nash’s conversion experience, only after much contemplation, did Goodwin Wells become a member of the Congregational Church.

188 Mary P. Ryan, “A Woman’s Awakening,” p. 110-111.
189 Goodwin Wells, Religious Testimony, January 9, 1829. This is a compiled, unpublished hand-written religious testimony by Goodwin Wells. It is in the possession of Ms. Connie Wells, the great-great-granddaughter of Mr. Wells, Geauga County, Ohio.
190 Claridon Church Record Book, 1829, Goodwin Wells, Religious Testimony.
From 1829 through 1832, Wells discussed the need for religious revivals held by the churches. “The Conference of the Churches have felt something of the need of a revival to continue and increase [those] devoted to God…” By February 1834, a large revival was held in Claridon. Emily wrote, “[we] are having a blessed good meeting in Claridon and many souls are being converted to God. Mr. David Patchin and I are attending the meetings. Reverend Mr. Foote is the minister to lead the meeting Mr. Myron Tracey invited him to hold the meeting in his church…” Reverend Myron Tracey was the pastor of the Claridon Congregational Church and officiated at the conversion of Goodwin Wells. Reverend Foote’s name appears in several records and he is noted as a circuit evangelist. Congregational Church members from Troy, Burton, and Claridon attended the great revival of 1834. Church records indicate a successful outcome by the hundreds of converted souls welcomed into the church. Emily added, “at the close of the meeting it was requested for all those that had made up their mind that they will do every known duty from this time till death to rise up…there was a great number that rose and Mr. David Patchin was one. He has been living 2 years out of the church…he said he should not unite with the church til he could spend his sabaths without arguing on polliticks…” Both Emily’s husband and newborn daughter were baptized April 6, 1834 and became members of the Troy Congregational Church.

The Claridon revival of 1834 came at a crucial time in the county’s history. Not unlike revivals held in New York or New England, the Claridon revival resulted from adversity and social change affecting the local area and America. By 1825 several meetings were held to discuss the construction of the Ohio canal. Certainly a canal meant

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193 Nash, *Journal*, (1834), p. 44.
more industry and a boost to the economy, but it also led to an influx of foreign laborers. The *Painesville Telegraph* reported that several citizen meetings with Geauga residents attending and even chairing events throughout April and May 1825. Emily acknowledged, “there is great doing in Talmadge (Tallmadge, Ohio) the governor [is] going to be there to begin the Ohio Cannall….trying to have something grand.”

 Historian Andrew Cayton’s research supports Emily’s information about the building of a canal. The ambitious project meant revenue for the county and a viable link to connect the state together. Building a canal allowed Ohio to mature and move from frontier settlements to developed cities. Of course this meant serious changes occurred within the state. Hundreds of unskilled and semi-skilled workers needed to construct the main channel of the Ohio canal settled in the state. Some workers were local farmers, but the vast majority were Irish and German immigrants. Even the *Painesville Telegraph* identified the enormous number of immigrants settling in the area. Immigrants introduced new challenges and elements into the county with ethnic enclaves, or shanty towns established near the canal construction and new religions. To a predominantly Congregational Protestant population, immigration created a challenging environment rife with conflict.

 Concerns over immigration and shifts in the ethnicity of the region appeared in a local newspaper, the *Chardon Spectator and the Geauga Gazette*. The paper even ran a front-page article entitled “The population of the United States.” The article lists Ohio as one of the most populous states, with a growing number of immigrants. The newspaper

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projected continued growth into the 1840s as a result of “rich land yet unoccupied…” The prospect of even more immigrants inhabiting Ohio and competing with indigenous residents was a growing concern. Holding a religious revival served to unify church members and reaffirm their solidarity.

Along with diverse people came new religions. Emily attended several meetings at the “Baptist log-house” before joining the Congregational Church in 1832. In an 1827 entry, Emily remarked, “we stayed overnight and went to a meeting there and see a woman baptized in the river by the Carmelites after meeting came home.” Obviously she was aware of new religions, messages, and practices. Although not strictly religious, the Masons became a formidable group in Geauga County. Emily includes at least four specific journal entries describing Masonic rituals and funerary services. After attending the funeral of Mr. Jacob Welsh on April 21, 1822, Emily wrote “…he being a mason the masons beried him in their stile…I never found anything so appropriate in my life I am glad I came to the funeral they sung the anthem when the friends were viewing the corps…Mr. Sawyer shut down the lid and covered up the face…then marched up the hill and beried him then marched down to the town and preached the sermon…” She attended several services describing elaborate Masonic rites with music, processions and swords. Emily’s entries are not critical nor does she condemn the Baptists, Carmelites, or Masons. Moreover, her comments hint of curiosity and intrigue.

Douglas Hurt supports the notion of social change and immigration on the Ohio frontier. Like the local newspapers, Hurt identified immigration as a source of tension.

People who moved into the state brought their cultural characteristics with them, and most did not hail from New England. Although he identified ethnicity and diversity as a source of conflict, Hurt was quick to point out that religious differences created concerns. Most Protestant religions seemed to tolerate each other in Ohio, but Catholics, Mormons, and Jews were marginalized and often not welcomed. These new religious denominations created their own settlements, separate from existing ones, hoping to avoid harassment.

Although Emily does not mention religious tension or problems, she was definitely aware of “new” religions in Geauga County. For Emily and other staunchly religious Congregationalists, immigration and diverse religions meant it was necessary to hold a revival to predicate their credence and union.

The *Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette* ran two articles in 1833 both criticizing and ridiculing the Masons. Far from providing information facts on the order, the articles warn Geauga residents of this subversive group. Fearful of secret organizations and Masonic rites, the local media supported a newly emerged political group: the Anti-Masons. Gaining considerable support in Ohio this party even ran a presidential candidate in 1832. Local fears ballooned into national resentment directed at the presumed Masonic threat.

Attracted by rich agricultural land and perhaps hopeful of less rigid orthodox religious practices, the Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) established a community in the Western Reserve. Curiously Emily Nash does not mention the Mormons in her journal. However the local newspaper contained two very anti-Mormon articles in 1833. Newspapers criticized Mormons for

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199 Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier*, pp. 289-299.
communal property-holdings, money lending, and unorthodox sexual practices.\textsuperscript{201}

Clearly the Mormons created a sense of suspicion and agitation among some local residents.

On a familiar and personal level, Emily described the violent murder of a young girl—Sally Russell in 1833. The murder of this girl enhanced the need for the Claridon revival. Perhaps some residents moved away from religious values and a revival provided the necessary cohesion to reaffirm beliefs. Sally was only fourteen or fifteen years old when “she was waylaid by some human Devil whose passions were inflamed by the fires of hell...she was choaked [sic] strangled and brused her person shamefully and namelessly violated...” The accused murderer, Decius Barnes from Chardon, was indicted for murder but later acquitted of all charges for lack of substantial evidence. Emily’s general opinion charged Decius Barnes with the murder and hoped he agonized over the “visions of this innocent murdered girl in his sleeping and waking hours.”\textsuperscript{202}

The fact remained that a young girl was physically violated and murdered. This event shook the moral foundation of the county and its residents.

Similar to other revivals, Geauga County residents along with Congregational ministers decided to hold a religious meeting to urge repentance, prayer, and address the state of potential spiritual decay. Revivals energized the population and renewed unity despite social change, eroding morals, and murder. Revivals came at the moment of crisis. This emphasis on revivals was a hallmark of the Second Great Awakening. Whether designed to address pressing social problems or save tempted souls, the Claridon revival of 1834 was an immense success. Burton church records report an

\textsuperscript{201} Chardon Spectator and Geauga Gazette, August, 1833, December, 1833. “Anti-Mormon Article”

\textsuperscript{202} Nash, Journal, (1833), p. 43.
unprecedented number of new members, sixty-one from Burton and over forty-five from Claridon joined the Congregational Church. Indeed, many souls were converted, redeemed, and saved.203

There were a number of significant social movements associated with the Second Great Awakening that Emily both participated in and described in her journal. Emily indicates that “arguing polliticks on Sunday” was an issue that her husband needed to resolve before joining the church. One of the benevolent movements associated with the Second Great Awakening in New York was the Sabbath-observance Campaign. Like the Temperance movement, Sabbath-observance began in the churches and was incorporated into other institutions in society. Sunday laws restricted activities and the consumption of alcohol.204 These various benevolent movements coincided with temperance in Geauga County. Equally important Congregational members held abolition meetings throughout 1834. The Chardon Spectator lists three ads and articles for anti-slavery conventions in the county between January 1 and February 1, 1834. Certainly related to the benevolent efforts of the Second Great Awakening, anti-slavery was a popular social cause in Geauga County organized through church efforts. The revival of 1834 helped solidify and polarize attitudes against slavery. As late as 1842 additional meetings were held in the Congregational Churches to discuss the evils of slavery and condemn slaveholders. In a December 26, 1842, meeting the church council stated, “no slaveholders will be invited into the churches to discuss their stance.”205

203 Geauga Leader, October, 5, 1895, Claridon Church Record Book, February 1834.
204 Nash, Journal, (1834), p. 44.
Another moral activity supported by women was anti-slavery. As one of the most significant moral and political crises of the nineteenth century, slavery became a rallying cause for Ohio women. Slavery was of course an ethical issue, and it once again propelled women into the political theater. This was true in Geauga County and across the state. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery in the entire territory north of the Ohio River. Many early settlers, although opposed to slavery, wanted the territory preserved for white society. The moral issue of slavery was not the primary concern. Many efforts and measures were used to keep black settlers from residing in the state. Staunch “black laws” required a bond of $500 to $1,000 posted before African-Americans could settle in the state, in case they became indigent. To live in Ohio, a black person had to register with local officials and post bond. Some cities had higher African-American populations such as Cincinnati, but many northern rural areas had relatively few black settlers. Even population statistics recorded in 1850 reveal one African-American “residing in Geauga County.” In 1841 land purchases record a “negro settlement” in Parkman named after two free African—American families residing there. African-Americans were in fact, rare in Geauga County. Ohioans seemed determined to keep blacks out of the state for fear of over-population, or job competition.

Not all of the state openly discriminated against African-Americans. Oberlin College welcomed black students. This is not surprising since Charles Finney served as a professor of theology and president of the college. Oberlin became the first college in the country to accept and admit African-American students. Many religious organizations

208 Geauga County Historical Society, Pioneer History, p. 503, 706
also opposed slavery on moral grounds, namely the Quakers and some Presbyterians. Both groups were active in Ohio and preached slavery was a sin and slave owners sinners.209 Throughout the nineteenth-century, the distinction between anti-slavery advocates and abolitionists grew. Many abolitionists united to form anti-slavery organizations and actively worked to end slavery. Meetings, conferences, literature, and speeches promoted their views. Some abolitionists, like John Brown, sought violence and action to end the institution. Other leaders, such as William Lloyd Garrison, used ethical and religious concerns, as well as a political agenda to attack slavery. Although both radical and conservative views on abolition developed throughout the century, the general outlook sought the legal prohibition to end slavery.210

Like temperance organizations, numerous anti-slavery societies emerged throughout Geauga County. Chester Township amended its constitution by adopting the view “to aid every moral means in abolishing slavery.” The society denounced slavery as a sin in this Christian land and must be stopped. Once again, this moral crusade had a definite political agenda. Several other anti-slavery societies formed as early as 1826 in Ravenna, Warren, and Cleveland. Betsy Mix Cowles of Ashtabula organized women into the Ashtabula County Female Anti-Slavery Society. When women were not permitted to join male organizations, they created their own auxiliary groups exclusively for women. As Donna DeBlasio confirmed, the efforts by Cowles cannot be ignored. Her active participation in the abolition of slavery not only addressed the moral impropriety, but also paved the way for women reformers in other social organizations such as suffrage and

education. When women were shunned or discouraged by male members, they organized their own meetings. Anti-slavery benefitted women by providing opportunities for public speaking and political action, much like temperance. Not only did women join organizations and hold meetings, but they assisted in helping slaves escape along the Underground Railroad. The system of safe houses and barns helped runaway slaves reach Canada. Women acted as guides and conductors, ushering slaves to freedom.211

Three separate Geauga County residences served as stations on the Underground Railroad; one in Huntsburg, another in Burton and one in Troy. In 1933, Daniel Lorenzo Nash, the nephew of Emily Nash wrote an account of his family’s involvement in smuggling slaves in Troy. Alden Nash, Emily’s younger brother built the first hotel or tavern in Troy called the “Nash Hotel” or Troy Inn in 1842. When he was seven years old, Daniel Lorenzo Nash recalled his mother preparing food in baskets and taking it into the barn. Daniel asked his father if he could accompany him to the barn and care for the horses. Alden Nash made his son promise not to discuss what was hidden in the barn. Much to his astonishment Daniel saw a black woman with her children hidden in a wagon covered with straw. The escaped slaves were kept hidden in the barn until they could be smuggled to another safe house. The young Nash recalled being shocked at seeing the mysterious visitors, also noting that he had never seen a black person.212

Daniel Nash’s 1933 recollection asserts the Nash Hotel (today the Welshfield Inn) was a stagecoach stop on the line between Pittsburgh and Cleveland. According to Nash,

212 Daniel Lorenzo Nash, Letter, written in 1933. Daniel Lorenzo Nash was the nephew of Emily Nash. He was the son of Emily’s brother Alden Nash and Olive Poole Nash. Alden Nash built the Troy Hotel in 1842. The family moved to Michigan in the late 1850s. The original letter is stored in the Shanower Library, Century Village Burton Ohio.
his family regularly hid many slaves in a barn until they could safely be sent out of the state. Nash also recalled Old John Brown meeting with his father Alden Nash at the hotel.\(^{213}\) Certainly Emily’s extended family was directly involved in anti-slavery.

Despite Ohio’s outward discrimination, a sentiment of anti-slavery developed throughout the county. Many abolitionists followed the less radical views of Arthur and Lewis Tappan. The Tappans sought gradual emancipation for African-Americans. One of the most influential Ohio activists was Presbyterian minister John Rankin. He built his home above the Ohio River in Ripley, Ohio, and kept a lantern burning to guide runaway slaves to safety.\(^{214}\) Famous abolitionist spoke at meeting houses or churches throughout the county. Even female abolitionists Abby Kelly Foster faced open ridicule when speaking in Salem, Ohio, in the 1850s.\(^{215}\) More aggressive abolitionists like John Brown of Kent, demanded an immediate end to slavery. Brown’s militant abolitionist views were well-known throughout Ohio. He supported the Oberlin Rescuers, a group of professors and students who rescued fugitive slaves and helped them escape. Many Western Reserve settlers denounced slavery and applauded Brown’s unwavering commitment to ending the institution. At one anti-slavery meeting in Emily’s hometown of Troy, supporters claimed Brown’s actions were divine and that he was led by a higher power.\(^{216}\) Other residents condemned Brown’s actions at Harper’s Ferry because he violated Virginia law. Geauga residents vacillated between moderate acceptance of ending slavery and outright condemnation of the institution.


Emily read about Brown’s capture and trial in Virginia in 1859. Whether she wrote of the famous abolitionist because of familiarity with his family, or she was simply intrigued by the political circumstances, Emily confirmed that Brown died trying to liberate the slaves. Later that month (December 1859) she added “four men hung to day in Virginia for the reason [John] Brown was…for the slave.”217 Emily may not have truly supported the anti-slavery cause, but clearly she was aware of the strong moral sentiment in Ohio and attended numerous lectures and local rallies. An intense curiosity and opportunity to participate socially in meetings may have motivated the young journalist. Critical political issues and agendas affecting the broader American society were once again reflected in Geauga County.

Another popular approach to ending slavery in American was proposed by the American Colonization Society in 1816. The ACS attracted both pro and anti-slavery factions with their agenda of sending manumitted slaves to Africa.218 One prominent supporter of colonization was Congregational minister Giles Hooker Cowles of Ashtabula County, Ohio. Under his tutelage, his daughter Betsy Mix Cowles came to believe that slavery was morally repugnant and needed to end immediately. By 1845, Ms. Cowles adopted and advocated a much more radical view toward slavery based on the teaching of William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison connected slavery to sin and wanted the institution ended without compensating slave owners.219 In a revealing letter dated June 30, 1838, Cincinnati abolitionist Susan E. Wattles wrote to Betsy about the combined

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219 Donna DeBlasio, Betsy Mix Cowles, pp. 51-53.
need of religion and education in the abolitionist cause. Trained as a teacher, Cowles whole-heartedly supported her fellow abolitionist. She believed blacks required financial support and education following freedom. Cowles became a staunch supporter of both social reforms; abolition and education. The Ashtabula County Female Anti-Slavery Society used correspondence, letters, campaigns, and speeches to create a network to fight slavery.

Cowles’ abolitionist causes provide a striking contrast to Emily Nash’s life and activities. Surprisingly, the two women had many early similarities. Both were born in New England and migrated with their families to the Western Reserve as children. Cowles’ father was a Congregational minister, and Emily’s father a justice of the peace. Both women were devoutly religious and lived no more than thirty miles apart for most of their lives. Yet Cowles became an activist, reformer, abolitionist, and women’s rights advocate. Outside of temperance, Emily did not actively engage in many other social reform movements. Emily’s life provides an almost complete contrast of two women influenced by the Second Great Awakening, but producing different results.

Betsy Mix Cowles received her formal education from Oberlin College in 1838. She already held well-formed anti-slavery views before entering, but they were peaked by her training and exposure to more radical principles. By 1846, Betsy corresponded with Abby Kelley Foster and continued her work with the anti-slavery movement and for the plight of slaves. Her education and exposure to other cities and people may have predisposed her toward equality and reform. Cowles travelled and lived in Canton, New

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220 Susan E, Wattles to Betsy Mix Cowles letter, June 30, 1838. The Betsy Mix Cowles collection is stored at Kent State University Library.
York, and Chicago. More worldly and travelled than Emily, Betsy’s experiences allowed her to develop a global understanding of issues. Emily travelled very little in her lifetime, making her world seem very small. Betsy never married and supported herself through a teaching career. Although Emily married three times in her life, she outlived each spouse and in fact spent most of her time as a widow. Ironically both women were relatively independent and supported themselves.

Except for two cryptic references to slavery when John Brown was executed, Emily was silent on the topic of abolition. She did not write about the institution of slavery or the need to end it. Although historian James Oliver Horton reports a dramatic increase in Ohio’s black population from 1810 to 1840 (from 2,000 to 17,342), Geauga County had a surprisingly small number of black settlers even into 1850. Blacks were discouraged from settling or living in Ohio and Emily did not question the situation. Horton argues that the small number of blacks living in Cleveland in the mid nineteenth century (roughly 224) meant the city adopted a more racially liberal attitude. He compares this number to Cincinnati which had a substantially larger black population and serious racial tension. Just because minority statistics remained small does not mean prejudice and discrimination did not exist in Cleveland or Geauga County. Quite simply the lack of exposure to African Americans made Emily ambivalent and perhaps apathetic to the problems. Curiously Emily may have even justified slavery by using biblical references to explain situations. She believed a “natural order” existed between and mater and servant and chose not to question it. Nash’s lack of writing on the topic of slavery is

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224 Ibid, pp. 54-55. Horton writes Cincinnati had a black population of 3,237 by 1850 compared to Cleveland which had 224.
discouraging, especially when her extended family was involved in various endeavors and anti-slavery was a focal point of social reforms associated with the Second Great Awakening. As Donna DeBlasio so aptly wrote, “certainly it is fact that there were other persons of similar backgrounds who did not become reformers like Betsy Mix Cowles.” For a variety of reasons, Emily chose not to write about the topic of slavery and the abolitionist cause in Geauga County.

Yet Emily’s writing style and journal entries changed as a result of the Second Great Awakening. Following her conversion and that of her husband, Emily modified her journal entries significantly. She continued to include religious passages and biblical phrases, but she also discussed the deceased person’s spirituality and devotion to the church. To Emily, it mattered whether a person converted to the church because it determined the soul’s fate. In a telling passage, Emily mournfully described her mother’s death, “it has been a solemn Saturday to me for I am a motherless child sureley… she died lamented not only by her afflicted family who mourn her departure from them in the midst of life and usefulness but all that knew her…she embraced the savior in early life and has been for thirty years universally devoted to his service.” Emily faithfully believed that her mother’s soul was saved because of her conversion and religious commitment.

Emily held the same conviction for other Geauga residents who accepted Christ. When Noyes Williams died Emily affirmed, “he had a sweet and calm resignation in Christ and died without doubt as to his union to him he has gone to meet the savior.” She was also convinced that Chauncey Percival would walk with the Lord because “he has

225 Donna DeBlasio, “Betsy Mix Cowles,” p. 27.
been for some years a member of the Christian church [and] was exemplary in his daily walk and regarded by all as a rare specimen of Christian consistency.”

Perhaps more revealing were those men and women who chose not to convert or lived outside the church. Emily was gravely concerned for their immortality. As she described Mr. Benjamin Kingsbury, “he is very anxious about his soul’s everlasting welfare…in this condition he died hoping yet doubting sometimes a trembling sinner…” Emily pitied David Hoard because “he died to day without hope in Christ…he died as he had lived without hope and without God in the world.” And even Emily’s friend Betsey Hopkins was in jeopardy because “she delayed the work of preparation for the dying hour…as a ruined sinner her soul is lost forever for without holiness no one shall see the Lord…”

**The Second Great Awakening and Mourning Behavior**

Another indication of changes in Emily’s writing style after her conversion to the Congregational Church involved her commitment to provide evidence as a witness at death bed scenes, and prepare bodies for burial. Although she wrote about laying bodies out before 1832, many entries after this year include specific details about the deceased person’s behavior at the hour of death and her personal role in preparing bodies for burial. After observing the death of Alba Tinkham, Emily insisted “her confidence in God remained strong to the last moment…she died with a breach…her sufferings were past describing…” It was important for Emily to witness and record the dying person’s spiritual disposition.

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By 1834, Emily began to personally attend and prepare bodies for burial. She had accompanied her mother in the past, but as an adult and member of the church, she became responsible for providing this service herself. In September, after “being there most of the week to help them care for Julia Olivia Smith”, Emily wrote, “I went to day to lay her out and put her in the coffin.” In the following years she witnessed more death, attended funerals, and continued to provide services by “making clothes and getting ready for the funeral tomorrow.”230 Emily’s firm religious faith prepared her for the seemingly morose duty of caring and preparing the dead.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg claims that the Second Great Awakening allowed for vast changes in power and authority never seen before or experienced by women up to this point. Ultimately, she argues this set the stage for feminism. Religion helped women like Emily Nash to develop leadership skills and take control of institutions in society. In Emily’s case, this refers to death and dying. Because the female sphere of influence encompassed religion, death fell into her realm of control. Smith-Rosenberg writes that the sheer number of women dominating revivals, and church membership gave them the opportunity to control mourning behavior.231

Ann Douglas contributes to the history of mourning behavior and the Second Great Awakening by adding, death became “domesticated” by women. Part of new roles and responsibilities within the church included more expressive mourning behavior. Douglas emphasized the relationship and dependency between women and ministers in the nineteenth century. She remarks, death became “glamorized” and the position of

231 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct, pp. 129-130, 144-145.
women elevated because of the importance of death rituals.\textsuperscript{232} Emily had a very close relationship with multiple ministers. She knew them personally and often mentions one of more on a daily basis. This dependency and patterned relationship between minister and women substantiates and supports Douglas’ thesis. The female claim on home and church crossed into death and mourning. Ministers relied on women to handle mourning behavior. Douglas writes that the sensitized mourner became a valuable asset to the drama of funerals and dying in nineteenth century America.\textsuperscript{233} Since women were emotional and sentimental, it seems natural that death fell into their realm of influence. Women became the heirs of progressive religious views and helped shape the excessive, elaborate, and sentimental mourning behavior that emerged out of the Second Great Awakening.\textsuperscript{234}

The important relationship between Emily and local ministers became apparent at an early age. While she engaged in liaisons with a number of young men, Emily judged all of them by the amount of alcohol they consumed. She ended the courtship with at least two local boys because of excessive drinking. Most of her engagements and activities with young men involved attending meetings, both religious and temperance. Emily’s socializing was both influenced and affected by local ministers. John Barrett and Luther Humphrey both preached abstinence and moral reform. “Mr. Orin Abbett preached to us in earnest,” she wrote in September 1825, “to abstain from all evil.”\textsuperscript{235} Between July and October 1825, Emily and her friends attended more than ten meetings. She indicated which minister preached, and sometimes acknowledged the topic. The

\textsuperscript{232} Ann Douglas, \textit{The Feminization of American Culture}, pp. 242-244.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid, \textit{The Feminization of American Culture}, p. 244.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid, pp. 250-253.
\textsuperscript{235} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1825). It is unclear if Minister Abbett preached on sexual abstinence or alcohol.
obvious influence and immense social authority ministers had over Emily and other young women, is unmistakable. It is not coincidental that Nash began attending more funerals and laying out the dead while involved in religious meetings. In 1828, Nash complained about having to stay with the elderly Hannah Beals, “when she “[would] gladly go to the funeral of Mr. Jonathan Brooks.” Nash recognized her influence and associated within the church. She found it upsetting when she could not attend a funeral, or church, or lay out a body.

Barbara Welter uses the phrase “feminizing religion” in reference to the newly acquired responsibilities held by women regarding death. Welter, like Smith-Rosenberg, sees the feminization of religion as a move toward gender equality and women’s rights. The clergy listened to women and religion remained open to them. Within religion, women had power. In a similar study, Mary P. Ryan described evangelical middle class women feminizing religion in Oneida County New York, during the Second Great Awakening. Ryan supports the stance that religion became feminized and less patriarchal. While men lost some authority in the churches, women exerted increasing control over religion, domestic responsibilities, and funerary behavior. Once again, a maternal influence over religion extended into mourning behavior and death rites.

Although the connection between women’s roles, leadership in the church, and the feminization of death, may have escaped Emily’s awareness, she did embrace the newly found role of elaborate and expressive mourning behavior and preparing bodies for burial. Emily’s unwavering conviction in religion carried her through personal triumph

236 Ibid, (1828).
237 Barbara Welter, Dimity Convictions, pp. 63, 85.
and tragedy. She attended more meetings and even talked about church members “building a meeting house in the center of the town...I hope they will keep united in doing it...God will help to bring it about.” By the summer of 1836 Emily reported “we have raised the meeting house...I did more than my part...it is the hope and pillar of success.”

There were more temperance lectures, anti-slavery meetings, and new ministers preaching in all three churches. The Congregational Church had grown from a frontier missionary venture, to a permanent, respectable denomination with hundreds of members in Burton, Claridon, and Troy.

Church activity consumed and occupied Emily’s life. The Second Great Awakening gave women a respectable sphere of influence outside their homes. Communication, networks, and social connections were a vital if not direct outcome of the religious movement. For Emily these connections were essential. She learned to negotiate and interact with members of the community from engaging in preparing bodies for burial, to praying with their families and witnessing death. Her trusted position in the community was made possible through her roots and associations within the church. Her involvement in temperance lectures and religious meetings permitted visibility and trust by the community. Emily asserted herself through religious engagements which gave her the confidence to work with families and the public. Her leadership roles gained through the Congregational Church extended into her duties and responsibilities as a layer of the dead.

Emily’s religious faith gave her much needed support when she suddenly and unexpectedly suffered from a “paraletic shock” in July 1836. The disease left her partially

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paralyzed and “at the point of death.” Weeks after the attack, when she resumed writing in her journal, Emily remembered “hearing people praying and sending to the store to get cloth for my burial clothes.” She eventually recovered but continually suffered from epileptic seizures. Her faith undaunted, Emily wrote in August 1836, “let me never forget the solemn shock when I was at the point of death…oh the amazing struggle for the soul and body…I will look on this as a warning to me…” As she slowly recovered her first thoughts were “to get hold of the bible to find consolation there…I must have it read if only one verse a day…” The first quote Emily read and incorporated into her journal stated, “he that doubteth is damned!” Religion sustained her and allowed her to cope, even when suffering from severe illness.

**Conclusion**

In the years following her conversion and acceptance within the Congregational Church, Emily attended two more revivals in Burton. Both revivals resembled the Claridon meeting of 1834 by attracting many new souls. In the winter of 1853-1854 thirty-nine new members joined the church under the guidance of the Reverend Ebenezer Bushnell.²⁴² Emily’s life and writing changed considerably since her first revival. Although she described the 1854 meeting as “refreshing to [her] soul,” other personal issues occupied her journal entries. Married only three years to her second husband John Halkins, Emily cried, “he left me to day to get along as I can he has become dissatisfied about the situation…” Halkins feared Emily’s disability prevented her from caring for him. Suffering from illness himself, Halkins also feared Emily’s daughter Philansia would not resume caring for him if Emily died. Halkins left Geauga County to reside

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²⁴² G*eauga Leader*, October 5, 1895.
with his children in Michigan. Although she thought it was best, Emily felt abandoned. He died later that same year in Michigan at the age seventy-eight.243

Emily attended the 1866 Burton revival but was more skeptical about its outcome. The revival had social qualities similar to the former meetings, but Emily’s entries in the summer of 1866 expressed concern for secular meetings being held within the church. She suspected new initiates were more interested in holding meetings than hearing the “gospel preached.”244 The churches had a variety of purposes and uses, some very secular in nature. Emily’s sincere devotion to religion continued throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Affected by severe illness, she worried about her grave state of affairs and bleak future. By the fall of 1867, Emily’s third and final husband Elijah Pike died. Much to her satisfaction, Pike joined the Congregational Church during the 1866 revival. Writing after his death, Emily worried, “what shall I do without him, what will the church do without him[?]” 245

The changes resulting from the Second Great Awakening were visible across the nation. Often called a decade of declension, the 1850s saw noticeable stagnation in religion. More secular issues seemed to dominate American life and religiosity waned. The revivals of 1854 and 1866 reflected meetings held in other areas of the country. There was an active attempt to revitalize religious fervor in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina in the 1850s. Revivals addressed immigration and urbanization concerns in this era. As the decade progressed, revivals were more common spreading throughout the country. No longer were they associated with small tent gatherings, rather revivals demonstrated the power and prominence of the Protestant

churches. Revivals became enormous and elaborate events to attract followers once again to the church.

The Second Great Awakening continued to offer new opportunities and open doors for women. Geauga County founded several auxiliaries, headed by local women. Sunday school classes, a Ladies Society and Woman’s Missionary group were all appendages of the religious movement and its lasting effects. Women were now a fixture in the Protestant churches.

Perhaps encouraged by the later revivals and prominent role of women within the church structure, Emily’s death notices adopted a more somber, religious tone. Few if any of her entries lacked religious commentary. The fate of one’s soul was always mentioned. Fortified by spirituality and active participation in the church, the Second Great Awakening continued to shape and determine Emily’s writings throughout the nineteenth-century. Her views on death and mourning behavior reflect the larger American society.

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247 Geauga Leader October 3, 1895.
CHAPTER 3: A WITNESS TO DEATH

“25 January 1860 Julia Turner died to day of consumption aged 31 years she gave pleasing evidence to her friends in her last days of having passed from death unto life therefore they are comforted with the evidence that there loss is her unspeakable gain…” Emily Nash, 1860

Introduction

Several scholars provide the foundation for understanding mourning practices in both nineteenth-century America and Geauga County. David Stannard and James Ferrell discuss general patterns of death in America. Both include the sweeping changes of the Second Great Awakening and Romanticism in reshaping ideas toward death. Funerals became more elaborate and sentimentalized. Ferrell and Stannard identify the Age of the Beautiful Death and a new movement in creating cemeteries. Emily Nash described similar experiences in Geauga County.

Nicholas Marshall, Philippe Aries, Pat Jalland, and Robert Wells contribute to the background of death and funerary behavior by offering more specific regional studies. Written in the 1970s, Aries study examines Western attitudes toward death from the middle ages to the twentieth century. Marshall focused on antebellum New York, and Pat Jalland, Victorian England. Each regional study provides useful comparisons with Geauga County mourning behavior describing disease, periods of mourning, and proper

etiquette. The most important comparison comes from Robert Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors: Death and Society in an American Community 1750-1900*. Because it covers the same time frame as Geauga County, Wells’ research proves to be a representative community broadening ideas about death outside of Ohio. Comparing New York to Ohio creates interesting views on rituals of death and mourning.

More specific examples of tangible cultural expressions of grief include Martha Pike and Janice Gray Armstrong’s *A Time to Mourn*. Examples of art, mourning portraits, jewelry, clothing, fabrics, and color, all stress the symbolic meaning of death. Barbara Dodd Hillerman’s “Chrysalis of Gloom,” and Lawrence Taylor’s anthropological view offer yet another perspective by including the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.251 Sonia Bedikian’s article on “The Death of Mourning,” points out that death was both visible to respective communities and expressed in tangible ways.252 Tied to Romanticism, a new Spiritual movement expressed the desire to communicate with the dead. Ann Braude and R. Lawrence Moore wrote benchmark studies on the nineteenth century phenomenon. Ideas on Spiritualism apply to the larger American society.253 Stanley French, David Charles Sloane, Alan Ludwig, Francis Y. Duval, and Ivan Rigby all focused on the garden park cemetery movement.254 New gravestone designs and

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tombstones became fashionable expressions associated with cemeteries and mourning behavior.

This chapter utilizes ideas from the Second Great Awakening with Romanticism and cultural aspects of mourning behavior. Defined as the “age of the beautiful death,” Romantic rituals and elaborate mourning rites described the nineteenth century obsession with death. Because of the high rates of disease and illness, Americans developed new interpretations of the process of dying. No longer interpreted as a frightening end, death became domesticated and “beautiful.” A number of cultural expectations existed for a proper death. A circle of mourners and witnesses to the process were expected. A proper death meant the victim died peacefully, surrounded by loved ones at home. Emily Nash served as a witness and of course prepared the deceased for burial. Her examples and perceptions are extremely valuable for illustrating these services in Geauga County. More importantly, this chapter examines the anomalies when death could not be observed, or when suicides or sudden deaths took place.

This chapter combines socio-cultural views on death with historical interpretations. Identifying clothing and tangible expressions of mourning allows for an understanding of how widows and widowers dealt with periods of grief and acceptable social behavior. Clothing, colors, and objects of remembrance, identify elaborate mourning rituals and the central place death held in the community. Romanticism and Spiritualism helped create the garden park cemetery movement in the nineteenth-century. Landscaped cemeteries associated a haven, and beautiful resting place with

burial grounds, redefining death. Reinterpreted as a “garden,” park cemeteries emphasized beauty and serenity over grief and finality.

This chapter uses Emily Nash’s journal entries to provide an understanding of her role as a layer of the dead, including responsibilities as a witness, and the effects of Romanticism and cultural expectations in the age of the beautiful death. Emily Nash lived at a time when mourning and funerals were an important part of social and cultural behavior. Expressive mourning and elaborate funerals emphasized rituals of death. Nash witnessed death by attending the sick and watched as they departed life. She also reveals in her journal proper behavior and etiquette pertaining to funerals, remarriage, mourning clothes, and other cultural rites. Nineteenth-century America was preoccupied with the process of dying and the ensuing culture surrounding appropriate behavior and proper etiquette. These same traditions and patterns of elaborate funerary rites are detailed in Emily’s journal, reflecting the priority and attention paid to mourning behavior in Geauga County.

**Age of the Beautiful Death**

Shaped by religious views stemming from the Second Great Awakening and the proper gender roles defined by society for men and women, maintenance of death and mourning became a female prerogative. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* in the mid-nineteenth century influenced many women by defining the explicit and separate spheres of influence for both men and women. Men were breadwinners, women preservers of religion and proper etiquette. Part of that moral sanctity required women to witness death and comfort the bereaved. Just as they influenced their families and home life, a new romantic version of death emerged in the nineteenth century expecting women
to sentimentalize and domesticate the process. Death and bereavement fell under a
c female realm of influence.

Significant changes in religion and attitudes toward Romanticism perpetuated
modifications in funerary behavior across America. Death became more sentimental and
elaborate. Mourning practices comforted the living. The Second Great Awakening
emphasized enthusiastic spirituality through actions. Romanticism became a popular
cultural movement coexisting with religion, expressing itself in the art and literature of
the nineteenth century. Romanticism, defined as an artistic and literary movement in the
nineteenth century, explored the human link to nature through poetry, music, and the
visual arts. Romantics also focused on emotions and expressions which of course
included behavior related to death and observing death. Overflowing with sentimentality
and emotions, Romanticism stressed the connection to nature and evoked powerful
feelings. Not just associated with literature, Romanticism influenced funerary behavior
making it more elaborate, emphasizing emotions, love, and pain. Combined with
Romantic ideas, women now sought assertive roles in Christian organizations. The
intensity of the Second Great Awakening offered new opportunities for women through
leadership, church related- activities, and preparation for the afterlife. Women also
expressed their imagination and emotions through Romantic paintings, samplers,
mourning portraits, poems, and literature. Together, Romanticism and the Second Great
Awakening shaped mourning behavior of the era.

255 Martha V. Pike, and Janet-Gray-Armstrong, editors, A Time to Mourn: Expressions of Grief in
Nineteenth Century America, pp. 16-17.
256 James Ferrell, Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple University
Press, 1980), pp. 30-33. Ferrell provides definitions and examples of Romanticism and its effects on
funerary behavior. Also see John Conron, American Picturesque, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State
University Press, 2000), for examples of landscape art representing Romanticism.
257 Kleinberg, Women in the United States 1830-1945, pp. 80-81, Booth, Buckeye Women, pp. 152-153,
Martha Pike and Janet Gray-Armstrong, A Time to Mourn, pp. 128-129.
Congregational minister Henry Ward Beecher preached a new approach to salvation, sin, and death in the 1850s. Beecher rejected rigid fundamentalist doctrine which stressed that death was fearful and held terror and judgment in the afterlife. To Beecher, death was a release from pain and suffering in this life and provided a portal to Heaven. Beecher’s vital stance on death invited Christians to mourn gloriously and rejoice because Heaven was a much better place.\(^2\) Traditional views of predestination lost ground to a more sympathetic religious outlook. If humans suffered here on Earth, Heaven must be a better place. Religion reassured people and emphasized preparation for the afterlife. Beecher and other ministers insisted that reunification in Heaven with loved ones was a final reward.\(^3\) Funerals then, no longer symbolized finality and sorrow, but represented an eternal reward in the afterlife. Less frightening and more rewarding, the afterlife and death seemed to take on a new meaning, according to Beecher and the Congregationalists. Progressive interpretations of religion, combined with Romanticism, viewed death as a journey. Mourners grieved the loss of life but celebrated the prospect of reunion. Americans appeared to embrace death, acknowledging its inevitability. The bereaved developed elaborate mourning behavior, not necessarily for the dead, but for the living. Heaven became domestic, and a welcome release from disease and pain on earth.

The excessive mourning behavior of the nineteenth-century contrasted significantly with earlier eras. Although a community event, funeral services were much simpler and less elaborate in the Colonial period. Women functioned as layers of the dead and prepared the body for burial. The coffin was carried to the grave and prayers offered for the deceased. Symbolic tokens such as funerary rings and locks of hair may have been

\(^3\) Nicholas Marshall, “In the Midst of Life we are in Death: Affliction and Religion in Antebellum New York,” p. 179.
given to family members. Effigies representing the death’s head, skeletons, or hour
glasses adorned tombstones. Death was fearful and represented a warning to the living.\footnote{260} Far from a pleasant or comforting thought, death symbolized finality, the unknown, and the inevitable end.

New interpretations of death and mourning emerged in the nineteenth century because of high rates of disease. Society suffered from constant bouts of illness and virulent diseases including measles, typhoid, scarlet fever, and tuberculosis. Americans actually experienced a decline in the overall life expectancy across the country between 1790 and 1860 with most deaths occurring in infancy and childhood.\footnote{261} America suffered from constant intrusions of sickness, premature death, and accidents. Geographic mobility also led to the spread of disease. Mourning was magnified by the other catastrophic historical event, the Civil War. Added to an era of continual sickness was the trauma of war. The Civil War changed customary mourning practices from home and family controlling the funeral, to death on distant battlefields. Constant illness and the ever presence of death consumed the lives of nineteenth century Americans.

Social change, Romanticism, widespread disease, urban growth, and war led to elaborate mourning and funerary behavior. Religious importance and domesticity gave women a leading role in commemorating death. Earth became less comfortable and Heaven idealized to many Americans. Elaborate funerary behavior and mourning customs allowed Americans to express their grief and revel in spirituality and cultural values.\footnote{262} Nineteenth-century Americans chose to embrace and acknowledge death and

\footnote{260} Martha V. Pike and Janice Gray-Armstrong, \textit{A Time to Mourn}, pp. 15-16.  
\footnote{261} Nicholas Marshall, “In the Midst of Life,” pp. 178-179.  
celebrate the process of grieving by performing rituals and ceremonies to commemorate
the deceased and comfort the bereaved. Geauga County residents adopted similar
behavior in their funerary customs.

Historians describe the nineteenth century as the Age of the Beautiful Death. Seemingly Romantic, this attitude permitted loves ones to cope with the horrendous loss of family. The Age of the Beautiful Death required witnesses, conversions, and testimonies confirming a departed person’s spirituality and preparedness. A beautiful death insisted that an individual be surrounded by his/her family and friends. Ideally the person died at home surrounded by a circle of mourners. The dying person gave his/her farewells to the family and onlookers. Death was a spectacle and mourners were to provide evidence that the deceased faithfully honored God before expiring. Deathbed scenes also provided witnesses with examples of how to live their own lives and how to behave. 263

Death was an ever-present fact and nineteenth-century Americans did not ignore it. Instead, they were acutely aware and made every effort to observe deathbed scenes. Details based on observations provided sometimes graphic physiological accounts as well as spiritual preparedness. At a time when medical technology was still in its infancy many graphic descriptions provide details of disease and dying. It was not uncommon to find physical descriptions included in letters, diaries, and journals. Far from being delicate comments, physical ailments were just as common as observing the person’s resignation and attitude toward death. Perhaps these details allowed community members

to share their knowledge about disease rather than simply imparting unsavory information.\textsuperscript{264}

In many ways Geauga County was a microcosm of larger nineteenth-century America and the preoccupation with funerary behavior common throughout the country. Nash’s journal is informative and priceless as a primary source on the topic of death. Emily had an intimacy with death that seems almost casual and factual at times. Death existed as part of daily life. Consequently, it was familiar and normal to most nineteenth century Americans. Emily’s journal teaches us that the sick and infirm were cared for in the home so death was routinely observed. Many of Emily’s journal descriptions are not delicate references, but provide graphic often gruesome pathological details of injuries and diseases. Just as it was important to observe a person’s final moments by a circle of mourners, the cause of death was always provided.

In several journal entries, Emily remarked about tending or visiting sick friends. On one occasion she visited Betsey Hopkins and another she attended Mrs. Lovina Fox. She doubted either woman would recover from palsy or disease. Yet in both instances, Emily firmly stated the women left large circles of mourners to remember them.\textsuperscript{265} The cause of death and disposition of the afflicted were necessary requirements in her entries. In March 1849, a son of Amos Ford was killed when a log rolled over him smashing his vital organs. “He bled to death in a few moments. I went to his funeral to day and Elie Beebe died.” When she was unsure of the cause of death she said so. “I don’t know what ailed [Beebe].”\textsuperscript{266} Emily was present to hear the final words and watch her friends take

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\footnote{266}{Ibid, \textit{Journal}, (1849), p. 63.}
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their last breath. Although Mrs. Kingsbury died of fever, and Mrs. Richards three months later with dropsy, Emily confirmed a large circle of friends awaited their deaths and each woman proclaimed on her death-bed, that she was ready, willing, and prepared.\textsuperscript{267}

It was obvious that many county residents suffered from the unpleasantness of cancer. Emily rarely questioned fate, instead she appeared convinced their reward was peace and a blessed immortality. Sitting vigil by the side of both Lois Lamson and Alba Tinkham (1859), Nash asserted both suffered many months with cancer. The disease “commenced on Tinkham’s lip, eating off the arteries causing him to bleed to death.” Yet despite his pain and discomfort, Emily confirmed, he had a “heavenly smile lighting up his features” when he died.\textsuperscript{268} While observing death was well-defined by Nash, she tells of epidemics and other challenging diseases which afflicted the county in the nineteenth century. From a historical standpoint her entries reveal the overwhelming presence of illness and the reactions to healing, curing, and rituals associated with death. Emily routinely discussed the health status and suffering as a result of lung disease, ague, tuberculosis, fever, smallpox, cancer, and scarlet fever.

Early in 1823 Nash reported an outbreak of “black measles” in the county. Several residents contacted the disease and even Emily’s young nephew died. Emily lamented over the death of her sister’s son in 1824. By 1825 another epidemic ravaged Geauga County. This time dysentery took the lives of several children in Parkman and Burton. One family, the Fairbanks, lost three children and their mother in a period of ten days. From June through August 1825, Nash reported twenty-eight deaths attributed to dysentery. As a young woman, Emily revealed her own personal distress, describing the

\textsuperscript{267} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1855), p. 80.
pain and sorrow felt by survivors and witnessing the devastating effects of disease. In this environment, Emily acknowledged after seeing the wife of Daniel Pratt die of dysentery, “it is hard to die.”

Measles and other epidemics reappeared over several decades in the county. In a two month period, from January 3 to March 3, 1837, Emily recorded a striking array of illnesses and even one suicide. She tended men, women, and children afflicted with measles, lung inflammation, canker rash, and live complications. In this diseased environment, two crucial cultural observations emerge. First Emily Nash and other women in the community rallied to tend, treat, and comfort the sick. In 1823, at the age of seventeen, Nash accompanied her mother Polly Nash cooking and taking care of the younger children in a family wracked by measles. During the 1825 dysentery epidemic, Nash wrote in her journal, “it is a distressing time they are all dying not well ones enough to wait on the sick…people from the town went to help.” Nursing the sick came at a great price. Two entries describe her own exposure to black measles in 1824 and influenza in 1826. Emily complained to her journal after watching a woman die, “I am obliged to doo [sic] the work and wait…I am tired sick, sleepy and discouraged most to death…nobody cares.” She later added, “neither of us working here had our clothes off to go and lie for over a week…I have this day given up and gone to bed and I have been steamed…I am quite sick…we are all sick…I cannot describe it…it is so bad.”

Although the women and girls in town collectively supported the sick, they suffered their own bouts of illness and exposure to virile diseases.

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As unpleasant as these nursing episodes appear they reveal the significance of community action and the importance of female care-giving. The lack of medical knowledge and constant exposure to germs did not deter Emily and other women. Instead of breaking down the social order, disease invited the community to unite and stand together. What is remarkable is the continuation of funerary norms despite the severe interruption of disease. Many historians describe a collapse of death rituals and the absence of traditional mourning behavior. During a particularly virile episode of yellow fever in the late eighteenth century, Philadelphians actually abandoned the sick and many inhabitants fled to the countryside to escape exposure.  

Nash’s second important cultural observation outlined a basic lack of medical knowledge and sometimes the administration of disastrous treatments. Trepanning the skull and crudely removing a limb were common solutions. In an almost casual tone Emily observed, “November 2, 1825 Julia Ann Nash is one year old today and Nathan Lewis had his leg cut off… it was hard for him… farther held the foot while Doctor Erastus Goodwin sawed off the leg.” Even home remedies for illness had dubious results. Emily claimed her life was spared from black measles after drinking a concoction of cider thickened with sheep’s dung and being bled and purged.  

Treatments had few positive results on the afflicted and the medical profession did little to improve the situation. What these examples demonstrate is a powerful reliance on women in the

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community and the dependability of Emily Nash. In the wake of all this disease and
death, Nash found solitude in religion, comforting the sick, and witnessing death.

Christian doctrine insisted a group of watchers or observers witness the imminent
death of a person. Death was social and the circle of mourners provided solace and
reassurance to the afflicted person and his/her family. The individual’s attitude toward
death and Christian behavior assured the living that faith triumphed and Heaven was
waiting as a worthy reward. To be deprived of a death-bed scene and circle of mourners
meant an absence of family and loved ones, and of course no evidence of the deceased’s
preparation and worthiness.275

From the 1830s through the 1860s Emily was personally influenced by historical
and cultural changes in religion, mortality rates, and the Civil War. In 1884, Emily
fearlessly considered death as a “joyful hour” in reconciliation with loved ones.276
Religion and romantic notions of the afterlife served to console and reassure her through
periods of intense despair. Aside from preparing bodies for burial and recording death
notices, Emily kept vigil and witnessed the demise of hundreds of residents ensuring “the
death of the righteous and a Christian departure.”277 In this pervasive setting of death-
bed scenes, Nash reflects the impact of religion on culture and imparts the values and
norms of that era. Her interpretations recreate images of American attitudes toward death.
The romantic model of dying provided satisfaction for those who surrounded the death-
bed. The release from suffering and composure of the dying was witnessed by a circle of
“watchers.” 278 Similar to other nineteenth-century Americans Emily believed that dying

278 Philippe Aries, The Hour of Our Death, p. 449
calmly and peacefully reflected a clean and pure departure of the soul. Emily witnessed victims who suffered considerably but bore their pain with strength and fortitude. “Her confidence in God,” wrote Emily in October 1846, “remained strong to the last moment.” 279 A sweet and calm resignation and giving pleasing evidence to her friends, were common and repetitive phrases used to describe the dying. Friends and family were comforted, if not by the companionship of other mourners, but the reassurance of Christian behavior and the everlasting afterlife for the departed. Bearing witness to death functioned to reassure the console the living. For most of those dying, Emily did not doubt their religiosity or faith. But not everyone gave evidence of a pleasing or beautiful death. Nash recorded many deaths of those who were unprepared or struggled in their final hours. Those who did not die according to expectations served as a warning to others. The emotional comfort and support of the circle of mourners was lacking, but more significantly was the question of preparedness and faith. Many of those who departed quickly or suffered considerably had questionable souls. Emily found reassurance in the examples death provided. When Benjamin Kingsbury died and Betsey Hopkins wasted away with disease, Emily worried anxiously about their souls’ welfare. Although she described them as sinners, Emily does not explain the detraction from religion or the nature of their deviant behavior. If they showed signs of repentance, she felt hopeful. Again, her observations give testimony to the importance of seeing an individual die. Perhaps Emily thought Hopkins and Kingsbury were weak, or gave

unworthy death bed behavior. Whatever her concerns, she recorded their accounts in her 
journal, noting their undesirable behavior.²⁸⁰

On several occasions Nash recorded death bed baptisms. In the case of William 
Burroughs, he asked to be baptized before his death from dropsy. More revealing, Emily 
reported Burrough’s mother in attendance at her son’s death and the baptism served to 
“console her.”²⁸¹ For many of those near death, Emily pitied their obstinate behavior and 
failure to accept religion. They died without hope, or died a sinner without a cleansed 
soul. In her personal journal, Emily’s warning is profound: without religion and 
preparation for death the soul is jeopardized.

In one of the most profound and perplexing death entries, Emily observed and 
recorded her sister-in-law’s demise. Convinced that her brother’s wife Mary Nash was a 
sinner, Emily asserted, “God saw fit to discipline her by a severe and protracted and 
painful sickness.”²⁸² Although she does not explain the nature of her sins, Emily was 
convinced that pain and suffering were used to punish and make an example of Mary 
Nash. Religion serves as a form of social control and by not accepting or even choosing 
to reject the religious norms of the day, Mary Nash suffered the consequences. Emily 
insisted that her sister-in-law was not active in the work of God. Whether she pitied 
Mary, or felt sympathy for her suffering, Emily still recorded her death entry as a 
warning in her journal.

²⁸⁰ Pat Jalland, Death in the Victorian Family, pp. 24-26. Jalland describes the “ideal” death at home, 
peaceful, surrounded by a circle of mourners. Those who did not conform were labeled weak, or 
“unworthy.” The warning to others is especially important and similar to Emily Nash’s entries for those 
who did not “die well.”
Even more controversial was suicide. Surprisingly Emily described at least twelve accounts of suicide in her journal. Suicide challenged nineteenth-century concepts of death because it prevented a circle of mourners and disallowed direct observation. Mourning rules became suspended or violated, along with the assured damnation of the soul. With most of the victims, Emily tried to explain the irrational behavior. She knew the individuals personally and her explanations offered closure. Interestingly, illness, a burden to the family, or soured domestic relationships were the most common reasons provided. Her assessments were not without criticisms as she often referred to the individual as foolish and leaving a family behind to mourn. Nash acknowledged no one was left behind to hear the dying words or provide emotional and spiritual support in the final hours. In only one case did she describe a “witness to suicide.” After Linus Burr fatally shot himself in the woods “his little dog stayed by him to care for him for his master he was a true mourner.”

Her death entries for suicides imply a lesson learned and warning for those who put their souls in jeopardy. Nineteenth-century culture denied a person who took his own life a Christian burial. In fact, the person’s body might be buried outside the cemetery altogether. Traditionally the idea of killing oneself violated the law and allowed even the victim’s heirs to be punished. Often this included a forfeiture of property and land. This form of social control implied an inescapable punishment for the victim. For good reasons many people disguised self-murder to protect the victim and his/her family as well.

Emily never indicated any discernable punishment applied to suicide victims or their families. Similar to Howard Kushner’s analysis of suicide, Emily viewed each case as an unfortunate circumstance, but usually concluded the victim as mentally ill or insane. According to Kushner, this view of suicide slowly changed from outright condemnation of the victim, to trying to understand the circumstances and behavior in the mid to late nineteenth century. A medical model slowly developed, defining suicide as an illness, which required treatment.285 In his study of Schenectady, New York, Robert Wells confirms that a moral explanation for death often supplied reasons for the person’s demise. After 1850, more scientific methods and understanding of medicine helped explained death, including suicide.286 Instead of embracing divine punishment as a plausible reason, Nash accepted illness or other social circumstances as possible explanations. Emily feared the violation of unobserved deaths and dying alone as more tragic than passing judgment on suicide victims.

One of the great fears of a nineteenth century death was to die alone, or experience a solitary death without a circle of mourners present. The witnesses’ job was to confirm that a “beautiful death” occurred.287 Naturally Emily felt distressed when she could not attend a death-bed scene herself, or witness a person’s demise. Even as a young lady, she lamented over not being able to attend a funeral because of domestic responsibilities. It was proper etiquette to mourn with the family. This became a grave concern especially later in her life when Emily found it difficult to travel because of her physical disabilities or impairments. If she could not attend as a mourner, she did her best to pay last respects at the funeral.

286 Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 36-37.
When the Reverend Charles G. Finney died in Oberlin, Ohio, in 1876, Emily commented about mourners visiting from as far away as New York. One man arrived to the funeral too late and Finney’s body was already lowered into the ground. The gentleman persuaded the sexton to open the coffin so he might have the pleasure of seeing the great preacher one last time. His request was granted and the mourner confirmed Finney’s face appeared “cheerful and lovely” in death. The visitor was satisfied with this display. As morbid as her account sounds, it serves to confirm the importance of witnessing death and seeing the body at the moment of expiration.

In one of the most heart-wrenching entries in her voluminous journal, Emily documented the unexpected death of her only child, Philansia Patchin Holcomb in December 1879. The shock of her child’s death is apparent, but more revealing was her concern and questions about who attended her death-bed, or witnessed her daughter’s demise. Afraid that Philansia died without the traditional circle of mourners, she also feared no one would be left to comfort her when she died. Following tradition, she hoped Philansia would live to see her laid to rest and comfort her in her time of need. Philansia married Martin Holcomb and moved to Michigan in 1855. Although mother and daughter visited on several occasions, Philansia’s death was unexpected and devastated Emily.

Later that year Emily took some consolation in knowing that her daughter was “beried [sic] decently” and her sermon was preached by a Congregational minister. It would be two years later when Emily received a visit from Mrs. Levi Ford of Michigan, that she learned the grim details of Philansia’s death. Mrs. Ford witnessed Philansia Holcomb’s sudden illness and death in December 1879 and assured the journalist that

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“she died a Christian.” In addition, Nash received a package of her daughter’s mementoes and tokens of remembrance. Emily treasured the objects but also savored the knowledge that Philansia died among friends and protocol was indeed followed.\textsuperscript{290} Still Emily grieved with a mother’s tears about not seeing her daughter die, nor her grave in Michigan. Every anniversary of Philansia’s death Emily proclaimed her desire to see the grave. The fear of dying alone was becoming reality. By 1880, Emily buried her third husband and now her daughter. Although she had three grandchildren and a son-in-law, all resided in Michigan. Well into her seventies, Emily’s anxiety and fear of a solitary death resounded in her journal.

The protocol and proper etiquette of funerary behavior was well established and engrained in nineteenth-century American culture. Emily Nash was very aware of traditions and customs associated with local funerals. Once a death occurred a number of actions immediately began. The circle of mourners left the house and Emily commenced laying out the body. Because of her childhood training in sewing and weaving, she often fashioned “grave clothes” for the deceased.\textsuperscript{291} As a young woman Emily already had experience in laying out the dead. One of the principal concerns of nineteenth-century funerary behavior was the appearance of the corpse. Working in the decades before scientific embalming was standard, Emily attempted to display the body so it looked life-like, serene, and content. Corpses needed to look as alive as possible in an attempt to ease or comfort relatives and friends.\textsuperscript{292} She shaved the face, styled the hair, closed the eyes and made the person look asleep so the family could gaze upon the remains for one last

\textsuperscript{291} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1835), p. 46.
time. Sometimes alone, or accompanied by a friend or relative, Emily washed, dressed, and positioned the body in a coffin likely made by a local carpenter or cabinetmaker.

A young Emily credits her father in crafting wooden coffins for residents upon settling in Geauga County. Even her younger brother Alden continued the family tradition by building wooden coffins to certain sizes and dimensions.\textsuperscript{293} Coffins were made with sliding doors or removable panels allowing mourners to view the body. Relatives and friends kept vigil over the dead for perhaps three days while visitors came to pay their respects. During this time, family members kept “wake” over the body, in part out of respect and also to ensure that the person was truly dead.\textsuperscript{294} Since most of Emily’s writing occurred before the development of chemical embalming, artificial means such as vinegar and antiseptics were employed to preserve the body and slow natural decay. Emily even described blocks of ice placed under the coffin during warmer weather to slow decomposition. The body was moved to a parlor or room in the house where visitors could pay their respects, visit, and socialize. It was customary to hold religious services in the home or perhaps at the graveside. A marked distinction of funerals in nineteenth-century America was holding visitation and prayer services in the home, not a church. Over time, this behavior changed when professional morticians and undertakers assumed the responsibility of preparing bodies. The funeral industry emerged in the late nineteenth century and the behavior of undertakers led to a more anonymous preparation and tending of the dead. In Emily’s day, death was very visible and mourners expected to see and perhaps touch the body. Just as it was important to watch a person

\textsuperscript{293} Nash, *Journal*, (1841), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{294} Laderman, *The Sacred Remains*, p. 31.
die, so too was it to see the individual composed in his/her coffin. Emily provided that necessary closure for the family before the body was interred.295

Death was a gendered experience for women and men. When a woman was widowed she lost social status, and economic support. Women were commonly associated with their husband’s position in society. His death created a dubious and troubling situation. Even Emily used only formal titles for married women in her journal. She described women in terms of their family position and status in marriage. Few, if any first names were ever provided and individual identity for women is lacking. For a woman to lose her husband meant a loss in status and little opportunity or hope of employment. Most widows readily sought remarriage, especially if they had children. Widowed men on the other hand, chose to remarry to maintain a functioning household. Female labor in the home entailed considerable chores, child-care, and domestic responsibilities. Living in rural Geauga County, a widower found it next to impossible to successfully farm and run a household especially if he had children. He needed and often depended on a wife and stepmother to care for his offspring.296

Widowhood was lonely and unsettling for Emily. Although she benefitted from employment, her physical ailments and deterioration caused concern. For a woman to remain single, even in Geauga County was rather unusual. On two occasions Emily complained about her financial state. In the year after her first husband David Patchin died, Emily’s brother-in-law, George, served as administrator for her estate. He sold most of her land and property. Emily cried after all was sold, “things go for a verry little less

295 Robert Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 48-49
than half price I think.”\textsuperscript{297} She could not depend on her husband’s estate to support her
and her daughter. Toward the end of her life Emily angrily denounced a local
businessman, Chester Lamb, in her journal. She accused Lamb of defrauding her out of
property and forcing her to rely on charity from her neighbors in order to survive. Despite
Lamb’s unsavory business practices, Emily continued to live on her own small farm and
property in Troy. Interestingly, Emily had enough resources to continue living
independently despite her disabilities and losing most of her property. At one point she
reported in her journal of “making an effort to get a tomb stone while I live.” Childless, a
widow for the third time and family far away, she feared no one would bother after she
died. More revealing, she expected the grave stone to be costly and contently lived on
less until it was paid for.\textsuperscript{298}

Emily sustained herself through funeral and mourning preparations. She never
indicates how much she earned or received, but she did live alone most of her adult life.
She earned enough income to joke, “if I put my money into a tomb stone people cannot
borrow it and not pay me when I ask for it as thy have done in days past.”\textsuperscript{299} Of course it
seems logical that her occupation and nineteenth century funerary tradition pre-disposed
her toward her own preparation for death. But the comment also indicates that she had
enough of a disposable income for others to borrow money from a widow and apparently
not pay it back.

Proper protocol called for an extended mourning period for the deceased.
However, the length of mourning depended on a person’s position and status in the
family. Lengthy grieving periods may have been proper and even fashionable in

\textsuperscript{297} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1840), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid, \textit{Journal}, (1859), 174-175.
nineteenth-century America, but hardly practical in Geauga County. Residents of the county were quick to remarry, often within months of burying a spouse. Shocked by this callous behavior, Emily criticized her neighbors for not observing a longer mourning period. Her father, John Nash, married the widow Hannah Pettis to Stephen Carnady in October 1826 just one month to the day after Pettis’ husband perished. Emily wondered in her journal, “how can anyone forget their companion so soon?” It was a question she would write many times over the years. Pat Jalland describes a sense of fear, destitution, and dislocation felt by many widowed women in the mid nineteenth century. Often their state of despair left them without financial security and many women faced a feeling of helplessness as well as grief for their loss. Remarriage became an obvious solution for widowed women and men. Since Nash prepared most of the individuals for burial, she was struck by the apparent ease in which people resumed roles and positions once again in society. She earnestly hoped the deceased was not forgotten. Never without a comment or opinion, Emily sarcastically recorded John Welsh’s third marriage shortly after burying his second wife in 1858. “He is rather hard on wives,” she affirmed. She buried his two previous spouses.

Although critical of immediate remarriage, Emily understood why this occurred. Most women were economically dependent on their husbands, so the more marriages “the fewer widows left in town.” In several entries she hoped that the children would be cared for and consoled by a new mother. Nash understood blended families mended the domestic unit both emotionally and economically. In many cases remarriage occurred

between in-laws. A sibling assumed care of her sister’s children and became a “good mother to them” by marrying her widowed brother-in-law.\textsuperscript{303} Emily’s entries and descriptions provide evidence that death affected the entire community. Remarriage was an opportunity and option where both sides were compensated. Extended mourning may have been preferable, but necessity prevailed.

Other traditions common in American funerary rites were popular in Geauga County. Because the deceased was cared for at home, death was a familiar and common event occurring within households. Close knit families and community ties meant death was a “social event.” The community mourned the loss together. Mourners, especially family members were identified symbolically by performing certain rituals and appropriate customs.

Whether in Geauga County, New York City, or Schenectady, nineteenth-century America required a complex set of rules for mourning closely followed by observers. Arbitrary time limits existed for mourning. Women experienced more restrictions than men. Wives were expected to mourn and grieve their husbands at least a year. Proper etiquette restricted female behavior and social activities. She was permitted to attend church but not engage in festive activities for her year of mourning. Requirements for grieving husbands were less restrictive. Men rarely had the luxury of mourning for a full year because of their economic responsibilities. Widows were expected to be demure and discreet when visited by friends. Because they lived more public lives, men were excused from the prolonged mourning period. Women benefitted from the period of confinement because their position and status was observed by the community. Serving as a role

model and keeper of manners and morals, women received respect and sympathy from others. Her behavior honored the dead and in doing so, demanded respect by society.\textsuperscript{304}

**Visible Expressions of Grief**

Visible expressions of grief and mourning were very common. The transformation of clothing and wearing certain colors symbolically represented the nineteenth century obsession with funerary behavior. Emily frequently mentions a new set of clothing sewn for the deceased. The corpse was dressed in his/her best clothing preparing them for a journey. The symbolic meaning of special clothes implies a new beginning and the nineteenth century association with death as a passage or journey.\textsuperscript{305}

The transformation of clothing and colors applied to the living as well. The purpose of mourning-wear reminded the community a death occurred and separated the mourner from his/her surroundings. A physical alteration required different clothing and social behavior. Mourning rituals applied to colors of clothing and signified the bereaved “mourned well” by following tradition. For the first year of deep mourning a widow wore dark black. Funeral crepe was the most common fabric, along with silk or cotton. Lusterless materials without shine were the most prominent fabrics. Outfits were modest, ankle-length, and practical. The message was very clear, he or she was not available for social activities. Decked in mourning garments, the widow wore a veil covering her face. Black clothing and a veil created a physical barrier between the mourner and the rest of society. Other accessories accompanied her ensemble including black handkerchiefs, jewelry, and gloves. After a year, a widow’s costume changed from deep mourning to

\textsuperscript{304} Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors,* pp. 58-59.
lighter shades of black or grey. If she was older, a widow might wear black for the rest of her life. Certain fabrics and styles for mourning wear were chosen for practical as well as durable reasons. Advertisements for dresses, bonnets, and veils were found in national and local newspapers and magazines. Even widows could appear fashionable in the latest funerary attire.\textsuperscript{306}

Robert Wells discovered that articles appeared in Schenectady newspapers advertising mourning wear. He noted from the 1840s on, dresses and other mourning attire became the height of fashion and different styles were advertised. Businesses sold expensive fabrics and high-quality crepes and garments mostly to a female clientele.

What Wells identifies and Nash confirms, is the importance of mourning attire to the community. People dressed in specific clothing to indicate a state of mourning. As a comparison, Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wealthy wife of a U.S. Senator and Confederate officer from South Carolina, described the outfit she purchased for her mother-in-law’s funeral. Mrs. Chesnut’s mother-in-law died on March 15, 1864. The mourning outfit included a “black alpaca dress and a crepe veil.” An ornate and elaborate ensemble, a black bonnet and gloves were added totaling $500. The excessive, inflated prices were certainly due to the Civil War and scarcity of resources. More importantly, Mrs. Chesnut wanted to dress appropriately, even at a great cost. She complained about “paper money depreciating so much in value” that it was worthless. Even southerners tried to follow tradition and observe proper mourning behavior.\textsuperscript{307}


Although not expected to mourn extensively as a widow, men also had distinctive clothing to indicate death. Men's hats were adorned with a ribbon of black crepe or a "weed" of dead foliage to signify his state of grief. In addition, men wore black arm bands made from crepe designed to accompany the hat. On occasion, Emily mentioned funeral attire and grave clothes. She does not, however, provide details of color or shades associated with levels of mourning. Because of its rural nature, strict rules of etiquette regarding fashion may not have been closely observed in Geauga County. Although mourning behavior was quite elaborate and proper etiquette expected, it is hardly surprising or even practical that an extended mourning period was adhered to by Emily and other residents.

Homes also contained symbols and colors representing mourning behavior. Since most funerals were held at home, black crepe bows or wreathes were hung in the doorway. The use of funeral flowers was relatively unknown until the death of clergyman Henry Ward Beecher in 1887. Beecher insisted that flowers were more appropriate at funerals because they symbolized rebirth and celebration. Eventually funeral flower arrangements became popular replacing the somber gloom of black crepe and wreathes.

In the 1820s and 1830s Emily described farm wagons functioning as hearses used to transport the body to the grave. Coffins were routinely crafted by shape and size depending on the individual. It was not uncommon for a child to be carried on a pillow placed on the front of a saddle. Emily reported the death of her infant brother Edwin Nash in 1814. The child struggled several weeks before perishing in December 1814. His

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309 Habenstein, American Funeral Directing, p. 420.
tiny body was placed in a coffin and carried on horseback to his grave in the woods. Funeral hearses were more common by the late 1860s. Regalia included plumed black horses, often adorned with crepe. Specialized wagons, or funerary hearses, emerged as undertaking became a commercial enterprise in the late nineteenth century. As late as 1884, Emily described as many as ninety horse-drawn carriages used to transport the body of a wealthy local man to the cemetery. When Emily died in February 1888, her son-in-law paid fifty dollars for her “casket, robe, and hearse.” She was transported to the Troy Cemetery by a horse-drawn hearse.\footnote{Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1814), p. 9, (1884), p. 204, Probate Records, p. 130 Drawer 34, “The will of Emily Pike” stored at the Chardon Public Library, Genealogy Room.}

Clearly death was a constant concern to nineteenth-century society and Emily Nash. Death held a central place in society. Both public and private mourning and expressions of grief were displayed through clothing and other visible symbols. The need to keep the memory of the deceased alive led to a variety of items and mementos associated with funerary behavior. The home became the theater to display mementos and objects of remembrance. On a national level, mourning-art was mass produced by Currier and Ives in the form of prints and lithographs.\footnote{P.G Buckley, “Truly we Live in a Dying World: Mourning on Long Island,” in \textit{A Time to Mourn}, p. 123.} The desire to maintain a memory and even physical description of the deceased led to posthumous portraits. In the age before photography, death portraits became a popular method for grieving families to remember their child or loved one. Often commissioned during the funeral, posthumous portraits were part of nineteenth century funerary behavior. Sometimes drawings or sketches of the deceased were taken shortly after death. Portraits rendered an exact likeness of the person, including hair style and clothing. Posthumous paintings contained symbols subtly associated with death. Roses drooping or a broken stem meant a life cut
short. Water evoked a symbol of a journey or passage to another life. Watches or clocks signified the hour of death or passage of time. Other symbols found in mourning art included arrows and doves which represented emotional pain, the setting sun symbolized resurrection, and even ivy and other flowers for symbols of immortality and remembrance. Posthumous art not only memorialized the deceased but helped preserve memories for future generation. Sometimes more personal items and distinctive mourning objects were crafted. Hair wreathes, mourning lockets and special jewelry was fashioned from a loved one’s hair. Items could be worn or displayed in the home as a memento. Hair became a popular symbol, often worn in jewelry, symbolizing remembrance. Mourners could wear their loved one’s hair as a constant reminder of the deceased and since hair did not decompose it was considered immortal.

Keeping the memory of her loved ones alive was especially important to Emily. Some forty years after the death of her beloved first husband David Patchin, Emily wrote tributes to him. Each year Emily commemorated her daughter Philansia Patchin Holcomb with a similar memorial message. Emily did not forget and her journal served as a written testimony to her family. She treasured personal items belonging to her daughter including a lock of her hair taken on her death bed in 1879. These “tokens of remembrance” were precious to Nash and kept memories alive.

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312 Phoebe Lloyd, “Posthumous Mourning Portraiture,” in A Time to Mourn, pp. 72-75, Sonia A. Bedikian, p. 40. Although Emily Nash did not write specifically about mourning portraits, many can be found at Century Village and are on display in the nineteenth century homes.
Romanticism and Spiritualism

Nineteenth-century Romanticism focused on nature, humanity, and God. The Romantic view of death encouraged people to consider it as a natural occurrence and accept the process as a transition. James Ferrell refers to the Romantic view of death as "civilizing" or "domesticating" the event. Many Americans tried to comprehend death and make it less terrifying. Part of the nineteenth-century Romantic ethos included spiritualism and communicating with the dead. This controversial and popular movement aimed at proving the souls’ immortality and giving hope to the living. Spiritualism attracted the wealthy, middle-class, educated, men and women through séances and lectures. Many people eagerly joined because they felt oppressed by traditional religions. The movement attempted to communicate with the dead, providing evidence of life after death. Interestingly, many female reformers engaged in séances and actively supported the Spiritualist movement in America. Ann Braude’s book posits since women gained new leadership roles in churches, then their positions and support of spiritualism intertwined concepts of death, religion, and Romanticism. Spiritualism became an outlet for women already involved in reform movements. Braude identified an overlap of women’s rights, leadership in the churches, and spiritualism. A number of prominent men and women actively attended séances and became involved in the movement. William Lloyd Garrison, Gerrit Smith, Susan B. Anthony, and Betsy Mix Cowles all experimented with the phenomenon. R. Laurence Moore supports Braude’s view on the leadership positions played out by women and connections between spiritualism and

315 Ferrell, Inventing the American Way of Death, pp. 30-34.
317 Ibid, pp. 3-6.
reform ideas. Moore also identified the similarities between the revivals of the nineteenth century and the Spiritualist movement. Those who attended revivals and séances sought meaningful answers in understanding life, religion, and death. Revivals, like séances challenged traditional, orthodox religions. Both revivals and séances aroused emotions, and passions, while attempting to explain immortality. Braude and Moore both saw the Spiritualist movement as an extension of women’s activities and social reforms stemming from active participation in religion.

Influenced by the Spiritualist movement, Betsy Mix Cowles attended several séances. From her letters, Cowles appeared to have an open mind about the after-life and psychic phenomena. Betsy sought answers that perhaps traditional religion could not address. In several letters, Cowles remained skeptical of the outcome, but continued to attend séances in Ravenna, Cleveland, and Massillon, Ohio in the 1850s.

Spiritualists attracted opposition to their beliefs and practices. Some members were criticized because their methods seemed antithetical to Christianity, and attempted to make faith or religion scientific. Other critics charged spiritualists with blasphemy. Not surprising, Emily Nash commented negatively on a spiritualist meeting held in Auburn on July 4, 1858. Far from the open-minded opinions and actions of Cowles, Nash sarcastically remarked that she expected many people to attend the meeting, mostly out of curiosity. She ridiculed the Spiritualists in a long passage, by stating, “they will most likely slander God.” Devoutly religious, Emily warned about the spiritualists and claimed

their behavior violated “the church and cause of Christ.” Unlike Cowles, Nash rejected the possibility of communicating with the dead. However other aspects of Romanticism definitely influenced Nash, such as the rural cemetery movement and new gravestone designs.

During the nineteenth -century, the English and later Americans developed a concept of picturesque and beautifully pastoral landscapes focusing on nature and Romanticism. This movement emphasized nature and beauty while rejecting urbanization and industry. Death transformed into something beautiful, memorable and became a reason to celebrate. In many ways Romanticism began as a reaction against the destruction of nature. By the 1830s America underwent a transformation in establishing new cemeteries and elaborate burial grounds. This same process occurred in Geauga County. Closely associated with Romanticism and the “age of the beautiful death,” the rural or garden-park cemetery movement began. The origins of the garden park cemetery developed in England and France in the late eighteenth -century.

Traditionally, bodies were buried in the churchyard or village graveyard. The tremendous increase in population by the early nineteenth century, however, led to limited space and over-crowded conditions in church graveyards. The practical solution to properly burying the dead was the creation of cemeteries on the out-skirts of towns. Sprawling burial grounds like London’s Kensal Green and Paris’ Pere La Chaise offered a variety of resting places and architectural styles. Kensal Green served as a cemetery away from the expanding metropolis, aesthetically pleasing as a rustic park replete with Gothic and neo-

classical monuments. Paris experienced the same problems with an expanding urban population in the early nineteenth-century. Pere La Chaise resembled a rural park and garden rather than a cemetery. While it accommodated the dead, it also served as a park-like environment for the living.

Not surprisingly, New England experienced the same problems and dilemmas associated with urbanization and health hazards with its churchyard burials. By 1831, Boston established Mount Auburn Cemetery replacing the archaic church burial grounds within the city. Mount Auburn was the American prototype of the rural or garden cemetery in nineteenth-century America. Mount Auburn set a precedent with its garden design and an alternative to the over-crowding and unhealthy conditions in Boston. At the same time the garden cemetery movement offered the living a place of escape, or a diversion from death by attracting attention to the beautiful landscaping and monuments. The garden cemetery movement had additional benefits for the living. Romanticism described burial grounds as a place of reunion for families. The finality of death was tempered by the notion of a joyful reunion in the afterlife. Garden cemeteries provided a lovely landscaped park and resting place among friends and relatives.

Another advantage offered by Mount Auburn and mimicked in other nineteenth-century cemeteries was the appeal to all social classes. The Second Great Awakening embraced the middle class, farmers, and business owners. They could purchase plots and share the same space, cultural experiences and privilege in burial as the elite. Anyone

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323 Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein, editors, Mortal Remains: Death in Early America, p. 5, 10-14.
325 Ferrell, Inventing the American Way of Death, pp. 104-106.
who could afford to do so could purchase a plot at Mount Auburn.\textsuperscript{326} This view on equality in death applied to Geauga County cemeteries. There is no distinguishable separation of social classes or indication of rank. Families and relations tended to be buried near each other, but no lines of segregation are determined.

By the mid 1830s additional American cities created versions of garden park cemeteries, Green Wood Cemetery in New York, and Laurel Hill in Philadelphia emphasized the Romantic natural setting. Between 1831 and 1865 most eastern American cities boasted of at least one rural garden cemetery, a testimony to the movement’s popularity. Even the name “grave yard” or church yard was replaced in vocabulary with necropolis or cemetery, referring to a resting place rather than a place of disposal.\textsuperscript{327}

Many Ohio cemeteries adopted similar themes of comfortable resting places for the dead. Cleveland’s famous Lake View Cemetery founded in 1869, resembled the model necropolis’ of Europe and New England. The cemetery is known for its elaborate architecture and Romantic designs. Even Emily acknowledged the prominence of the cemetery when slain President James A. Garfield was laid to rest there in 1881.\textsuperscript{328} Not unlike other rural areas, Geauga’s earliest burials were in a person’s yard or homestead. It was not unusual for entire families to be buried on their own property. While her father made the coffin and Emily laid out the body, a funeral service was held at home and the body interred on the farm.

Each of Geauga’s sixteen townships established one or more cemeteries between 1824 and 1870. Presently, most of the townships have between three to five established cemeteries. The earliest cemetery in Burton resulted when local farmer and businessman

\textsuperscript{326} French, “The Cemetery as a Cultural Institution,” p. 77.
\textsuperscript{327} Ferrell, Inventing the American Way of Death, pp. 111-112.
\textsuperscript{328} Nash, Journal, (1881), p. 188.
Simon Rose deeded acres for a burial ground in March 1824.\textsuperscript{329} Burton’s Lower Cemetery, sometimes called Fox Cemetery contains graves of the area’s oldest pioneers and first settlers. In addition, Geauga County also contains sixty-nine burials of Revolutionary War veterans, several found in the Lower Cemetery.

Emily was well aware of at least three established cemeteries in her lifetime because she mentions attending services, or visiting graves at each of them. Burton’s Lower Cemetery and Welton, founded in 1854 along with Troy Township Cemetery contain some of the earliest burials in the county. Emily’s own parents, siblings, and two of her three husbands are buried in the Troy Township Cemetery. As she aged, Emily often noted that many of her friends were all buried in the “same yard” supporting the Romantic notion of a common resting place so important in the Age of the Beautiful Death.\textsuperscript{330} Her comments are indicative of friends sharing common ground and little regard given to social class.

Geauga’s cemeteries developed with the same intention as the elaborate garden park cemeteries in urban areas. Set in forested, sometimes isolated locations, they resembled the picturesque designs of the eastern cemeteries. One characteristic central to nineteenth century cemeteries found locally was the unique designs, memorials, and tombstones associated with graves. Gravestones were unique because of the Romantic, sentimental influences found in designs. A marked contrast to the somber, often frightening skull and cross-bones or death’s heads on eighteenth-century tombstones, nineteenth-century designs became more elaborate and detailed emphasizing Spiritualism and rebirth in Christian death. Honed from slate, granite, marble, sandstone, quartzite, or

\textsuperscript{329} Geauga County Historical Society, \textit{Pioneer History}, p. 400.
\textsuperscript{330} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1879), p. 177.
other local material, gravestones were created by stonecutters and sold them to residents. Style and designs on headstones were a product of Romanticism and the Age of the Beautiful Death just as elaborate burials and symbolism associated with funerary behavior. New styles, motifs, and meaning became fashionable adorning nineteenth century cemeteries.

One of the best comparisons and discussions of gravestone styles is by Robert Wells in his book *Facing the King of Terrors*. Wells used Schenectady, New York for his research and found that rapid and comprehensive changes in gravestones took place throughout the nineteenth century. Although a much more urban center, Schenectady has many connections and similarities to rural Geauga County and its townships. Wells discovered marble became the stone of choice by mid nineteenth century. The stone was easily cut and very bright, making it especially popular among residents. Many of the mid-nineteenth century stones found in Geauga cemeteries are made from the same material. The skull and cross bones and deaths’ heads are conspicuously missing after 1800 from Schenectady grave motifs. The urn and willow became the most popular style, as it was in Geauga County. Wells reasoned the preference for more stylized pictures on gravestones rather than words allowed for public symbols and easy identification of the theme. Freer expressions and simple designs declared a state of mourning to the public. Images on gravestones became more universal and displayed eloquent examples of mourning. Tombstones and styles reflect Romanticism and emphasize the pain felt by the living and the loss of a loved one. Stones also serve to remind society that the dead were not forgotten by the living.331

331 Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, pp. 61-65.
Many Geauga tombstones resemble designs and styles common in the East. Because the Western Reserve had a strong New England connection, styles of willow trees, urns, and garland are also found on Ohio tombstones. One of the earliest gravestones representing the New England connection belonged to Jacob Welsh who died in 1822 and is buried in Troy Cemetery. His unique stone contains carved images of a winged-cherub representing the soul-effigy. The Welshes originated in Boston, where designs of this kind were very common in the late eighteenth-century. Popular throughout Massachusetts, the winged cherub emphasized the soul leaving the body and connection between the living and the dead. This concept demonstrates a clear relationship between Romanticism and new perceptions of death and the afterlife so important to nineteenth century mourning behavior. Many styles diffused from New England to Ohio with pioneers settling in the Western Reserve. Before dying from consumption Emily explained that Mr. Welsh asked to be buried “up on the hill.” His grave is one of the first in Troy Township Cemetery. Located just outside the town, the cemetery and many tombstone designs resemble monuments found in the East. It appears that Western Reserve pioneers sought to replicate many aspects of their former New England homes. Similar to the Troy Cemetery, Fox Cemetery in Burton has a rural plan design and stones representing Christian symbolism emphasizing nineteenth-century funerary behavior. Fox contains many examples of social status, directly related to gravestone markers. The Fox family was prominent in Burton in the mid-nineteenth-century. Family

332 Geauga County Historical Society, Pioneer and General History, pp. 504-505. There is a brief history of Geauga’s early cemeteries in the Pioneer History.

members are buried close together in one location within the grounds. Each tomb marker is an identical classical obelisk fashioned from granite. There are perhaps six markers still standing today. The style, size and appearance of the obelisks create an impressive and monumental message of the family’s importance.

Throughout the nineteenth century gravestones became more personalized in nature and mirrored the same trends reflected in Nash’s death entries. By the 1830s there was a tendency to emphasize a person’s achievements and individual talents. The “common man” noted for his occupation and contributions to society occasionally appeared in published obituaries. Emily reflects this trend in her death notices, offering remarks about moral character and church affiliation. Gravestone designs also represented this trend in emphasizing individuality. Ornamentation on stones contain many examples of symbolism important to the culture of that era. Masonic designs, military trappings, and fraternal associations were popular emblems found in the oldest Geauga cemeteries. Few, if any headstones for women indicate an occupation outside the home. The most common epitaph for married women was the “wife of.” By nineteenth-century standards women were an appendage of their husband.

The use of warning inscriptions and frightening symbols on tombstones all but disappeared by the early nineteenth-century. Indicative of this softening of attitudes toward death is the epitaph of Abi Fowler who died in 1824. Her stone reads, “Sleep on dear with angels, take your rest, God called you home when he thought best.” 334 Less harsh and severe, this epitaph like many others found in Fox Cemetery, exemplifies a rural resting ground for the deceased and the hope of unification in the afterlife.

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334 Stone Inscription from Burton Lower Cemetery. There are numerous legible inscriptions similar to the one above.
Geauga tombstones also have a remarkable array of the most popular nineteenth-century symbolism. A common stylized motif that has symbolic significance dating back to the ancient Sumerians is the tree of life. New Englanders incorporated this symbol onto gravestones, followed later by settlers in Ohio. Often shown with branches spreading, the tree indicates growth, re-birth, and even paradise. Interestingly, the tree of life was standard in eighteenth-century Massachusetts towns near Emily’s birth place.\textsuperscript{335} Flowers, conifers, and garlands are also common designs adorning Geauga tombstones. Blooming flowers or epitaphs flanked by garland symbolize the Resurrection. Garlands represent victory over death. Sometimes the meaning of the symbol is obscure, or not obvious to the viewer. However, most symbols contain biblical and historical references.\textsuperscript{336}

The most popular nineteenth-century symbol adorning gravestones was the urn and willow. Embellishing hundreds of tombstones throughout the county, the urn and willow symbolizes a container (urn) to hold the bodily remains and the willow, earthly sorrow and human sadness at the loss of a loved one. The urn and willow became even more familiar because of the Civil War. Since bodies were often not returned for burial, the urn and willow motif represented an empty grave. Only the memory of a person resided with in the grave. The actual body was far from home. Even among popular symbols and obvious interpretations, such as a broken tree or a stump, (life cut short), or an open Bible, there are occasionally unusual depictions. Lemuel Punderson’s gravestone is adorned with a large hand pointing upward. A rare design, it simply means “gone

\textsuperscript{336} Ibid, p. 148.
home,” or the hand of God is righteous. Christian symbols, mainly lambs, broken columns, drapery and urns continued to be used in local cemeteries.\footnote{337} The imagery of gravestone art constantly changed and modified over the span of the nineteenth century. Tombstones were the last example of material culture viewed by the public representing the process of death and mourning. Situated in lovely, groomed, park cemeteries, the dead continued to be honored by their loved ones. Aside from the very popular urn and willow, two other universal stone designs were used copiously in Geauga cemeteries. Egyptian and or classical Greek designs, including columns, pyramids, and obelisks became fashionable. Inspired by romantic ideas of the past, the adoption of these symbols and architectural styles show a shift to more impersonal and mass-produced stones. Although elegant and refined, the classical styles did not have the detailed specialized appearance associated with the religious styles. Less symbolism and interpretation allowed for a more businesslike, impartial semblance of tombstones.\footnote{338}

Emily’s own tombstone monument which she personally chose, is a large Egyptian-style granite obelisk. Paying at least $225 for the monument, it represents a classical romantic connection to antiquity and holds the graceful beauty of a slender column. Emily’s choice in a tombstone was a popular design in the late nineteenth century, devoid of excessive personal or individuality so common with earlier mid-century stones. Her classical obelisk is inscribed with her name, her first husband, and third husband.\footnote{339} It is difficult to determine just how much a grave plot and tombstone cost in nineteenth-century Geauga County. Other than purchasing her own stone, Emily

\footnote{338} Sloane, \textit{The Last Great Necessity}, pp. 77-80.  
provided few clues. Robert Wells explained graves were dug by the church sexton at a cost of $1.75. If the body had to be stored before burial, there was another charge of approximately .75 cents. Single graves sold for about $7.00 for an adult in Schenectady, and only $4.00 for a child. Once again, Wells’ study of Schenectady proves a useful comparison to Geauga County.

**Conclusion**

Nineteenth-century America experienced excessive mourning behavior and an inescapable preoccupation with funerals and death. Death was tangible and addressed through specialized rituals, art, attire, ceremonies, and funerary paraphernalia. Americans did not deny death, but embraced it, developing ways to understand and rationalize the inevitable. Emily’s writing explains that death was a public event and residents of the county expected to witness death and survivors grieve together. Grief was displayed in very sentimental ways. Whether comforting the family, memorializing the dead, or creating stylized tombstones, Geauga residents mourned well. Emily’s experiences reflect a larger nineteenth century American preoccupation with funerary behavior and mourning rites. For most of her life, Emily Nash faithfully served her community as a layer of the dead and witnessed the demise of hundreds of residents, ensuring a worthy and proper funeral.

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340 Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, p. 70, 120-121.
CHAPTER 4: NOT A “GOOD DEATH”

“There is rumors of war about these days people talk of nothing but the national troubles about dividing the union on account of slavery.” Emily Nash January 3, 1861.342

Introduction

In June 1859 Emily Nash entered her first passage about the impending Civil War in her journal concluding that “judgment came upon us for our national sins one thing is certain not a sparrow falls to the ground without your farther [father] says.”343 This passage would be the prelude to the next six years and thirty two pages of her thoughts, hopes, and expectations on the struggle between the North and South. Emily’s journal serves as a portal and she the window of rapid social change in nineteenth-century America. She describes funerary customs and behavior common in the century associated with the Second Great Awakening and Romanticism. Her world quickly altered with the Civil War and deaths occurring far from home on distant battlefields. Consciously aware of the disruptions in society and her own community, Emily illustrates the era in her own words. Nash’s journal is especially important and unique because she lived through the Civil War, documented historic events, and provides a female perspective on laying out the dead. She personally knew the soldiers described in her journal and attests to rapid changes effecting funerary behavior in nineteenth century America.

The Civil War profoundly altered the concepts and meanings of death in nineteenth -century America. Discussions on Ohio’s contributions include resources, manpower, and motivation for fighting. James M. McPherson, Noah A. Trudeau, John David Smith, and Versalle F. Washington are leading scholars on Civil War soldiers and

U.S. Colored Troops. Eric Foner and Stephen Maizlish offer insight into Ohio’s political role, attitudes toward race, and general economic development on the eve of the Civil War. Eric Dean and Reid Mitchell address the emotional and psychological consequences of the war and the reactions to battle. These historians recognize that in order to provide a complete picture of events and attitudes, it is important to include morale and an understanding of why soldiers chose to enlist. Joseph A. Frank, George Reaves, Earl J. Hess and Pete Masolowski recognize the effects of war on the individuals and consequences for society. All of these perspectives and interpretations help define Emily Nash’s attitudes toward the war and the relationship between civilians and soldiers.

For Nash, the Civil War ushered in permanent changes regarding witnessing death and laying out bodies for burial. Her experiences and views sharply contrast with those of Drew Gilpin Faust and the concept of the “good death.” Gary Laderman and Robert Habenstein emphasize the changing attitudes toward death as a result of war and bodies

left on battlefields. Nash’s observations on the Civil War challenge prevailing theorists and contemporary historiographic information. Nash provides an original interpretation of the Civil War.

Twenty-first century historians, Susan Mary Grant, William Blair, David Blight and John Neff explore the aftermath of the war, establishing cemeteries, and reconciliation. Memory of the Civil War, collective mourning, and nationalism are all popular trends in recent historiography commemorating the 150th anniversary of the war. Nash’s views provide insight into these themes.

Useful comparisons from a variety of primary sources include the letters of Betsy Mix Cowles, Frances Peters, Esther Hill Hawks, Mary Boykin Chesnut, Elisha Hunt Rhodes, and a sundry of Civil War veterans. Whether writing about field hospitals, disease, or death these sources and first-hand accounts, serve to both complement and contrast Emily Nash.

This chapter examines the journal of Emily Nash and reveals a great deal about the Civil War observed by a layer of the dead and permanent changes in mourning behavior. Her insight provides a fascinating glimpse of the home front funeral behavior, disease, and shifting positions toward death. This dissertation provides the historical background on Ohio’s contributions to the Civil War including the third largest army and reasons for enlisting. Nash revealed her thoughts about political figures including John

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Brown and Abraham Lincoln. Her personal awareness stands in contrast to that of Kentuckian Frances Peter, physician Ester Hill Hawks, and southerner Mary Boykin Chesnut.

Emily Nash’s description of the political events leading up to and surrounding the American Civil War is one of the most fascinating sections of her journal. Intertwined among her death notices, Nash revealed her fears and apprehension about the nation on the edge of crisis in 1859. Sectional conflicts throughout the 1850s divided North and South along political, cultural, and social lines. Emily was well aware of these divisions and even attended local anti-slavery meetings in Geauga County. Never an abolitionist, Emily mentioned in several journal entries men executed in Virginia for the same reason as John Brown. They died for the slave, she affirmed in March 1860.\textsuperscript{350} Her disapproval of both Brown’s behavior and his execution was palpable.

In addition to her political views, Emily’s journal challenges popular convictions on the “good death.” Her experiences deny that the good death existed during the Civil War which contravenes historiographical information and recent scholarship by leading Civil War historians. Because she was a layer of the dead, her journal and this chapter presents different conclusions. Technological changes and permanent alterations in caskets, embalming, and cemeteries contribute to the shifts resulting from the Civil War. As more recent historians have shown, there were a variety of reactions toward Lincoln’s death and funeral. Nash and contemporary primary sources explain perceptions on the president’s death and reconciliation following the Civil War.

Ohio’s Role in the Civil War

Although Ohio played a strong role in the anti-slavery crusade and produced several outspoken abolitionists, Emily never expressed much interest in the movement. She complained more frequently in her journal that every discussion she heard involved the union dividing on account of slavery. Despite Emily having limited anti-slavery impulses, Ohio Quakers became actively involved in abolition. By the mid-nineteenth century Quakers gained a national reputation for championing the abolition of slavery. Other more moderate Ohioans sympathized with slaves and their plight, but they were not dedicated to ending the institution. In fact, many white residents perceived black immigration into Ohio as a threat to their power. Emily was astutely aware of the ever-growing issues surrounding slavery polarizing the state and nation.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, (1860), p. 103, Hurt, \textit{The Ohio Frontier}, pp. 374-375, Stephen E. Maizlish, \textit{The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856} (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1983), pp. 7-8. Maizlish discusses Ohio attitudes toward blacks including the state’s Black Laws.}

Emily offered an opinion when Abraham Lincoln took his oath of office on March 4, 1861, hoping he would repair the country and prevent war. By May 1861 she acknowledged in her journal that the Civil War was inevitable after hearing about the rebels taking Fort Sumter the previous month. Still, she adamantly hoped for a swift end and restoration of peace.\footnote{\textit{Nash, Journal}, (1861) pp. 104-105.} Ohio played a significant role in the Civil War. The state provided valuable supplies in the form of iron production and industrial materials. Salt, timber, and oats, used in America’s first oatmeal cereal were additional resources supplied by the state. Among other supplies, the war-cause demanded uniforms and regimental gear. Ohio’s manufacturing and industrial growth helped contribute resources to the war. Perhaps the state’s most significant contribution was the number of soldiers.
Emily did her part by joining a sewing circle in 1861 to help create uniforms for local enlistees. Although she does not disclose how many uniforms were created, on several occasions she mentioned “her sewing circle of women.” Emily felt she contributed to the war effort.

After the fall of Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers the next day, to serve for a three month period to put down the rebellion in South Carolina. Lincoln hoped for thirteen thousand men to join from Ohio. Cincinnati alone could have filled the quota with its volunteers. Altogether Ohio had 30,000 volunteers formed into multiple regiments. The state provided over three hundred thousand soldiers through recruitment and conscription as of December 1864. Eric Foner asserts that Ohio ranked third in its contribution of soldiers, only behind New York and Pennsylvania. The state and its citizens played a central role in the Civil War because of its leadership, men, and politicians.

On April 26, 1861, Emily solemnly acknowledged the “civil war is at hand and a recruiting officer here to day to inlist men to go and fight.” Fearing an enormous struggle, Nash attended church meetings and prayed for a peaceful resolution. Once Fort Sumter fell to the “rebels and a great number of men [were] killed,” Emily lost faith in any hope of a speedy end to the conflict. Observing recruitment in Geauga County, she understood the need and desire for local men to join the army.

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353 Cayton and Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation*, pp. 93-94. The authors offer a list of products contributed to the Civil War, Emily Nash, (1861) p. 105.
356 Ibid.
On the eve of the Civil War, Ohio had nearly 40,000 black people residing in the state. Unevenly distributed, most African Americans lived in southern Ohio.\(^{357}\) Geauga County did not have any black enlistees, and in fact, few blacks lived in the county. However, black men enlisted in the Union Army, which consisted of the United States Colored Troops. Black soldiers came from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, and Illinois. In addition, recruits came from the Confederacy, Washington D.C., and Canada. Ohio had the largest number of black soldiers. The issue of outright racism led the War Department to appoint black soldiers under the command of white officers. No African American held a field command. However, many black soldiers served as non-commissioned officers.\(^{358}\) A general fear of arming black soldiers and lack of ability by recruits, kept many men initially limited to the role of laborers behind the lines. Two outstanding regiments of black soldiers, the 5\(^{th}\) USCT Calvary, and the 27\(^{th}\) Infantry from Ohio, proved themselves in combat. Historian Noah Andre Trudeau reported the words of Sergeant Milton M. Holland’s reasons for joining the Ohio 5\(^{th}\) regiment. Holland hoped for a “brighter day for the colored man,” and hoped his sacrifice accelerated the possibility of social change and a better life.\(^{359}\)

The Civil War transformed the place of black men in Union forces and their contributions in ensuring victory. The black experience during the Civil War also created an important step toward citizenship in the nation. A number of historians have focused


on the recruitment and enlistment of black men. From Bob Luke and John David Smith’s 
*Soldiering for Freedom*, a comprehensive study of the inequality, poor living conditions, 
and unequal pay that plagued black recruits. Both free blacks and former slaves learned 
to become soldiers, handle weapons, ammunition, and take commands from white 
officers. Inequality and a second-class status meant that they had inferior muskets and 
insufficient provisions. Interestingly, *Soldiering for Freedom* focused on the outright 
racism and hostility by white troops and civilians and the hesitation of governors to 
recruit black troops. Racism, fear, and prejudice toward blacks in general, barred them 
from serving in the federal forces and combat until after 1863. Luke and Smith provide a 
thorough history of racism in America and the challenges faced by black recruits.\textsuperscript{360}

*Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* adds more 
details about the experiences and contributions made by the USCT. The undercurrent of 
racism and discrimination is still central to the story, but all of the essays concentrate on 
military valor and attributes in combat. As editor John David Smith proclaimed, Lincoln 
freed the Confederacy’s slaves by writing the Emancipation Proclamation, but it was 
black troops and their military service that helped win the rebellion.\textsuperscript{361}

Noah Andre Trudeau’s *Like Men of War* combines many of the themes from 
previous historians, including racism and a desire to serve. Trudeau’s study investigates 
the attitudes and values of black recruits, including their personalities and ambitions. 
African American troops participated in 449 engagements, which is certainly worthy of 
respect. He also described scenarios where black soldiers were killed by rebels as they

\textsuperscript{360} Bob Luke and John David Smith, *Soldiering for Freedom: How the Union Army Recruited, Trained, 
and Deployed the U.S. Colored Troops* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 8-9, 66-68. 
\textsuperscript{361} John David Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: 
attempted to surrender. Fort Pillow in Tennessee is graphically recounted with its emphasis on racism and outright murder. African American soldiers faced enormous atrocities yet continued to fight. Trudeau, like Smith, and Luke, provide detailed accounts of the willingness and determination of black soldiers confronted with insurmountable odds.

Once President Lincoln called for volunteer enlistments in 1861, Ohio’s black men eagerly offered their assistance to the war effort. Black recruits wanted to fight to end slavery and prove their roles as citizens in the nation. Two outstanding studies focus primarily on the role of black soldiers in Ohio. Kelly Selby discussed pay issues and hardships of camp life in her dissertation. Black soldiers received $10 a month in pay while their white counterparts received $13 and a $3 clothing allowance. Most important, Selby described the 27th USCT from Ohio and their exemplary service to the Union Army. Coupled with challenges of racism, discrimination, Ohio placed second only to Pennsylvania in the number of black troops who contributed to the war. Selby’s comprehensive work follows the black Ohio troops after the war, examining their legacy as veterans and the aftermath of citizenship.

Although written a decade earlier than Selby’s dissertation on the 27th USCT, Versalle F. Washington focused his work on the Ohio 5th USCT and their ties to Oberlin, Ohio. In many ways Washington’s book, Eagles on Their Buttons: A Black Infantry Regiment in the Civil War, combines themes of earlier historians by identifying both discrimination by society and determination by black soldiers as motivating forces for

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362 Trudeau, Like Men of War, pp. 166-169.
enlisting. At the same time, this military history sparks a renewed interest in Oberlin Ohio and its strong anti-slavery tradition. The 5th USCT’s distinguished record in battle included four of its sixteen African American members receiving the Medal of Honor.\(^{365}\) Washington concludes that the 5th USCT gained a positive reputation for their willingness to serve and perform. Attitudes toward race and equality slowly changed in Ohio, but those black soldiers who helped preserve the Union fought for the nation and their own citizenship. The military contributions of the USCT cannot be ignored. Whether examining the reasons black soldiers chose to fight, encountering blatant racism, or performing bravely in battle, the accomplishments and heroism of the USCT proved to be advantageous to the Union and enhanced Ohio’s role in contributing to the Civil War.

In addition to raising troops, Ohio had outstanding military leadership in the form of Ulysses S. Grant, James A. Garfield, Jacob Cox, Salmon P. Chase, William Tecumseh Sherman, and many others. Nash praised James A. Garfield, stating his military service provided him with valuable experience as a politician.\(^{366}\) Ohio nurses proved themselves on the battlefields and hospitals. Mary Ann Bickerdyke, “Mother Bickerdyke” cared for thousands of wounded soldiers during and after the war. Every Republican presidential candidate who ran for office between 1868 and 1900 had an exemplary Civil War record and many came from Ohio.\(^{367}\) Ohioans changed the state and nation by contributing men, supplies, and leadership.

Both Eric Foner and Stephen Maizlish offer insightful discussions on the development of political attitudes in the decade before the Civil War. Foner focused on


\(^{366}\) Nash, *Journal*, (1881), p. 188.

divisions along racial lines and tensions resulting from anti-slavery views in the state. He writes that Ohio was not unanimous in its attitudes. With the Western Reserve being settled by mostly New Englanders, a strong tendency toward anti-slavery developed. Oberlin became one of the few colleges to admit black students (and women) before the war. And in 1855, Oberlin elected an African-American man to a public office. Yet the state also had the word “white” clearly identified for male voters. Ohio, like many northern states, excluded black men from suffrage before the Civil War.\(^{368}\) Similarly, Stephen Maizlish identified strict Black Laws in the state despite proclaiming anti-slavery attitudes. More precisely, many white Ohioans feared black immigration as a direct threat to their economic livelihood.\(^{369}\) Foner and Maizlish’s research demonstrates powerful and conflicting views on race permeated Ohio politics in the years before the Civil War. These attitudes also provide background information for understanding Emily Nash’s views and perceptions on politics and events. Nash had no connection to black soldiers, nor did she acknowledge any people of color in her journal. This is not surprising, since so few African Americans appear in local county statistics.\(^{370}\) Her views on race and the position of black soldiers remains obscure. Exposed to lively discussions in newspapers and attending lectures and meetings, Nash received a plethora of opinions, and convictions regarding the war and slavery. Her journal entries provide little transparent commentary on the topic of race.

\(^{368}\) Foner, “The Civil War Era,” pp. 74-75.
\(^{369}\) Maizlish, \textit{The Triumph of Sectionalism}, pp. 7-8.
\(^{370}\) Pioneer History, official statistics report fewer than five African Americans in Geauga County from 1850-1860. James Oliver Horton in “Race and Region: Ohio, America’s Middle Ground,” provides statistics on the few number of blacks living in Cleveland in same time frame.
Emily was well-acquainted with the men of the “Hitchcock Guard.” Peter Hitchcock was an attorney from Burton who later became an Ohio Supreme Court Judge. The Hitchcock Guard trained at Fort Wood in Cleveland in 1861. Members of this Ohio volunteer militia would later serve together as the 171st Ohio Infantry Regiment.\footnote{Official Roster Soldiers of the State of Ohio.} Even though she wrote proudly of her soldier-friends during the war, Emily feared the “bloodey calamity” and pointless deaths of thousands of young men. Her fears and concerns were justified over the next four years. By the war’s conclusion nearly 35,000 Ohioans had died serving their country. Nearly 20,000 died of disease rather than bullets. More than 600,000 soldiers on both sides died during the Civil War. In terms of conflict and death, Ohio contributed greatly to these numbers.\footnote{Nash, Journal, (1861), p. 105, George Knepper, Ohio and Its People (Kent: The Kent State University press, 2003), pp.251-252.}

Many of the most famous battles of the Civil War included Ohio regiments. At Pittsburg Landing, or Shiloh, 1862, on the Tennessee River Ohioans fought bravely suffering approximately 2,000 deaths. Other notable conflicts included Fredericksburg in December 1862 and Gettysburg July in 1863. Buckeyes served gallantly in many battles suffering high fatality, wounded, or missing rates in conflicts.\footnote{Foner, “The Civil War Era,” pp. 78-80.} Thousands of Ohio soldiers fought in Civil War battles, but by 1863 Governor David Tod enacted legislation calling for the enrollment and training of men in the “Ohio Volunteer Militia.” The militia’s job was to defend local areas in the state and repel any potential threats. Many volunteer regiments consisted of men who knew one another, were brothers, or cousins.
Combined companies often included neighbors and friends from local towns. There was a strong sense of identity created with the formation of volunteer regiments.  

The 171st Ohio Infantry Regiment was a company created in 1864, designed to serve for one hundred days. Organized in Sandusky, the 171st combined the 51st Ohio Battalion National Guard from Trumbull County with the 14th from Portage, 85th from Lake County and 86th from Geauga County. The 86th from Geauga consisted of local men-Ohio Volunteer Militia (O.V.M) led by the honorable Peter Hitchcock. They were called locally the “Hitchcock Guard.” Although the 171st Ohio Infantry served together briefly, their duties included patrolling the Confederate prison at Johnson’s Island in Lake Erie, and preventing an assault by Confederate colonel John Hunt Morgan in Covington, Kentucky. Morgan’s goal was to disrupt and antagonize Union troops on the border between Ohio and Kentucky. In July of 1863, Morgan and his men led a raid across the Ohio River into the state. He was eventually captured by the Union Calvary and imprisoned in the Ohio Penitentiary. Morgan and several other officers managed to escape the prison. Although Morgan’s raid failed, it demonstrated Ohio’s vulnerability and need for a volunteer guard. A young twenty-year-old journalist from Kentucky named Frances Peter kept a diary from 1862 until 1864 detailing the actions of Morgan and his raiders into Ohio. Calling them “a squad of guerillas,” the raiders caused alarm.

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and concern for the Peter family living in Lexington. Frances’ father was a Union physician and her diary provides a unique home front perspective.377

Recent scholarship challenges the 620,000 deaths attributed to the Civil War. J. David Hacker argues that traditional statistics are too conservative and do not consider deaths from disease and injuries in the decades following the Civil War. He expanded the number of deaths to more than 752,000 to perhaps as high as 850,000. His statistics include census information, disease related deaths, and even civilian war deaths. Hacker believes the death toll is underrepresented because of the lack of adequate personnel records, underreporting wounds, and the low numbers of deaths on the battlefields. Deaths following the war include larger numbers, approximately twenty percent more than once reported. Disease-related deaths likely continued after the war’s conclusion. Many soldiers introduced germs and bacteria into civilian populations. Emily discussed this situation occurring in Geauga County. New diseases such as typhoid and cholera appeared in association with veterans returning home. The excess number of deaths cited by Hacker proves insightful when considering the possibility of more civilian deaths and a greater number of soldiers dying as a result of disease or war related injuries.378

Drew Gilpin Faust supports Hacker’s research and questioned the number of Civil War dead. She adds another dimension to the argument by stating approximately 620,000 soldiers died but those numbers tend to reflect only military deaths. Faust, like Hacker, is skeptical about the statistic and believes more accountability is necessary. She argued that civilian deaths are underreported, as well as troops suffering from diseases. In

addition, Faust stated that twenty percent of African Americans who served in the Union Army died. African American civilians perished as a result of the war. These deaths are generally not included and if considered, challenge the more conservative and traditional statistic.\textsuperscript{379} Both Hacker and Faust offer intriguing alternatives and support for their increase in statistics of Civil War deaths. Most important is the fact that the Civil War touched nearly every American and death permeated every aspect of culture.

Aside from political events, Emily described a number of national figures and their roles in the Civil War. Her written views foretell a nation facing enormous social and cultural change. Between 1859 and 1866 Emily offered insight and unique perspectives on John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, George B. McClellan, Stephen A. Douglas, and Jefferson Davis. Sometimes offering political commentary, other times criticism, Nash discussed the actions of various leaders in this time frame. She mostly emphasized the deaths of Brown and Lincoln, focusing on their burials.

\textbf{Politics}

In 1859 Emily reported on the actions and the execution of John Brown the local newspaper \textit{The Jeffersonian Democrat} ran several articles in November 1859 proclaiming that the radical abolitionist was a saint for his actions at Harper’s Ferry. The same newspaper identified Brown’s execution in Virginia as a “sacrifice in the name of slavery.” \textit{The Jeffersonian Democrat} also called on other anti-slavery societies to condemn the South and praise Brown’s behavior.\textsuperscript{380} John Brown became a symbol, and a martyr to many and a demon to others. Local newspapers ran front page stories glorifying

\textsuperscript{379} Drew Gilpin Faust, “A Riddle of Death”: Mortality and Meaning in the American Civil War, 34\textsuperscript{th} Annual Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture Gettysburg College, 1995, pp. 8-10.

\textsuperscript{380} \textit{The Jeffersonian Democrat} “Celebration of Brown’s Execution,” November 18, 1859, Chardon, Ohio, “John Brown Executed!” December 9, 1859.
the abolitionist. In death, Brown achieved a heroic status and even Emily took notice. As a layer of the dead, she was concerned with Brown’s death and the disposal of his body. She also knew the Brown family from local meetings and interactions. Brown’s death was a defining moment in future events of the Civil War. Even Mary Boykin Chesnut referred to Brown’s death and body when she wrote about Lincoln being elected in 1860. Outraged, she exclaimed, “Now that the black radical Republicans have the power I suppose they will Brown us all.” Southerners understood that his body held a deeper political meaning. In many ways the zealot’s death and the concern raised over his body’s disposal would become a major issue for the treatment of the Civil War dead.  

Customary and proper funeral behavior in the nineteenth century required a circle of mourners to witness death, layout the body, and determine whether the individual suffered. Emily wondered whether protocol was followed with the disposal of Brown’s body. She wondered if his corpse received proper care and attention.  

It was precisely Brown’s body that held an enduring legacy throughout the Civil War. Within two years, Union troops marched to battle singing about the famed abolitionist. The young private Elisha Hunt Rhodes of the Rhode Island Volunteers described marching with his unit through Harper’s Ferry in August 1864. After reaching the place where Brown was captured, the band played “John Brown’s Body Lies Moldering in the Grave, but his Soul Goes Marching On.” The men joined in singing loudly, much to the anger and disgust of locals. In another account, Confederate and Union troops camped across the Rappahannock River in 1862 within ear shot of each other. The Confederates played “Dixie” obviously hoping to rouse their enemy on the other side of the river. A Union

381 Laderman, The Sacred Remains, pp. 91-92, Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary From Dixie, p. 1, November 8, 1860.  
band responded with several verses of “John Brown’s Body.” Both sides played and sang patriotic songs meaningful to the North and South. As the war progressed, new verses and stanzas were added to the “John Brown” song, making it beloved marching music for Union troops. John Brown struck a blow at slavery and in the process his death and corpse challenged traditional norms regarding funerary rites.383

As rumors of war intensified, Emily became gravely concerned about national politics and the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln. Initially, Emily had faith and hope in Lincoln’s ability to lead. But as the war continued and she saw no resolution, Emily complained more and more about the president. She argued that the only solution to end the war was to “remove this abominable administration and now I pray to God that it be done speedily for I am tired of the lamentations in my ears and all around me…”384 Her optimism early on dissolved into hopelessness.

Apparently Emily preferred Stephen A. Douglas over Lincoln. Noting his death in 1861, she cried over losing a valued politician despite his support of the war. Quite simply Douglas was not Lincoln and Emily hoped for different decisions regarding the war. Apparently Mary Chesnut thought highly of the “little giant,” Stephen A. Douglas. In her journal entry dated June 1861, she blamed his untimely death on a troubled mind and “killed by the war.”385 Even though Emily’s journal entries contained countless pleas to end the war, she did support the North’s agenda and actions. In a very telling entry


385 Mary Chesnut, Diary, June 6, 1861, pp. 59-60.
Emily admitted that the nation needed protection and prayed for God’s help. She wanted the Union government protected from “every foe.”\textsuperscript{386} Her convictions stand to reason since she knew many of the soldiers personally.

By 1864 Emily openly criticized Abraham Lincoln in her journal, charging him with responsibility for the conflict. Hoping that George B. McClellan would be elected, Emily stated, “the majority do vote in favour of the present administration it is horrible to think they could after all events of the past four years.” She accused Lincoln of breaking promises and committing crimes against America. Emily’s bitterness stemmed from the “awful wheel of conscription in everey township.”\textsuperscript{387} Calling it a lottery of life, conscription meant more soldiers, continuation of war, and inevitable deaths. Emily detested war and Lincoln’s decisions. She was convinced that the nation was headed for destruction. Emily’s entries leave no doubt that she disapproved of the current political situation.

Other observers on the home front offered their own views on Abraham Lincoln. Surprisingly, Betsy Mix Cowles did not initially approve of Lincoln. In fact, Cowles adopted an anti-war attitude in January 1861. A strong Garrisonian, Betsy hoped for a quicker response in addressing slavery. Her younger sister Cornelia, also an ardent abolitionist, wrote to Betsy from Canton, Ohio, on April 14, 1861, shortly after the war began. “The murderous bandits of slavedom are really firing away at Fort Sumter,” she wrote. “We shall find out if we have a government or not.”\textsuperscript{388} Even after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Cowles remained doubtful of the president’s

\textsuperscript{386} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1861), p106, 105.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid, (1864), p. 122.
\textsuperscript{388} Cornelia Cowles to Betsy Mix Cowles April 14, 1861. \textit{Betsy Mix Cowles Papers}. Kent State University collection.
actions. He simply moved too slow for Betsy. She wanted slavery to end immediately. By 1864, Betsy proclaimed her support for Lincoln and embraced his efforts.  

Writing from Lexington, Kentucky, in 1863, Frances Peter acknowledged that she did not think “highly” of Lincoln, but grew to appreciate his policies regarding slavery. “He [Lincoln] is almost certain to be re-elected. I know a good many people who will vote for him,” she asserted in December of 1863. As an Ohio abolitionist, Cowles desired quicker decisions and more action on Lincoln’s part. In the border state of Kentucky, Peter reveals reservation in supporting Lincoln and a gradual acceptance of his policies. Betsy Cowles and Frances Peter both reassessed their views about Lincoln, but Emily Nash never softened her attitude.

Local newspapers carried the news of Lincoln’s re-election in November 1864, much to Emily’s dismay. She considered it bad news and hoped for McClellan’s election so that the Union would be restored “under the constitution as it once existed then an immediate termination of the struggle would insue.” Nash went so far as to question the thinking of so-called “intelligent publick.” How could any reasonable person want this administration to continue, she wondered.

Emily was so outraged over Lincoln’s re-election and the continuation of war that her writing style and references to the president changed after 1864. She no longer referred to Lincoln as “Mister,” or “President.” Her rancor and disgust ran deep and she resorted to calling him “that man” or simply “Lincoln.” Emily’s other death notices and comments were always formal and respectful. It is amazing she displayed so much emotion and out-right contempt for Abraham Lincoln. Her anger was tangible. Emily

389 Ibid.
390 Frances Peter, Diary, pp. 176, December, 1863.
continued to complain about Lincoln until the end of the war. Calling his re-election and administration the “pestilent pool of Lincoln politicks” she rightly feared a longer war and more deaths.392

Emily Nash and Mary Chesnut shared their contempt for Abraham Lincoln. Shortly after Lincoln assumed office in 1861, Mary Chesnut penned her indignation toward Mary Todd Lincoln and expressed her sarcasm when reading “only three of the elite Washington families attended the Inauguration Ball.” Referring to the president as “one of the cleverest yankee types” she described Lincoln as “awful grotesque in appearance.”393 As humorous and petty as her comments seem, Mary Chesnut’s views align with those of Emily Nash. Chesnut discredited Lincoln by attacking his politics and of course his physical appearance. Both women despised Lincoln from different sides of the war.

Two reasons underlie Emily’s convictions toward Lincoln. She feared discussions of politics in church and regarded the behavior as blasphemous. Instead of a haven for worshipping, the church was defiled with heated political debates. Emily felt deprived of religion and the consolation of church services. She complained of “rowdies keeping the meeting house a mess nearly all the time.” The political discussions involved the recent secession of South Carolina from the Union on December 20, 1860. Emily failed to appreciate the meaning behind the debates and talk of war. She wanted to return to her normal routine without bloodshed and war. “I feel to mourn over the state of the church in this place they have much to say and doo with political strife it has taken possession of their minds so they have become stupid in religion so that prayer meetings are

392 Ibid. (1864), p. 122.
393 Mary Chesnut, Diary, March 10, 1861, pp. 16-19.
forgotten.” Heated political discussions were not unfamiliar to Nash. She complained about the Congregational Church being used in temperance meetings. Emily supported the cause but objected to the church’s misuse. Fierce political debates in holy places clearly alarmed and disturbed her. She was offended by these actions and intrusions into her world. In many ways the changes brought on by the war and political meetings held in religious places were only a minor example of the severe and permanent alterations in mourning behavior yet to occur over the next four years.

Her other reason for detesting Lincoln’s administration related to the obvious number of soldiers killed and families torn asunder. Her journal echoes with stories of families losing one or two sons in the war. She wrote of the consequences of war at home, providing a middle-aged, female layer of the dead’s perspective on events and described her neighbors as widows and their children as orphans. Emily declared, this war is clothing our land in mourning, it is sending death to thousands upon thousands of our brothers and friends and also desolation and anguish to the homes and hearts of the people.” The Civil War was truly a “total war” where actions on the battlefield affected those at home. Although she did not witness the battles first-hand, Nash knew the fatherless children and widows from nearby farms. Her perspective on the home-front glimpsed the fallout and aftermath of battles and the effects the war had on local families. Emily saw the sorrow and anguished experienced at home when soldiers died. Talk of politics in church and sorrow on the home-front made Emily insist, “I abhor civil war and

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would to God some way could be found by which our nation could be extricated from this present situation…”

Nash experienced the war on the home-front. She witnessed death and the calamitous loss of young men to both battles and disease. Historian David W. Blight agrees that the Civil War is correctly termed a “total war.” In a fascinating chapter on one Union soldier’s experiences, Blight used the letters of Charles Harvey Brewster to tell his story. Brewster wrote hundreds of letters back home to his mother and sisters describing events, battles, and even his own emotions about the war. He experienced enlistment fever and eagerly joined with his friends from Northampton Massachusetts. His first accounts of the war tell of his enthusiasm and exhilaration in participating. Local women rallied to the cause, much like Emily Nash sewing uniforms and clothing for enlistees. Brewster’s initial reaction to the war express excitement and almost a romantic view. By the end of his three years of service, Brewster not only witnessed but participated in some of the deadlies battles of the Civil War including, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor, to name a few. His romantic visions of the war dissolved into the reality of hardship, sickness, death, and loneliness. Brewster’s letters to his family capture the “total war” experience. The young soldier’s letters express fear in battle, and his agonizing descriptions of the landscape littered with corpses and dead horses. Brewster survived his three years of service yet his letters reveal a change and hardened attitude toward the war and caution toward society in the years following the war. In June of 1864 he became a recruiter of black troops in Virginia. This gave Brewster yet another perspective and view on the Civil War. Brewster idealized and romanticized the war, only to experience the horror and dread of trenches and combat. His letters indicate the

war changed men and reshaped society. Although he survived, his writing reveals the struggle and changes brought on by a “total war.”

**Nash’s Views on the Civil War**

Emily Nash’s perception of the Civil War creates a significant political and cultural insight from a female perspective and portends radical mortuary changes taking place during the war. The Civil War changed the way people died and ultimately the intimacy and etiquette associated with funerary behavior. Emily recorded the deaths of eighteen soldiers from Connecticut, Michigan, and Ohio in her journal. She knew many of these young men personally or associated with their families. Not all of them would be brought home for a proper burial. Her journal entries describe their deaths, burials, and catastrophic changes in funerary behavior in Geauga County and across America.

In many ways Geauga County was representative of other northern regions regarding characteristics of those who fought and died in the Civil War. Of the soldiers Emily described, all were native born to either Ohio or Michigan. Age and socio-economic status also played a role. Most of the soldiers were in their late teens or early twenties. One exception was Peter Hitchcock who was forty-nine when he led the Geauga Ohio Volunteer Militia. Almost all of the service-men labored on farms or owned small businesses in the county. Community pride, patriotism and a connection to other men from the area likely drove residents into Union uniforms. Many unskilled workers joined the war of their own volition, others were drafted in 1864. In general, the Union

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397 David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), pp. 53-71. The entire chapter provides examples of Brewster’s experiences and the changes he underwent during his three of service.

398 *Military Roster of Ohio.*
Army was disproportionately made up of farmers and unskilled laborers. This trend continued throughout the war. Professional and skilled workers were less likely to join the service. A rural environment meant most enlistments were farmers, rather than factory workers or businessmen. Maris A. Vinovskis provides useful demographic information on soldiers. Although he uses men from Newburyport, Massachusetts, in his study, reasonable comparisons can be made with Geauga County soldiers. Most soldiers from Newburyport ranged in age from their late teens to early twenties. One eleven year old enlisted and a few men over fifty joined. Vinovskis discovered that education, or lack of, predicted whether a man enlisted. One out of every three soldiers never attended high school. And similar to Geauga enlistments, most men were unskilled workers. As general as his calculations appear, Vinovskis provides similarities in his demographics with other Union soldiers and useful comparisons with socioeconomic information, including Geauga County.

Although Emily seemed hostile to the war effort, many Geauga men joined the Union Army feeling that it was a necessary crusade. Considering the county’s anti-slavery organizations, this was a likely reason. Another factor was the unity and camaraderie many men felt toward one another. Men who volunteered in 1861 had a close connection to their state and comrades from the same towns. Geauga County’s 86th Volunteer Militia included men who were related and close neighbors from the townships. These men joined together and consequently died together on the battlefields and in hospitals. Similar to World War One Pals Battalions from Britain, entire towns and


400 Maris A. Vinovskis, “Have Social Historians Lost the Civil War? Some Preliminary Demographic Speculations” Civil War Soldier, pp. 36-39.
villages lost a generation of brothers, cousins, and friends. Volunteers eagerly joined the war alongside their friends hoping to maintain a local identity.\textsuperscript{401}

Esther Hill Hawks provides additional reasons for why men joined the Union Army. From October 1862 to February 1864, Hawks, a Union physician, wrote her memoirs about tending and caring for black troops in Florida and South Carolina. Working in a small hospital in July, 1862, Esther Hawks sadly reported on cases of gangrene, and amputations. Hawks tended a young twenty year old former slave, Charley Reardon whose arm had been amputated. She asked him why he chose to fight in the war. Sitting next to his bed and holding his poor hand, the only one he had left, Reardon responded, “I came to fight not for my country, I never had one, but to gain one.”\textsuperscript{402} Hawks met other black soldiers who fought heroically, including “150 of the brave boys from the 54\textsuperscript{th} Massachusetts. They were laid on blankets on the floor all mangled and ghastly.” An abolitionist even before the war, Esther Hawks seemed amazed by the number of black soldiers who chose to serve and were free men living in the north. “Some are even educated” she wrote in 1862, “three are graduates from Oberlin.”\textsuperscript{403} Clearly Hawks took pride in her interactions with black soldiers. In addition, she sheds light on why they joined and the enormous sacrifices they paid. Frances Peter wrote her own account in June, 1863 about a “negro regiment, the 1\textsuperscript{st} Massachusetts passing through Cincinnati.” Peter reported a “large number of white citizens determined to put a stop to these proceedings threatened the colored citizens.”\textsuperscript{404} Even though black patriots and troops experienced discrimination, many African American men still “ran off to join

\textsuperscript{401} James McPherson, \textit{Battle Cry of Freedom}, p. 265.
\textsuperscript{403} Hawks, \textit{Woman Doctor}, pp. 50-53.
\textsuperscript{404} Frances Peter, \textit{Diary}, Wednesday, June 17, 1864, p. 135.
regiments,” Frances Peter proclaimed. Like Esther Hawks and Frances Peter, Emily Nash understood that men joined the service for a variety reasons, including the love of adventure, to end slavery, or for personal pride, the war offered them a wide range of opportunities.

The first Civil War fatality recorded by Emily was the death of General Nathaniel Lyon, who was killed in August 1861 in Springfield, Missouri. Although General Lyon was a stranger to Nash, his death made local and national news because he was only forty-three and the first Union general to die in battle.405 General Lyon’s tragic story appeared in newspapers throughout the country. Lyon had a considerably small army of some 5,500 men who fought against 13,000 Missourians and Confederate troops near Springfield. Realizing that he was outnumbered and without reinforcements, Lyon decided to attack the Confederates. The general was twice wounded before he was killed by a rebel bullet. His troops were demoralized by the loss of their leader and 1,300 casualties.406 Emily was impressed by Lyon’s heroics, but she focused more on his death and funeral. She wrote, “general Lyon is killed his body embalmed for conveyance to his friends in Connecticut thus his hearts blood ran out on the battlefield.”407 Noting whether the soldier’s body was chemically embalmed or preserved with ice, became a standard observation in her journal. In addition, Nash always mentioned whether the body was returned home or not.

Throughout the summer of 1861 newspapers carried graphic descriptions of the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21. The Jeffersonian Democrat published eyewitness

testimonies explaining “now and then the mangled soldiers uttered piercing groans...they gave vent to their agony in heart-wrenching shrieks.” Emily was appalled by these stories and wrote her own entry, “an eyewitness says about [Bull Run] here I had to encounter scenes too horrible to look upon...such mangled bodyes such gastly faces arms and legs loped off and thrown in a pile this is fun for the doctors they are getting money”408 Her bitter sarcasm reflected the gravity and somber reality that the war was far more brutal than anticipated. Emily’s role as a caretaker of the dead was already beginning to change. She recognized the loss of control by writing about soldiers dying so far from home.

Of the eighteen soldiers’ deaths recorded in her journal, Emily knew seventeen of them personally. More than half of the men died of disease while in camps or hospitals, and the other nine she described as having died from wounds received in various battles. Four additional soldiers are mentioned in the journal, but it is nearly impossible to determine their exact cause of death or connection to Nash. Emily described them as “dying in the service of the army.” It is possible they died of disease rather than wounds inflicted on the battlefield.

Emily wrote of new diseases appearing in Geauga County as early as 1863. Her entries describing “new” diseases in the area support J. David Hacker’s recalculated statistics and research on the number of civilians affected indirectly by the war. Many soldiers were returning to Ohio at the peak of the war and new recruits joining the service. The revolution of men in and out of the county meant new opportunities for disease. Not unlike Philadelphia or Richmond, Virginia, rural Ohio towns unaccustomed to new pathogens were exposed by returning soldiers. Nash described locals dying from

typhoid fever in February 1863. A month later she recounted a horrific story of a Farmington man burying four of his children in one coffin. They all died of diphtheria. It is not coincidental that both typhoid and diphtheria were recorded by Nash during the Civil War. Throughout 1864 Nash documented deaths attributed to smallpox. Although not a new disease in Ohio, it was infrequently mentioned until 1864. Writing about the need to hastily bury the body of a child afflicted with smallpox for fear of the disease spreading, Emily described the illness as raging throughout the county.\textsuperscript{409} She continued to sit vigil with families and prepare bodies for burial despite the risk of contamination. She does, however, mention the need to bury bodies quickly after everyone had retired for the evening. Emily did her best to ensure proper burials were carried out despite the scourge of smallpox. The threat of disease affected hospitals and the city, according to Frances Peter. She identified the spread of diphtheria among the soldiers in her father’s hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1863. The deadly disease spread from infirmed soldiers to local children, killing them all. “In short [diphtheria] has been all over the city,” Peter lamented. Alarmed by the deaths, the young diarist clearly recognized the connection between sick and ailing soldiers contaminating the local residents.\textsuperscript{410}

Historian Eric T. Dean argued that the Civil War was a form of “biological warfare” where soldiers had to contend with the ever-present threat of disease. According to Dean, for every death attributed to battle, two men died of disease. Numbers indicate about 164,000 Confederates and approximately 250,000 Union soldiers died from illnesses during the war. Noah Andre Trudeau added out of nearly 179,000 black soldiers who served in the Civil War, 38,000 deaths resulted from combat. Like their white

\textsuperscript{410} Frances Peter, Diary, pp. 91-92, Wednesday January 21, 1863.
counterparts, disease killed most black soldiers. The astounding statistics and resulting deaths were attributed to a basic lack of medical knowledge, ignorance of germ theory, and a disregard for sanitation.\textsuperscript{411} Soldiers spent most of their time in camps associating with other men and sharing germs and pathogens. According to historian Reid Mitchell, aside from material deprivation and lacking the basic comforts of life, soldiers experienced lice, filth, and disease. Conditions for Confederates were far worse than Federal soldiers, and blacks had it worse than whites.\textsuperscript{412}

Several major military campaigns were disrupted because of illness. General Robert E. Lee’s western Virginia campaign of 1861 failed in part because so many of his men fell ill at once. The campaign of Vicksburg of July 1863 also experienced failure because more than half of the soldiers and sailors suffered epidemic illnesses.\textsuperscript{413} Regiments and units contended with epic portions of volunteers reeling from disease even before they engaged in battle. Whether they were Confederate or Union soldiers, men who were accustomed to a rural lifestyle, relatively germ free were suddenly thrust into an environment with thousands of other men. Germs, infections, and contaminated water shared by men produced a breeding ground for new illnesses. The principal killers included dysentery/diarrhea, typhoid, and pneumonia.\textsuperscript{414} As they moved to new territory, soldiers spread the bacteria and illness. At the end of the war, prisoners from Andersonville and Florence prisons spread diseases and germs to the local residents. The significant movement and migration of soldiers and civilians meant the introduction of


\textsuperscript{413} Eric T. Dean, “Dangled Over Hell,” pp. 400-402.

\textsuperscript{414} McPherson, \textit{Battle Cry of Freedom}, p. 416.
contagions and epidemics. Philadelphia, Danville, Virginia, and Wilmington, North Carolina, all experienced unprecedented outbreaks of smallpox, yellow fever, and typhoid as a result of war hospitals or camps located close by. Disease was the greater threat and added to the misery and suffering of the soldiers. Contaminated water, poor diet and a generally unhealthy environment meant most soldiers entered the war at a tremendous disadvantage.415

Soldiers in the Civil War contracted and spread viruses. The only prevention for disease was vaccination and few soldiers or local residents had that option available to them. Surprisingly, the Civil War did not offer significant advances in medical technology or improvements in health like the wars of the twentieth century. Soldiers had little confidence in the medical profession. Doctors were in fact ignorant in treating many of the diseases or administered dangerous treatments. Modern antibiotics did not exist and antiseptic disinfectants were virtually unknown.416

Diphtheria, typhoid, and dysentery continued to course through Geauga County in the summer of 1865. Emily described a very frightening and contagious “new fatal disease” striking the area in August.417 The disease was cholera. She had good reason to call it frightening and fatal. In the mid nineteenth century cholera epidemics struck frequently and without warning throughout the world. The larger cities spread the disease more readily because of contaminated water supplies. European reports of the disease described in morbid detail the deadly circulation of cholera. Victims explained feeling unwell and then followed fairly quickly by bouts of vomiting and diarrhea. Blood ceased

to circulate properly and the afflicted person lost as much as twenty-five percent of his bodily fluids. The eyes were sunken and the skin took on an almost blue color from the lack of circulation. Death was inevitable within three to five days after becoming infected.418

In Cincinnati cholera killed nearly 60,000 residents between 1849 and 1851. Detroit lost 700 people to the same disease. The new deadly disease spread through drinking water, wells, and rivers. Often people fled one infected area seeking refuge down river, spreading the disease as they moved. Common theories at the time attributed cholera to miasmas and ground fog. Little attention was paid to water sources. Scientific technology at the time, dismissed the real catalyst, allowing outbreaks to continue and spread. Cholera transmitted and traveled along water routes from larger cities to more rural areas like Geauga County. Once a person was infected with the disease, the contagion spread through bodily fluids. Treatments for the symptoms was as barbaric as the disease itself, including bleeding, the victim. Those in charge of caregiving or in close contact with the infected persons, also passed the disease. In the nineteenth century cholera proved to be severe and fatal.419

Schenectady, New York, also experienced outbreaks of cholera in 1854 and again in 1866. Like Geauga County and Emily Nash, Robert Wells found evidence of the disease recorded in local residents’ journals. Victims succumbed to the disease within hours of exposure. The illness circulated rapidly in the summer of 1854, likely spreading through contaminated vegetables and water. Altogether, forty deaths were caused by the

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419 Walter T. Daly, M.D. “The Black Cholera Comes to the Central Valley of America in the Nineteenth Century,” in American Clinical and Climatological Association, 2008.
disease in 1854. Cholera reappeared in Schenectady between 1866 and 1867. Community reactions were very different in this later episode. Wells insists that the community understood the causes and prevention of cholera by the late 1860s. No longer accepted as divine punishment, human action could prevent an epidemic. Residents attributed the 1866 outbreak to a number of factors including a Civil War veteran sick with the disease, filthy slaughterhouses, marshes, and polluted water. Measures were introduced to clean the streets and water supplies. Interestingly, Wells, like Nash, also considered the role of illness and disease spreading because of returning veterans.420

Infectious disease wracked army camps during the Civil War leading to chronic illnesses and a basic misunderstanding of public health or effective treatments. Camp environments proved an ideal habitat for the transmission of cholera. The bacteria was especially hostile in warm and humid environments where the disease multiplied rapidly. Over-crowded conditions and the close camp quarters forced men to share the same water and toilet facilities. Person-to-person contact, infected food and water, and the movement of troops into new territories created a potentially hazardous situation and continued the spread of cholera.421

Descriptions of “camp fever” were prevalent throughout the Civil War. A rather generic description, the illness included chronic diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, fever and death. Misunderstood and misdiagnosed during the Civil War, cholera added to the ignorance regarding treatment and containment.422 The disease emerged during the Civil War and spread rapidly to the civilian population. In the summer of 1865 Emily prayed

420 Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 111-115.
421 Evans, “Cholera” p. 277.
422 Eric Dean, “Dangled Over Hell,” pp. 400-401. Drew Gilpin Faust also makes references to “camp fever” in This Republic of Suffering.
and listened to the victims “dying counsel” as she waited for their inevitable death from cholera. 423 Two Union soldiers from Geauga County reported in their respective diaries about suffering from “camp fever.” Writing between January and February 1862, Henry Hotchkiss of the 9th Ohio Infantry Volunteers, identified camp fever in his personal journal. Hotchkiss found it nearly impossible to keep up with his job as a wagoner and maintaining the horses and mules of his regiment because of illness. Every entry over the next twenty-two days described severe fever, vomiting, and sickness. After a lengthy hospital stay, Hotchkiss reported recovering enough from the illness to resume his military responsibilities.424 Captain J.H. B. Corell served in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in March 1864. His three handwritten diaries frequently discussed mundane weather reports and illness, which he termed camp fever.425 Both Hotchkiss and Corell survived bouts of camp fever and returned to Ohio following the war. Judging from the multiple entries discussing the illness, it is easy to assume both soldiers were most certainly concerned about their physical and mental well-being.

In the age of the beautiful death, cholera defied and challenged tradition and proper etiquette. The beautiful death-bed scene with its circle of mourners was hardly possible or practical with this disease. As a matter of fact it was not unusual for panics and mass social unrest to occur when a cholera epidemic broke out. People fled infected areas sometimes abandoning the severely sick and dying. A sudden violent and seemingly ugly death made cholera anything but beautiful. Although Emily did not report any episodes of mass hysteria, she did describe concern and fear over contamination.

424 Henry Hotchkiss diary, January-February 1862. The diary belongs to Century Village Museum and is stored in the Shanower Library, Burton Ohio.
Death from disease in the Civil War, although extremely common, seemed to defy the "beautiful death" and challenged all traditional mourning behaviors of nineteenth-century America. Emily questioned the purpose of dying in a war so far from home and asked whether it was honorable? She frequently asked questions in her journal about the purpose of war and death. These views reflect the larger issues of America coping with disease and social change.\(^{426}\)

Never before had Americans experienced carnage on this level. Even those Americans like Emily Nash who were accustomed to frequent death were shocked by the staggering fatalities and disease that resulted from the conflict. The awareness and familiarity of death became a cultural norm by the war’s end as Americans were forced to accept the loss of former intimate death-bed scenes surrounded by loving family. Soldiers died far from home and science intervened producing new technology to preserve the body. In essence, where death had formerly been intimate and familiar, it now became horrific, scientific, and impersonal.

Without a doubt the single greatest threat to human life during the war, was disease. Emily discussed new illnesses and bouts of unfamiliar viruses and bacteria in the county directly related to the Civil War. The most common cause of death among Geauga County soldiers recorded by Nash was dysentery. Not unlike other soldiers, more Ohioans died of disease than bullets.

Emily’s acknowledgement of disease was crucial, but also the condition of the body and whether soldiers received appropriate and proper services gave testimony to the immediate changes occurring with death rituals in nineteenth century America. She wrote

\(^{426}\) Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 111-115. Sean A. Scott, A Visitation of God: Northern Civilians Interpret the Civil War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 198-201. Scott discusses the “good death” and its disruption during the Civil War.
an entry in September 1861 reporting that Charley Scott, died in the “servis of the army.” Distressed, Emily did not attend his funeral because it was too far from home. She assumed and hoped that Charley Scott received an appropriate funeral service. But dying far from home she knew that he was not surrounded by a circle of mourners nor attended by a layer of the dead.

But she did attend the funerals of both Chester Hoard and C. Sliter, who “died down south in the army,” in April 1862. She vaguely described both men dying from disease while serving in the Union Army. The remains of several soldiers were returned to the county. As the war progressed, however, fewer bodies were sent back to the area. Sending bodies home was costly and as the war intensified, impractical. Scott, Hoard, and Sliter’s deaths greatly disturbed Emily because no one witnessed their demise. Their departures accompanied a great struggle with illness and often bodies were not properly handled, or even returned for burial. In an age when witnessing death preoccupied American funeral behavior, the Civil War violated these social norms.

Nash, just as she provided the cause of death for local residents in her journal entries, she noted what afflicted area soldiers. Harvey Price died of dysentery and his body buried in where he fell. George White died of consumption after falling ill in the war. He returned home with the disease in 1863, likely spreading it to local residents. By the summer of 1864, Emily reported on the tragic end of Andrew Pool from “camp dysentarey.” Pool, a Geauga resident, recently joined the service and like so many new recruits succumbed to dysentery within the first year.

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430 Nash, Journal, (1864), p. 120.
In her discussion of disease, Emily wondered on paper whether it was truly honorable to die this way. Her cousin Monroe Nash perished in the Union Army in Kentucky after contracting dysentery in February 1865. Emily recalled a conversation she had with Monroe before he joined the service. He thought that the war was a noble cause and worth fighting. He joined the service for these reasons. Skeptical of justifying war and killing, Emily disagreed with her cousin and wondered whether he felt honored dying of illness for “his noble cause[?]”431 She never spoke to Monroe again, but recorded her sentiments, doubts, and anger about his death and sacrifice of life in her journal.

But if righteousness existed in warfare and patriotism and national pride came from battles won facing the enemy, disease was pointless and wasteful. Yet both patriotism and nationalism were powerful factors in motivating Civil War soldiers, states James M. McPherson in *For Cause and Comrades*. He puzzled over the question as to why soldiers joined the war. In letters written home, many men reported that they felt compelled by honor, courage, and valor.432 In his sample of soldiers, McPherson discovered both Union and Confederate officers expressed patriotic and ideological motivations in serving, but the biggest difference existed with enlisted men. Over sixty-two percent of Union enlisted soldiers reported patriotic convictions compared to only fifty-two percent of Confederate soldiers. Perhaps because Confederate officers had more stake in slavery, they reported more patriotism. Union troops contained more continuity and more balanced social classes among enlisted men and patriotic attitudes were commonly reported.433 Two other historians examined the topic of morale and patriotic

motives for fighting. Pete Maslowski agrees with McPherson in his essay by using similar sources: letters and diaries to explain ideological principles. Asking how and why soldiers marched off to combat and endured repeated slaughter, Maslowski identified love of one’s country, Union and power, glory, fighting for the rights of man, and even adventure and excitement as motivating factors. Earl J. Hess added religion as a motivating factor. Courage and ideals certainly played a role but strong religious convictions and sense of right and wrong urged many men to enlist. Dying for the nation and using religion to justify killing, filled many men with a patriotic cause. Emily most certainly disagreed. Emily was convinced that there was no honor or victory in death from dysentery, tuberculosis, or pneumonia. According to Nash, the war only caused a tremendous loss of life and tragedy for families on the home-front.

The Civil War was arguably the most significant social transformative event in the nation’s history. Notions of death and preparation of bodies left on the battlefield never returned home, challenged American attitudes toward death. Reid Mitchell captured the terrifying awareness experienced by soldiers, in writing the wholesale nature of death during the war left many a man an anonymous, neglected corpse. Each soldier knew this might be his fate during the war. Some men ignored the inhumanity, others experienced sympathy or disgust. Even Esther Hill Hawks seemed stunned when she came upon a great “grave yard” along the beach outside the hospital where she worked. She decried, all of the graves were anonymous and without markers. She sympathized with the poor soldiers who “left their homes burning with zeal to do something for their

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Country, only to be left in this sad spot in the sand.” Emily struggled with these fundamental changes when writing about her friends killed in battle. The carnage of the Civil War and soldiers killed in conflict created compelling challenges for Nash.

**Battles**

Beginning in 1862, Nash documented a series of battles fought from Tennessee to Virginia. Likely based on newspapers and information from Geauga residents, Emily recorded her views in her journal. From the onset of the war Emily offered valuable, if not harsh and critical insight of events unfolding on the battlefield and home-front. Her awareness of various battles was punctuated by the crippling misery of her friends’ deaths during the war. Several of her friends and relatives fought and died at Pittsburg Landing, Fredericksburg, and Spotsylvania. With each soldier’s death, Emily became soberly aware of permanent changes in funerary behavior affecting the country.

In April 862, Ulysses S. Grant moved his troops to a location on the Tennessee River called Pittsburg Landing. Grant’s plan was to combine forces with other Union troops to amass some 75,000 men together and attack the Rebels. Most of Grant’s men were stationed above the river at Pittsburg Landing awaiting orders. The site was strategically important because it was a junction on the railroad between the Confederate movements into the Mississippi Valley. The Yankees were confident they could halt Confederate troops. This battle stood out because it was the first great encounter where so many western soldiers participated.

The battle of Shiloh, commenced on April 6th 1862. On April 7th Grant led a counter-offensive and over powered General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, forcing

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the Rebels to retreat. In two days of fighting at Shiloh, over 20,000 men combined were killed and it is historically one of the bloodiest battles in American history. The reality of this battle had a startling effect. In addition to the thousands of soldiers killed, Confederate General Albert S. Johnston was struck by a bullet and bled to death on the battlefield. His untimely death added to the confusion and terror of war for the Confederates. No longer did soldiers or officers view the war as “romantic” or a brief encounter with the enemy. Accounts of dead and wounded littering the ground left ghastly images for both Yankees and Rebels. Shiloh made both sides realize this was not a simple victory for either side.439 Several Ohio regiments fought at Shiloh. Often referred to as a “baptism by fire,” the battle of Shiloh and Pittsburg Landing took a heavy toll on human life. Never again would Union troops underestimate their Confederate opponents.

Aside from the enormous casualties, Shiloh exposed regiments to the horrors of combat first-hand. Terror-stricken men on both sides watched as their comrades were hit by artillery and often dismembered by shellfire. Many soldiers panicked and attempted to escape the battlefield. Others immobilized by injuries, lay where they fell, hoping someone would retrieve them. Still other soldiers enraged by attacks fought almost blindly and aggressively. The events of Shiloh eroded morale and took an incredible emotional toll on soldiers and civilians.440

Never condoning the war, Emily bitterly complained about the death of her friend Chauncey H. Talcott, who was killed on “April 6 at the battle of Pittsburg Landing.” The

440 Joseph Allan Frank and George A. Reaves, “Emotional Responses to Combat” in The Civil War Soldier, pp. 388-391. The authors compare the emotional and psychological trauma of combat between the Civil War and World War I. They argue Shiloh had devastating emotional consequences similar to trench warfare.
twenty-eight year old was shot through the breast. She attended Talcott’s funeral on May 8th, 1862, once his body was returned to Burton. Nash was aware that the soldier was killed in April but lay unburied “on the battlefield about a month without a coffin.” Her observation is insightful. As a layer of the dead Talcott’s death violated tradition, because he was not buried according to appropriate standards. Virtually every aspect of Talcott’s death defied accepted ideals. No circle of mourners presided, nor any evidence of a last statement, or his disposition. Talcott died alone, far from home among strangers on a battlefield in Tennessee.

Chauncey Talcott joined the Ohio Volunteer Militia Company A, 41st Regiment in 1861, rising to the rank of Second Lieutenant before being killed at Pittsburg Landing April 1862. Emily completed the forlorn story of Talcott in 1863 with the death of another local soldier Lester T. Patchin. Patchin, a nephew of Emily’s first husband David Patchin, was wounded at Stone River and died in Nashville, Tennessee. After attending his funeral in Burton on February 8, 1863, Emily wrote his death notice in her journal. Patchin died from infection that set in his knee after suffering a gun-shot wound. Talcott and Patchin were close friends and cousins, according to Nash. The two men joined the service together in August 1861. Both men made a pact to join the army together and if one was killed the other wished to “rest beside him” if he suffered a similar fate. Talcott and Patchin resembled so many young men who joined, served, and died together during the Civil War. The two soldiers lay side-by-side at Welton Cemetery in Burton.

Morris Latham, W.W. Munn, and Hazen Corliss all died of wounds received on various battlefields across the South. Latham was shot in the groin, Munn in the forehead.

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and Corliss received a wound to the head at the “battle of Spring Hill Tennessee 1864.”

In each case the wounds proved fatal. The odds were against surviving wounds in combat. Historian James M. McPherson explained the large caliber and low velocity muzzle of Civil War rifles caused enormous and horrible wounds to soldiers. If he did survive the initial gunshot, chances are he succumbed to infection.

If soldiers feared the thought of open combat on the battlefield, they had every reason to be terrified of field hospitals. Disease spread from soldier to soldier and medical treatment was barbaric. Many soldiers distrusted physicians who routinely removed limbs hoping to prevent infection. Despite the creation of the U.S. Sanitary Commission in 1861, soldiers continued to die of unsanitary conditions and wounds. The Sanitary Commission raised funds for bandages, medicine and food for troops. The medical profession made few contributions during the war and was hindered by a basic lack of scientific knowledge and overwhelmed by disease, illness, and catastrophic death.

Frances Peter did her part by “making bandages and tearing up old linens” for Hospital No. 1 which had about 200 sick and wounded men under her father’s care. “There wasn’t much at the hospital,” she confessed, so they made do with what resources were available. Caught between Confederate and Union forces in Kentucky, the Peter’s family periodically treated soldiers from both sides. Regardless of who received treatment, Peter described the constant illness and epidemics among the men. In April and May 1862, a number of soldiers from the 22nd Kentucky left the hospital, exposing staff and civilians to small pox. More often, Peter discussed the poor conditions within

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445 Ibid, pp. 410-411. McPherson discusses the role of hospitals, as does Gilpin Faust, Laderman, and Reid Mitchell. All four agree about the unsanitary conditions in hospitals led to more deaths.
the hospitals and lack of medical supplies. When a group of Rebel soldiers arrived at Hospital No. 2, many were already suffering from small pox and dysentery. Frances Peter did not have “blankets or bed clothes of any kind to offer them.” In this weakened state, many soldiers died immediately. Burdened by a lack of efficient supplies, many soldiers associated hospitals with barbaric treatment, pain, and death.

The close of 1862 brought little solace to Emily and the residents of Geauga County. The carnage of the Civil War at the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862 and later the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House in 1864, accounted for more soldiers killed and problems associated with proper burials. The Battle of Fredericksburg lasted five days in December 1862. On December 13 Union troops fought courageously against four ranks of Georgia, and North Carolina troops. Fourteen Union brigades fought heroically against the Confederates, only to suffer one of the worst defeats of the Civil War. Over 13,500 Union soldiers were killed at Fredericksburg compared to about 4,500 Rebel casualties. There was really no strategic gains in position for either side. What survivors remembered about Fredericksburg was the number of bodies littering the battlefield. Northerners were distraught over the news of all the casualties. In his personal journal Private Elisha Hunt Rhodes, provided his own descriptions of the battle. On the evening of December 14 the battle raged and the Rebels entrenched themselves. Bombarded by artillery and exploding shells, Rhodes recalled the scene before him, “the dead and wounded covered the ground in all directions.” Men tried to retrieve them from the battlefield but only to have the enemy open fire. Rhodes concluded that many men were left to fend for themselves. He later acknowledged, “my heart filled with sorrow for our

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446 Frances Peter, *Diary*, p. 15, 29, 33, 75, April 16, 1862, August 31, 1862, September 18, 1862, November 1, 1862.  
dead, but I am awful grateful that my life has been spared.” Rhodes, like many soldiers at Fredericksburg, blamed the countless dead on incompetent leadership and disastrous decisions made by Union General Ambrose E. Burnside and others.

Emily was painfully aware of the thousands of soldiers killed at Fredericksburg. Her dear friends Augustus and Lucretia Lane lost their son Chauncey Lane on the last day of the battle. Emily understood the family’s sorrow and despair writing in December 1862, “In this last battle of Fredericksburg there was slaughter which was fruitless.” More revealing, she felt the war was a “lost cause” and the nation at the point of destruction. Fredericksburg and the tragedy of so many deaths weakened morale on the Union home-front. What happened on the battlefield affected those at home. Like Rhodes, Emily worried over those soldiers who lay unburied and exposed thousands of miles from home.

If Fredericksburg filled Emily with trepidation, the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, in May 1864 gave her a first-hand account of injuries and death. The battle at Spotsylvania demonstrated relentless violence and ceaseless warfare. Grant’s army hoped to capture Spotsylvania Courthouse and move on to Richmond. Grant and Lee clashed over a two week period in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. Although General Lee was outnumbered, attack after counter-attack continued until the Union Army suffered 44,000 casualties and the Confederates 26,000. Elisha Hunt Rhodes was hopeful because “Grant was a fighter.” Although Rhodes admitted his division had to dig in and

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448 Elisha Hunt Rhodes, *All for the Union*, p. 92 December 13, 1862. Rhodes describes many instances when the dead could not be retrieved from the battlefield.
lost about half its numbers to Rebel fire. “Digging in” and creating trenches meant many soldiers were mobile and forced to protect themselves in the earthen-works to withstand enemy artillery. The mental, let alone physical strain on the soldiers and officers was enormous.

Emily’s memories of Spotsylvania left her with a distinct impression of the war. The glory of battle could not outweigh the sheer number of men killed in Virginia. The human sacrifice was enormous and unrelenting. In June 1864, Emily travelled to Michigan to comfort her daughter Philansia Holcomb. Emily’s son-in-law Martin Holcomb was shot in his left knee during the Battle of Spotsylvania. Wounded, he remained in a hospital until he recovered. Surprisingly, he is one of only a few soldiers Emily records surviving a wound and medical care, returning home to Michigan. At the same time Emily reported visiting a friend in Michigan, Mrs. Woolcot, whose husband Joel was not so lucky. Joel Woolcot fought alongside Martin Holcomb in the same battle, but received a bullet near his heart. He lived twelve days in agony before succumbing to infection in the same hospital as Holcomb. Emily was with Mrs. Woolcot when she received the devastating news about her husband’s death. “My heart bled to day being present,” wrote Nash in retrospect. She described the woman’s pain as severe and her agony and screams like a “soul parting from the body.” Mrs. Woolcot fainted on the ground. “I’ve never seen such agony,” admitted Emily. She was present to witness the fallout and aftermath of battles. The severe emotional toil in the days and weeks following the death of a loved one changed the lives of wives and children forever. Emily offered comfort and support but detested the carnage of the Civil War.

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451 Rhodes, All for the Union, pp. 153-154.
In a similar passage, Emily offered one of the last personal stories of a Geauga soldier. She was present when her friend received the awful news of her son’s death. Private Delos Shaw was a prisoner of war in the infamous Andersonville Prison. He survived the horrors of incarceration only to be sent to Vicksburg aboard the steamboat Sultana. On April 27, 1865, the Sultana was returning liberated Union prisoners home following the end of the war. A boiler on board the ship exploded killing Shaw and 1,500 other men. Elizabeth Shaw was wracked by grief and spoke of nothing else except how she hoped to see her son in a couple of days. But mother and son were never reunited. Even after the war, death, misery, and suffering by those at home continued. Poignant and sorrowful, Emily’s entries are significant because of her personal knowledge and narration rather than sterile facts and statistics on the war. Emily mourned for the soldiers and mourned with their families. By 1865 more deaths were occurring in distant places on a regular basis. Emily still demonstrated some control by recording the deaths of her soldier-friends even if she could not be there to prepare their bodies for burial. Generally both sides of the conflict believed the number of deaths fluctuating successes and losses on the battlefield meant their soldiers died for a patriotic cause. Not unlike Monroe Nash’s reasoning, he fought for a “righteous cause.” But those far from the battlefield had other impressions of killing and warfare. Emily’s journal reveals the devastation and melancholy the Civil War brought to small communities like Geauga County.

**Home front Reactions**

Other women writing on the home front during the Civil War provided similar reactions to death as those expressed by Nash. Betsy Mix Cowles felt sorrow and loss

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when her nephew, Giles Hooker Cowles died at the Battle of Petersburg in June 1864. Betsy received numerous letters of condolences from family and friends. Her cousin Sarah, writing in August 1864, remarked about the tragedy of Giles’ death and how his father, Emily’s brother hoped “to lean on him in the decline of his years.” Grieving with the family, Sarah plainly understood the loss of a child meant the parents suffered in their old age.454 In response to Betsy’s letter detailing her nephew’s death, E.P. Howard exclaimed, “Who knows what is before us[?] Do you think there will be more fighting in this dreadful strife?” Acknowledging Betsy’s nephew, Howard added, “How sad and yet how noble! When will the storm pass?”455 Despite fighting a war to end slavery and believing in a just cause, Betsy and her extended family felt deprived over the dreadful loss of their nephew.

As a testimony to the number of funerals and the effects on civilians, Betsy’s friend attended the service for a soldier in New York in 1864. Writing to Betsy about the event, she cried, “Oh this dreadful war! When will it cease?” E.P. Howard corresponded with Colonel H. England who “died in the army June, 1864.” Although Howard did not doubt England’s “preparation for a better world,” she lamented over his parents loss. The young colonel received full military honors and a large funeral ceremony on the square. His distraught parents asked Howard to “ride as a mourner in his funeral parade.” A most solemn occasion, the letter indicated the impact death had on the family, town, and residents.456

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454 Cousin Sarah to Betsy Mix Cowles August 1, 1864, Betsy Mix Cowles Papers. Kent State University Library, Archives.
455 E.P. Howard to Betsy Mix Cowles, September 4, 1864, Kent State University Library, archives. Betsy Mix Cowles Papers.
456 E.P. Howard to Betsy Mix Cowles, July 1, 1864, Kent State University Library, archives. Betsy Mix Cowles Papers.
Mary Chesnut of South Carolina, provides yet another perspective from the home front from a southern point of view. Comparing her views in 1861, Chesnut simply stated, “no casualties yet, no real mourning, nobody hurt. So it is all a parade.” Her almost casual observations turned grim after witnessing a military funeral in July 1861. “The empty saddle and the led war-horse…it comes and it comes until I feel inclined to close my ears and scream.”\(^\text{457}\) Witnessing the effects of death on her friends brought a sober reality to the war. By 1864, death became commonplace. “Read to-day the list of killed and wounded. One long column was not enough for South Carolina’s dead.” From May through June 1864, several important and deadly battles were fought in Virginia, including the Wilderness and later Spotsylvania Court House. As deaths mounted, Chesnut added, “Our fighting men have all gone to the front; only old men and boys are at home now.”\(^\text{458}\) The absence of fathers, husbands, and the death of friends characterized the horrors of war. Whether an aristocratic southern lady, abolitionist from the North, or layer of the dead from Ohio, the Civil War permeated the lives of women on the home front in remarkably similar ways.

**Technological Changes**

In a country riven by change, the technological and scientific innovations introduced during the Civil War altered Emily’s role in funerary preparation and mourning customs in Geauga County. Those same changes were reflected across a stricken nation. In the nineteenth century most people died close to home. In fact, it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that more deaths occurred away from the home and family. War of course challenged the widely held cultural belief that death

\(^{457}\) Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Diary*, June 12, 1861, p. 62.  
\(^{458}\) Ibid, *Diary*, July, 1861, p. 88, June 1, 1864, p. 310.
took place at home surrounded by loved ones. Nineteenth-century Americans struggled to comprehend terrible and tragic deaths from war and so far from home. Technology helped to complete the process of preserving and sending bodies home.

Early methods of body preservation included the use of ice packed on the corpse or laying the body itself on blocks of ice. The Civil War made this type of preservation impossible and impractical. One of the greatest difficulties was procuring a coffin for a dead soldier. Coffins were in demand following a battle. Thousands of people were competing to find for their son, father, or brother on a battlefield. Since most coffins were still hand-made locally, the task of finding enough coffins for bodies proved especially daunting.

One of the first indications of technological changes was the shift from coffins to caskets. Emily’s immediate family made wooden coffins for local residents. The body-shaped coffin was rapidly replaced by newly designed more elaborate caskets. Caskets became more common and readily available in the decade following the Civil War. However, even during the war many caskets were mass-produced and mail-ordered rather than personally constructed. Some were lined with linen and satin, providing a comfortable resting place for the deceased. The change in terms was noticeable during the Civil War. Caskets came to symbolize a conventional rectangular receptacle for holding the remains of the dead. \(^{459}\) Coffins represented local, personal workmanship, caskets were impersonal containers for the body. The newly designed receptacles also had handles allowing for transportation, usually over a substantial distance. Public interest in caskets or containers for the dead provided more protection for the corpse than a simple wooden coffin. Because funerals had high attendance, the container holding the

\(^{459}\) Pike and Armstrong, \textit{A Time to Mourn} p. 50, Habenstein, \textit{American Funeral Directing}, p. 274.
body had to be beautiful both inside and out.\textsuperscript{460} Caskets became functional during the war because contemporary beliefs held that the body should be observed at, or after death, even if the individual died far from home. The aesthetic appearance of the body could still be retained for viewing once it reached its final destination.

The emergence of caskets coincided with other technological changes such as new methods for preservation, embalming, and later an emerging undertaking business. Emily described three funerals for soldiers where “metalik coffins” were used to preserve the body. She does not use the term metallic before 1862. What Emily described was a widespread new development in funerary technology called the Fisk Metallic Casket patented in 1849. Lead or metallic caskets became popular during the Civil War because of their innovative design and function. Made from cast iron, metallic caskets purported to be air-tight and indestructible.\textsuperscript{461} The war accelerated metallic casket sales simply because of the desire to ship soldiers from the battlefields in the south to homes in Ohio. Keeping with tradition, the casket preserved the body for viewing. Thus air-tight cast metal burial cases or caskets became popular during the Civil War out of necessity.

Although new and appealing, the Fisk Metallic Caskets were quite costly. It is likely that only wealthy families could afford such technology. Wholesale prices for this casket style was more than twenty five dollars. As compared to traditional wooden coffins, metallic caskets were out of reach for most soldiers.\textsuperscript{462} Typical ready-made wooden coffins cost between $2 to $8 dollars depending on the wood. Two out of the


\textsuperscript{461} Laderman, The Sacred Remains, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{462} Robert V. Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 70-71. Wells discussed types of wood used for wooden coffins and a wide variety of prices.
three local soldiers buried in metallic caskets were officers. Emily acknowledged Second Lieutenant Talcott lay on the battlefield about a month before his remains were identified and sent home.\textsuperscript{463} The Fisk Casket was useful in preserving the physical remains and stopping decomposition that had obviously begun. It is unlikely that Talcott was embalmed before being shipped. Emily indicated if this was the case. Nor does she comment on the body’s appearance once it reached Burton. Although this new and approved casket design permitted soldiers to be shipped home, Emily was not convinced that the technology replaced the circle of mourners or watching the individual die.

Lieutenant Chauncey Lane was also shipped to Burton in a “metalik coffin” in 1862. Although she acknowledged his death one thousand miles from home, the casket assured that Lane’s remains would be returned to his family. He was given a grand funeral and “beried under arms.”\textsuperscript{464} Another Civil War veteran, Andrew Pool died of dysentery. One revolutionary feature of the Fisk Metallic Casket was a glass plate over the face permitting mourners to view the deceased. Pool suffered terribly from disease and after dying, his body was left ten days on the battlefield. Emily viewed the body remarking about its wasted, deteriorated appearance. “He has been dead ten days he did not look verry natural I think…”\textsuperscript{465} Her journal entry may seem harsh and perhaps sarcastic, but Emily never intended anyone to read her passages. They were observations, thoughts and perceptions meant to record her views on funerals. Since viewing the body was an integral part of funerary behavior, it was natural for her to make such observations.

\textsuperscript{463} Habenstein, America Funeral Directing, p. 269, Nash Journal, (1862), p. 110.
\textsuperscript{464} Nash, Journal, (1863), p. 113.
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid, (1863), p. 120.
Robert Wells confirms Emily’s description and use of metallic caskets for officers. In his study of Schenectady, New York, Wells identified Fisk Metallic Burial Cases sold to residents as early as the late 1850s. However, because they were so elaborate and expensive, the average consumer purchased affordable caskets from the local cabinet maker. In his research on the Civil War, Wells found that generally officers and wealthy service men could afford to have their bodies shipped home. In one example, a soldier from New York died in Louisiana in December 1864. His fellow officers arranged for his body to be shipped back to Schenectady in a metallic coffin.  

It seems ironic that so few medical improvements and advancements were made during the Civil War and yet so many drastic funerary changes resulted. The Civil War introduced one of the most dramatic technological changes in the funerary business: embalming. As the war continued and soldiers died, the demand to send bodies home increased. Embalming was not immediately embraced by Americans as a viable option in preservation. Europeans employed embalming practices in the 1850s primarily for the study of anatomy. Preserving the body seemed unnatural to many people. However, the benefits soon outweighed the apprehension. If a body could appear life-like and arrive home in decent condition even after the trauma of war, then embalming could allow the family to mourn in a more traditional way.  

Emily argued that embalming would not be necessary if soldiers died at home where they belonged.  

Despite new casket designs, disease and deterioration took its toll on bodies left on the battlefield and exposed to the elements. Various preservation methods had been

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466 Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, pp. 70-71, 128-129.
467 Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, p. 92. Robert Habenstein, Gary Laderman, and Robert Wells all provide information on embalming. See chapter 5 and a discussion of Thomas Holmes and a history of embalming.
attempted throughout the nineteenth century, including other air-tight containers and refrigeration techniques. Because so few people died far from home, embalming was rarely used until the Civil War. Dr. Thomas Holmes, an early battlefield embalmer experimented with a variety of fluids and techniques. Not only did Holmes chemically embalm bodies for transportation, but he succeeded in recreating a life-like appearance. Because embalming was initially expensive, officers and prominent individuals were the only ones capable of affording the technology.\textsuperscript{468}

Aside from Holmes, other embalmers began a lucrative business by setting up their services close to army hospitals and battlefields. Embalmers even advertised their services on signs and posters near areas of conflict, hoping to attract clientele. During one battle in Virginia, soldiers entering an engagement with the enemy recalled embalming advertisements pinned to trees. Disheartened by the thought of impending death, officers complained and had the signs removed.\textsuperscript{469} Other mortuary services were available and emerged as businesses because of the Civil War. Two express companies; Adams Express and the Southern Express retrieved bodies from the battlefield and shipped them home for a price. Both companies ordered wooden coffins at the beginning of a battle and for about $50.00 shipped the body home. Innovative and aspiring businesses, both express companies were the prelude the modern undertaking service.\textsuperscript{470}

Sometimes soldiers took it upon themselves to prepare for death. Often fellow soldiers would contribute to the costs of shipping a comrade home. However, as the war progressed and the sheer number of men killed in battle rose, this proved unlikely. These

\textsuperscript{469} Ibid, \textit{The Sacred Remains}, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{470} Drew Gilpin Faust, \textit{This Republic of Suffering}, p. 91.
actions indicate the desire to provide the best possible death for soldiers even amidst war. The desire to preserve tradition and create an appropriate burial was eminent.

In actuality, few Geauga veterans were embalmed or shipped home. Likely due to the expense, soldiers were buried where they fell. More often Emily observed the date of death and the actual burial of the soldier. Often there was a gap of several weeks between the events. Many soldiers were not returned home. Either the family could not afford to transport the deceased, embalming was too costly, or the remains were too badly decomposed.

Whether new technology included air-tight caskets or embalming, Emily was keenly aware of the changes affecting traditional practices. The Civil War was a watershed for those transformations in behavior and her journal forecasts the alterations as a dramatic turning point. Reassuring and comforting the sick and dying was a role that Emily presided over for many decades in her community. Since nineteenth century culture required death to be observed and individuals surrounded by his/her loved ones, it seemed natural that Emily was gravely concerned by the unobserved deaths during the Civil War. Her role and traditional nineteenth-century funeral behavior was usurped when death on the battlefield no longer permitted witnesses and testimonies subscribing to the person’s spirituality and preparedness to die. If Nash was alarmed by the technological changes introduced by war, her journal indicated profound and permanent cultural changes resulting in the aftermath of war.

One of Emily’s chief concerns was the inability to witness death. The circle of mourners was absent and often death occurred quickly, without following proper protocol. Referring to death from war as a fruitless slaughter, she focused on the sorrow

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felt by family members in Burton who were not there to observe death "one thousand miles from home." Interestingly Emily tried to offer a characterization of the soldier and credit his personality in her death notices. One of the advantages of having a circle of mourners was to hear the final words and last utterances of the dying. She offered her own assessment of soldiers. He was pure of heart, Emily wrote about one young soldier who died in the South. "He was pious and worthy, greatly loved by all that knew him." Similar to death notices describing those she observed, Nash attempted to offer a spiritual and personal assessment of the young man.

Apparently the inability to observe death concerned many people on the home-front, not just Nash. No doubt deaths during the Civil War caused enormous grief. But denied the ability to witness death and not present to hear the final words, created a serious dilemma for nineteenth-century Americans who were quite familiar with circles of mourners at the bedside and elaborate funeral behavior. In May 1863, Elias Peissner was killed in the Battle of Chancellorsville, in Virginia. A series of letters written by officers to Peissner’s widow reveal his manner of death and reactions to his demise.

Peissner died in the initial assault led by General Lee on Union troops on May 1st, 1863. Although killed in action, Peissner’s family in New York eventually received his remains sent home in a metallic casket. Over the next few weeks Margaret Peissner both wrote and received letters about her husband’s death at Chancellorsville. Margaret requested information from fellow officers about the manner of her husband’s death and even his last comments. One officer informed Margaret that her husband received injuries shortly after the battle commenced. Yet he assured the widow that her husband was a good man.

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and “died gallantly and nobly.”^474 When Peissner’s remains reached New York, Margaret saw obvious signs of decomposition and decay. Her additional letters begged for details and after viewing her husband’s face and distorted body, she concluded, “he must have died in great pain.”^475 Margaret Peissner sought reassurance that her husband died peacefully, even in battle. She reasoned that he must have experienced intense suffering to look that poorly. Her letters indicate the concern over her husband’s disposition, pain, and state of mind before his death. Sadly, Margaret never received the reassurance she sought. Even thirty years after his death, the widow Peissner dressed in black gowns and continued to use black-bordered stationary associated with grief and long term mourning.^476

In other entries where soldiers died unobserved, Emily wondered whether the soldier was prepared to die and change worlds. One would never know because there was no record of his death being observed. Her greatest concern resonated with the death notice of Edward Wells. Private Wells died of disease in a “land far from home and [far] from friends surrounded by many dangers….he died alone.”^477 Her last sentence accompanied many death entries attributed to Geauga soldiers. Dying alone was uncommon, against tradition, and rare. Denied the consolation of the standard death bed rituals and circle of mourners, the sudden and often violent death of Civil War soldiers changed the very notion of an acceptable demise.

The war made death more anonymous and Emily was being replaced and removed from many of her customary duties. She knew her soldier-friends died among

^474 Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, p. 151.
strangers, or their passing was unnoticed altogether. She worried no one would “close his eyes or see the death struggle or receive the last adieu or take the parting hand nor compose the body when the heart ceased to beat…” Throughout the war years, Emily asserted. “I rather my friends die at home where they can be buried decent and have their eyes closed when dead…oh the horrors of this war.”

She confessed it is better to die at home where the dead received care, and death was scrutinized and noticed in a domestic, familial setting. Her death entries impart lasting and final changes occurring because of the war.

Perhaps the most monumental cultural challenge for Nash was the absence of a body for burial. Naturally she could not witness death, nor compose the body, but often the corpse itself was not returned to the county. Beginning with the death and disposal of John Brown’s body, Emily was gravely concerned with the proper treatment and burial of Civil War soldiers. Bodies sent home for burial were treated with reverence and respect, which reflected tradition and honor toward the dead. Deeply rooted ideas were challenged when bodies were not located and returned home. Conventional behavior was uprooted by the conditions of war.

Just as witnessing death and composing the body was imperative, having the actual corpse to view was a central part of traditional funerary behavior. As late as 1863 Emily relayed the story of Henrietta Hosmer’s death in Illinois on Christmas Day. Hosmer died in childbirth and her body arrived in Burton the end of December. Despite the lengthy delay, a traditional funeral commenced on January 1, 1864. Delays in burials were not uncommon even among civilians. However, as the war continued, it became increasingly difficult to identify and find bodies to ship home. Those who were sent back

to the county received honorable and notable services. One soldier was buried in the masonic tradition and another had a grand funeral with a large concourse following his coffin to its final resting place. In each situation a body was present and interred.

However, four funerals were held in Burton without a body present. Funerals without bodies became an unfortunate, but necessary aspect of the Civil War. Almost unheard of, Emily did not write of funerals without bodies until the Civil War. Of the four servicemen described in her journal, she commented where the body lay, either in the south, presumably on a battlefield, or buried where he fell. In all cases the body was not returned and therefore funerary tradition violated. Not hearing their final statements or comments meant no one knew for sure of the soldiers’ disposition or willingness to accept God. Because she could not witness their deaths, Emily felt defeated and a disservice to her occupation as a layer of the dead. She witnessed a widening separation between the living and the dead. In an age when death was readily observed, the Civil War corrupted the notion of the “beautiful death.”

Although the body was not present, in the case of each soldier a funeral service was provided. Elaborate and poignant, the funeral without a body offered a sense of closure for relatives in Geauga County. Emily heard the funeral sermon and attended the service for each veteran. Still trying to create a mediocre sense of tradition and familiarity, residents held funerals to respect the fallen soldiers, but to also recreate the attitude of community. An essential part of mourning behavior was the funeral, with or without a body. The same challenge was faced across America as many soldiers failed to return home and civilians were left to hold proper memorial services.

\footnote{Nash, 	extit{Journal}, (1864), p. 110, 120.}
The most famous funeral of the Civil War era was that of Abraham Lincoln. His assassination came at the end of the war and in many ways symbolized the death of over 620,000 soldiers. Public response and commemoration also suggests a transformation in customs and behavior surrounding nineteenth century mourning. Lincoln’s death and funeral demonstrated the end of many traditions and ironically the beginning of new technological and scientific methods introduced during the war.

The national dimensions and consequences of Lincoln’s death are addressed in John Neff’s *Honoring the Civil War Dead*. The nation had but a few days to rejoice over the war’s end, only to face the catastrophic assassination of the president. For many northerners, Lincoln became a martyr and symbolized the sacrifice of so many Civil War soldiers. Neff stressed the need for many people to find a meaning or explanation for the president’s death. First responses to Lincoln’s death followed tradition. After he was shot, the president was moved across the street from Ford’s Theater to a boarding house where the family and others kept vigil by his bedside.480 One aspect of Lincoln’s deathbed scene captured America’s attention. Currier and Ives produced an engraving, not altogether accurate, depicting Lincoln’s “good death” as he was surrounded by his children and wife along with members of his cabinet. In reality, Mary Todd Lincoln was so distraught she remained in another room with her younger son and neither were present for most of the vigil. The engraving is a representation, symbolic of the death of so many soldiers and also reflects concepts associated with nineteenth-century death-bed scenes. Lincoln appeared calm and composed with his family close by. There was no evidence in the print of the violence inflicted on the president or any sign of a struggle.

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before perishing.\textsuperscript{481} Popular prints displayed what the public \textit{wanted} to believe about the president’s death. Stoic and calm, death was accepted by Lincoln and Americans.

Lincoln’s body was taken to the White House and prepared for embalming and public display. A national day of mourning occurred on April 19, 1865, and the corpse was displayed in the East Room of the White House.\textsuperscript{482} From Washington D.C., Lincoln’s body traveled by funeral train making stops in several northern cities including Baltimore, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York City, Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, Chicago, and finally, Springfield. At each stop thousands of mourners paid their respects to the slain president. Cleveland built a special structure to accommodate the anticipated crowd. The funeral cortege made a 1,700 mile journey before reaching Springfield, Illinois.\textsuperscript{483} Throughout the journey attendants tried to conceal the decomposition of the body, especially the face. It was important for the president to look life-like and recognizable. However, when Lincoln’s body finally reached Springfield on May 3, signs of decay and the shortcomings of embalming clearly showed. Eyewitnesses described his skin as grey or brown and his features sunken. Still, the process of science allowed Americans to glimpse Lincoln and grieve collectively.\textsuperscript{484}

Reactions to Lincoln’s death varied depending on what part of the country or where people lived. David B. Chesebrough examined and compared sermons written and preached in the seven weeks after Lincoln’s assassination. Useful as primary sources and a gauge to measure grief, mourners flocked to churches to hear sermons, hoping for guidance, and perhaps answers. Some preachers interpreted the president’s death as

\textsuperscript{481} Ibid, pp. 72-73.
\textsuperscript{482} Laderman, \textit{The Sacred Remains}, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{483} Neff, \textit{Honoring the Civil War Dead}, pp. 76-77, 79, Gilpin Faust, \textit{This Republic of Suffering}, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{484} Laderman, \textit{The Sacred Remains}, p. 161.
divine punishment, other saw him as an agent of God, removed when his service concluded. Still others preached that it was time for a change and America needed to move forward. Similar to Neff’s views on Lincoln, the president became a martyr, a fallen hero, and father figure to the country. Other clergy viewed the presidents’ untimely demise in a more “positive light” by claiming the tragedy united people like never before. Lincoln’s tragic end brought all social classes together and they collectively mourned. Chesebrough even examined sermons in southern churches where many people were genuinely shocked by his death.

Even Mary Chesnut’s perception in the days after Lincoln’s assassination reveals shock. When she discovered from a dispatch that Lincoln had been killed, she exclaimed, “old Abe Lincoln has been killed, murdered and Seward wounded! It is simply maddening, all this.” Captain J.H.B. Correl seemed overwhelmed by the tragedy. Writing in his diary from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Correl wrote several lines about the weather on April 15, 1865, and then added, “It rained today. Received a telegram about Lincoln’s death. I was relieved of charge and wrote to my wife.”

Moved by the awful news, Correl retired to his quarters and shared his grief with his fellow soldiers. Personal responses to Lincoln’s death disclose shock, and grief and the gaiety of war’s end turned to depression and gloom.

Lincoln’s funeral attracted considerable attention, even in places where the train did not stop. It is estimated over one million people viewed his body and another seven million participated in memorial services across the country. Even Elisha Hunt Rhodes,

488 J.H.B Correl, Diary number 3, April 15, 1865, Century Village Museum, Shanower Library.
still serving in the field in Virginia, wrote of the president’s death. He described flags at half-mast and black drapery honoring the fallen leader. In his personal journal the day of public mourning (April 19), Rhodes announced “we cannot believe he’s dead. Lincoln was truly the soldier’s friend…” Black crepe, wreathes, and black-draped flags adorned American cities and public buildings. People in the north mourned collectively and his demise symbolized the catastrophic loss and pain of the Civil War.\(^{489}\) His death, funeral and mourning was the crescendo and final scene in the destruction of the war. Only the funeral of such an important heroic figure such as Lincoln could create a sense of collective nationalism and public mourning.

Part of collective mourning included funerals in American towns and cities allowing people to experience a “common or shared pain.” Americans felt connected and had opportunity to participate in a funeral and express their sorrow. Of course these funerals were held without a body. Just as funerals were held in absence for missing veterans, services were held without the body of the slain president.

Emily was one of the millions of mourners who attended a funeral for Lincoln in Burton on April 23, 1865. Certainly critical of Lincoln’s actions and politics throughout the war, she was nonetheless alarmed by his assassination. She complained on April 14 about boisterous rejoicing in the streets since the war ended, but her heart remained heavy over so many deaths. The next day she received news of Lincoln’s death by telegraph. Taking one last opportunity to criticize the dead president, she noted he was killed in “the theater a place of amusement…”\(^{490}\) Emily’s attendance at a funeral for Lincoln was essential for several reasons. First she followed tradition and protocol.

\(^{489}\) Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead*, p. 81, Rhodes, *All for the Union*, p. 232.

Although she openly despised the president, she showed respect for the man and his position. She even referred to him as “Mr. Lincoln.” Second, Nash’s account demonstrates public mourning for a national figure on an enormous scale. And finally, Burton’s funeral without-a-body represents a new trend associated with events of the Civil War: an honorable funeral despite no physical body. Lincoln’s mortal remains manifested in the end of tradition, new scientific innovation, and collective mourning concluding the Civil War.

Another indication of cultural changes associated with funerals during the Civil War was found in decorative elements on gravestones. Bereaved families wanted to remember their fallen soldiers even if his body was not present. The urn and willow style of gravestones became popular in the mid-nineteenth century and accelerated in the 1880s. Nearly a universal design and found throughout Geauga County cemeteries, the urn and willow was an abstract symbol of memory devoted to the individual. The motif represented sorrow and human loss. This style was closely related to the Civil War and the likelihood of an unobserved and more anonymous death. Urn and willow gravestones often contain the simple epitaph “In Memory,” meaning the body may lie somewhere else but the grave is close to home. The significance of the urn and willow explains the historical and cultural changes underway during the Civil War. More people traveled and died in war far from home. In the past graves and stone markers indicated where the body was located. In contrast, urn and willow implied the memory was retained but not the physical being. Like so many other cultural changes such as funerals without bodies, the
urn and willow decorative gravestone style was a compromise allowing memory to survive even in times of certain change.491

**End of the Good Death**

Emily’s death entries and analysis of the Civil War leave little doubt she witnessed and experienced vast and permanent changes in funerary and mourning behavior. She doubted soldiers killed on the battlefield so far from home and family experienced a “good death.” Dying and an appropriate death permeated every aspect of living. Poetry and literature, mourning wear, and accessories all insisted on a proper way to die. Civil War soldiers along with civilians were already immersed in a culture of intimate death-bed scenes and a circle of mourners. Emily’s journal reveals not only the drastic changes brought on by war, but she adamantly denied that soldiers received a “good death.” Undoubtedly Emily viewed the Civil War and its destruction as a horrendous catastrophe, ending the Age of the Beautiful Death and all its rituals and ceremonialism.

A striking contrast to Nash’s experiences and writing, Drew Gilpin Faust argues in her acclaimed work *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, the “good death” was indeed available and made possible for Civil War soldiers. Her thesis underscores the important and powerful role dying played in American culture. The good death was an accepted and anticipated part of nineteenth century socio-cultural life. How a person died was a critical part of social behavior.

Faust writes that the good death was acknowledged and managed whenever possible. Stand-ins, or surrogates in the form of other soldiers, doctors, nurses, chaplains,

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and other personnel sat with dying soldiers in field hospitals. Letters home occasionally described the last words the deceased provided by a comrade. Soldiers retained some version of the familial setting even on the battlefield. Civil War nurse Clara Barton kept notes on the men she tended, which she sent home to their families telling them about the soldiers’ death.

Faust does not doubt as the death tolls mounted and intensified, it became difficult to justify the war, and even more difficult to construct a good death. Many letters written home from battlefields or hospitals provide evidence that soldiers desperately attempted to convince their loved ones at home that their comrades died committed to religion and prepared for an afterlife. Many genuine attitudes appeared to be expressed in condolence letters. Perhaps the rituals of nineteenth century mourning behavior saturated society so deeply, soldiers wanted to believe in the good death. On the other hand, providing condolence letters devoid of violence and struggle not only adhered to cultural standards but eased a grieving family’s fears.

Just as soldiers were aware of the good death, Faust writes that it was the foundation for the process of mourning carried on by survivors. This statement recognizes the importance of the good death to all members of society. Adhering to this view and the process of mourning was part of the societal expectation. But as the war progressed the discrepancy between ideal beliefs and the overwhelming reality of death was redefined. The notion of a good death, traditional or not, could not be accomplished. Unprepared for the carnage of destruction and death in the Civil War, human life

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492 Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering, pp. 11-17.
494 Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering, pp. 30-31.
495 Ibid, p. 163.
diminished and a major alteration in attitudes about dying emerged. Survivors mourned and tried to preserve memories of the deceased and understand how their concepts of mourning behavior changed.

Perhaps Faust’s strongest evidence comes from the rapid change in efforts of survivors to comprehend the challenges associated with enormous and catastrophic death. Efforts to identify and bury the dead during and after the war, a new undertaking profession and technological advancements in a scientific funerary industry emerged. Faust describes some of the same changes in culture observed by Emily Nash. An impressive array of primary sources are used in This Republic of Suffering including letters from soldiers written to family members, or journal entries recorded in combat support Faust’s chapters on “Dying” and “Killing.” She successfully illustrates the attitudes of soldiers going into battle and their shock at witnessing violent, and brutal death. At the same time she uses prominent figures such as Ambrose Bierce, Frederick Douglass, and Mary Chesnut’s writings. Even her incorporation of poetry and culture by Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman thoroughly examine the non-combative side of the war. All were struck by the horrors of war and deeply affected by death. Her plethora of sources adds to the overall understanding of death in America.\footnote{Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering, p. 196, 141.}

Emily Nash’s journal allows a different set of conclusions based on her insight as a layer of the dead and her death bed observations. Nash disagreed that a good death was ever possible for soldiers after 1862. She is not an anomaly. Rather, Nash saw the effects of the war on the home front. She witnessed the changes in nineteenth century mourning behavior and was deeply affected by the modifications in culture. To Nash, the Civil War changed the meaning and validity of the good death. Dying alone far from home without
the comfort of family alarmed Emily. She insisted it was better to die with a circle of
mourners present and witnesses to compose the body. The war changed this custom and
violated tradition. Not one of Emily’s entries described a soldier’s death witnessed or
attended by a friend or comrade. She saw the war changing mourning behavior
permanently. Her journal entries insisted the age of the beautiful death and the good
death were no longer attainable or even possible for soldiers. 497

Aside from dying alone, the violence of the Civil War and death from disease
made the good death highly unlikely. Many of Emily’s soldier-friends died on the
battlefield and were never returned home. Before the Civil War it was relatively rare not
to have the physical body present to intern. Even Emily wrote passages about violence on
the battlefield and intense warfare. She questioned the manner of death and ensuing
struggles faced by soldiers dying in conflict. Bodies torn apart by explosions or
dismembered by artillery hardly meant a peaceful passing. To Emily, the ferocity of war
ended the good death.

In January 1862, a young soldier at Camp Wickliffe in Kentucky, wrote to his
elderly grandmother, Nabby Hitchcock in Burton. William Hitchcock complained about
an epidemic of measles resulting in the deaths of four men. Suffering from the illness
himself, he described his fellow soldiers as “no more than skeletons.” The hospital
accommodations were inadequate, forcing the men to sleep on the floor. The disease
raged through the camp and Hitchcock observed, “it is not surprising to me that they are
all stricken with disease.” 498 He mentioned two of his comrades dying and their remains

497 Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 150-153, Laderman, The Sacred Remains, see the chapter on the
Civil War.
498 William Hitchcock to Nabby (Abigail) Hitchcock letter, January, 1862. The letter resides in the
Hitchcock file at Century Village Shanower Library.
shipped home. This fascinating letter does not divulge any information about battles or camp life other than illness. Instead, William identified the sickness and the stress it placed on the entire camp.\textsuperscript{499} His letter does little to disguise the pain and suffering, instead he wanted his grandmother to know about the grim situation and perhaps his impending fate. Surely Nabby Hitchcock recognized the absence of the good death.

In the same way she viewed a violent death, Emily asserted that death by disease meant a struggle and a painful demise occurred. Just how the soldier struggled or coped with his disease was never revealed since many servicemen died alone. William Hitchcock’s letter certainly supports Emily’s assertion. While her journal reveals proper services were extended to those deceased soldiers returned home, the vast majority of her writing contends the good death was seriously breached and forever transformed. One of the lasting consequences of war was the “resounding shrieks of the sufferers, horrid butchery and carnage…”\textsuperscript{500} Emily saw little effort made to ensure a good death was available.

Other contemporary sources support Nash’s notion of improper burials and a general violation of tradition and customary behavior. Elisha Hunt Rhodes used the phrase “simply horrible” describing bodies half buried or unearthed because of constant fighting. Many of the young private’s accounts include vivid passages of bodies left decaying where they fell, unburied and exposed to conditions. It is evident even in Rhodes’ personal journal that he was emotionally disturbed by the mistreatment of the dead. Even after burying a fellow soldier Rhodes observed, “[death] is so common that

\textsuperscript{499} Ibid, letter, January 1862.
\textsuperscript{500} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1864), p. 123.
little sentiment is wasted. It is not like death at home." Author Gary Laderman acknowledges that the war limited priority given to burying the dead. Battles raged and the dead, wounded, and mangled bodies were left on the open fields. Occasionally flags of truce allowed a cessation in fighting long enough for both sides to bury the dead. Laderman confirms much like Nash, that the desire to provide a good death permeated nineteenth century culture, but the impracticality of war made it nearly impossible. Laderman concludes that most soldiers who died in the Civil War died on southern soil away from family and proper burials. Their fate was highly disruptive to the normal patterns of thought and behavior established for disposal of the dead.

Perhaps Laderman’s strongest support in denying the good death is found in his research on photographs taken during the Civil War. In 1862 a series of photographs were taken at Antietam by Matthew Brady and Alexander Gardner. They exhibited their work in New York City. This new medium left little doubt as to the horrors of war and the condition of bodies. The photos were taken at Antietam before the bodies were buried. As gruesome and realistic as the photos are, they define the terrible carnage and inexplicable slaughter of the war. Laderman believes that northerners finally understood the true brutality of the war after “looking death in the face.” The photos served as a testimony to the war’s butchery, but also allowed observers to scrutinize the faces and expressions of the dead. Some visitors searched for their loved ones, others tried to

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501 Elisha Hunt Rhodes, All for the Union, p. 71, 81, 84.
recognize features and actual expressions.\textsuperscript{503} Mathew B. Brady emerged from the Civil War as one of the greatest chroniclers of soldiers, battlefields, and death. However, historian Robert M. Levine warned even though the scenes of devastation were historically important, the psychological effects on civilians could also be enormous. Recent research also suggested that Brady and Gardner both, posed and even staged some of the soldiers.\textsuperscript{504} Once again, the good death was hardly achieved under these circumstances. There still remained an urgency and desire to bring the body home, but it was hopelessly impossible for most. Civil War photographers capitalized on the public’s fascination with pictures. Brady and Gardner’s work brought the war home and confirmed the terrible reality of death with their pictures.

Laderman’s research supports and agrees with Nash’s observations and journal entries. The good death was imbedded in nineteenth century culture and a necessary part of mourning behavior. War interrupted and distorted these customs and expectations making it virtually impossible to achieve. Nash’s first-hand experiences insist that the good death was no longer feasible and instead testify to the radical transformations in funerary behavior following the Civil War.

One of the gravest concerns during and after a battle was the disposal of the dead. Treatment of bodies was an issue from the very first battle. Burying the dead seemed hasty and an unplanned. First Bull Run in July 1861 left Union forces shocked and unprepared for disposal of the dead. Some families traveled south hoping to retrieve their deceased soldier from a battlefield or hospital. However, most northerners could not make the journey because of the expense. In 1862 physician and writer Oliver Wendell

\textsuperscript{503} Ibid, p. 148-149.
Holmes Sr. traveled to Antietam trying to locate a family member. As a non-combatant, he heard and wrote about the cries of the wounded and witnessed the remains of men unceremoniously covered by dirt or left to rot. He described officers being embalmed and encased in metal caskets, while most of the “rank and file (infantry) were buried where they fell.”

Holmes’ account graphically identified two problems: could the dead be identified let alone properly buried.

Initially bodies were buried where they fell. Sometimes they were recovered during an engagement under a flag of truce. Responsibility of burying the dead usually fell to whomever held the field. Burial parties were sent out to collect and bury bodies in mass-graves. Soldiers who had not yet served in battle and African American servicemen often completed the task of interring the dead. Confederate soldiers buried their dead in trenches together with other men, and Union soldiers attempted to provide wooden markers for their countrymen. But the daunting task meant most soldiers ended up in mass graves.

Unfortunately, this led to the anonymity and loss of identity for most soldiers.

Public outcry for commemoration of the dead was put into motion. The War Department issued General Order 75 ensuring identification of soldiers and markers for preservation of accurate mortuary records. Additional general orders provided land for cemeteries and proper burials. By 1873, Congress granted additional legislation expanding the terms for all honorably discharged Union veterans to be buried in national cemeteries.


cemeteries. Yet, even these efforts were not successful. In fact despite the conscious effort to identify the fallen, some 42% remained anonymous. Just as the war prevented proper funerals, recovery of the dead and disposal of bodies was often impossible.

Creating acts and legislation to care for the dead appeared easier than executing the orders. The Battle of Antietam in September 1862, proved to be the bloodiest one day of combat for both sides during the Civil War. As Confederate troops left the field, thousands of dead from both sides were left behind. Most of the dead lay unburied, a ghastly number of twenty-three thousand men were left for Union troops to contend with.

Four days passed before burial parties disposed of mostly Union corpses. The Confederate dead were not so lucky. Some were buried in mass graves and trenches, most lay unburied where they fell. The enemies’ dead received little care or effort. What emerged alongside the dead on the battlefields was an impersonal disconnection with the body and careless attitude regarding the corpse. Many soldiers charged with burying the dead tended to dehumanize the remains. Perhaps disconnecting served as a coping mechanism, or permitted the living to contend with drastic numbers of corpses. But burying soldiers in mass graves led to anonymity and a newfound understanding of the Civil War’s slaughter and butchery.

The scale of the war and numbers of dead led to unprecedented challenges in burying and identifying the dead. Two crucial figures, Captain James M. Moore and Captain William Earnshaw, both officers of the Civil War had considerable experience

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508 Susan Mary Grant, “Patriot Graves,” pp. 82-83.
510 Ibid, This Republic of Suffering, p. 83.
with cemeteries. The daunting task of removing Union soldiers from unmarked graves and repatriating them fell to these two officers. Moore and Earnshaw identified and marked the graves of 700 Union soldiers at Spotsylvania Courthouse. Another 800 graves were identified on the Wilderness battlefield. Sadly, only twenty-eight percent of soldiers from both engagements were ever identified. 511 The term “Unknown U.S. Soldier” marked most of the inscribed wooden tablets. Two months after the war ended, a vast reburial program was initiated. By 1862 the federal government established over a dozen national cemeteries including Arlington, or Alexandria National Cemetery, Virginia, Annapolis and Soldier’s Home National Cemetery in Washington D.C. Cemeteries were created on or near battlefields, hospitals, or points of troop concentration. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln dedicated the national cemetery at Gettysburg. The legislation that began in 1861 concluded by 1870 with the burial and reburial of virtually all of the Union dead. Union soldiers were interred in America’s national cemeteries. Although many Union troops received proper burials, nearly half of the Civil War dead remained unidentified.512

The response in establishing cemeteries in many ways reflects the traditions of nineteenth century mourning behavior. Trends in enacting park necropolises applied to Civil War cemeteries and battlefields. Accounting for the dead meant creating enclosures and lovely resting places for the fallen. The cemeteries became a meaningful focus for the living. Keeping with nineteenth century Romanticism and tradition that began in a

few northern cities, cemeteries became a natural focal point for families to visit and facilitated collective mourning.\footnote{Grant, “Patriot Graves,” p. 78.}

Several historians have concluded that the national cemeteries symbolically allowed the unified country to “bury the conflict” and successfully shape a much needed national identity. Historian Susan Mary Grant writes that the Civil War cemeteries validated mourning traditions lost during the war. Attempts were made to improve burials and funerary practices. Cemeteries became symbolic landmarks commemorating and validating the service and sacrifice of soldiers. National cemeteries allowed those on the home-front to mourn and those who died to be remembered.\footnote{Grant, “Patriot Graves,” p. 91-95, 78, Neff, \textit{Honoring the Civil War Dead}, pp. 182-184. Neff examines race and the burials of black soldiers.}

There may have been a desire by the North to reconcile and establish cemeteries as a collective form of mourning but many historians have examined the volatile and derisive nature of burying the dead and commemorating Memorial Day. John Neff asked whether Confederates felt a sense of unity at the war’s conclusion. States like Texas experienced considerable discrimination in establishing cemeteries. Black soldiers were segregated and buried in a separate lot in Brownsville. Other cemeteries were predominately white and excluded minorities. Discrimination and segregation were the norm and this hardly accounted for unification and reconciliation at the wars’ conclusion.\footnote{John R. Neff, \textit{Honoring the Civil War Dead}, p. 193.}

For William Blair, the aftermath of the Civil War and established national cemeteries served to further divide the North and South. Not only did southerners have to accept defeat, but Black people celebrated their freedom and Confederate graves did not
receive any recognition. In many cases prohibitions existed to limit memorial services or celebrations commemorating dead Confederate soldiers. Most important, Blair denies a national identity was formed and instead believes a separate sectional Confederate identity evolved. Union soldiers received burials and markers tended with government money. When Confederate bodies were present alongside Union soldiers, they were segregated and divided into individual graves. Blair states these cities of the dead were meant for the victors; loyal Union soldiers. Former Confederates were reminded of their second-class citizenship and cemeteries only reinforced this subjugation. Burial and honoring only Union soldiers served to create division, animosity, and enhanced sectionalism.

Reconciliation and commemorating of all the fallen soldiers of the Civil War would take decades to accomplish. Initially decorating the graves of Rebel soldiers was forbidden. By 1868 a Union veterans’ organization began decorating the graves of federal soldiers. The concept of “Decoration Day” was celebrated on May 30th and served as a day of commemoration for both Union and Confederate dead. The origin and inspiration for Decoration Day evolved from Confederate women decorating the graves of soldiers with flowers. Decoration Day, later renamed Memorial Day, honored the graves of all fallen soldiers. Ceremonies of this nature served to provide reconciliation and honor, using cemeteries as a place to heal, forgive, and reflect. The true attempt to forge a national identity and validate the new nation occurred in Civil War cemeteries with

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517 Blair, *Cities of the Dead*, pp. 52-53, Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, p. 133.
Memorial Day celebrations honoring both sides of the conflict long after the war ended.\footnote{Blair, \textit{Cities of the Dead}, pp. 70-72.}

For Emily Nash, reconciliation and healing the country would take time. Shortly before the war ended she earnestly hoped that an olive branch would be extended to “our enemies in the south.” Nash recognized southerners as “our own lineage and blood partners.” She wanted reconciliation to heal the wounds and to be kind and merciful toward the South. In several passages she acknowledged “in all history there is nothing like this nothing that reflects more discredit upon our professed civilization.”\footnote{Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1864), p. 123.} Emily believed that healing meant forgiveness and acceptance. Part of her stance is attributed to her Christian beliefs, but she saw appeasement and unification of the country as a solution to the bloody conflict and restoration of “publick liberty and individual rights.”\footnote{Ibid, (1864), p. 122.} The war destroyed those rights and only an immediate termination of the struggle would save both North and South, firmly asserted Nash in 1865. John Neff concurred, time and distance allowed for healing and reconciliation to occur. Healing commenced the further Americans moved away from events of the Civil War.\footnote{Neff, \textit{Honoring the Civil War Dead}, pp. 238-239.}

Interestingly Nash wrote and spoke of “one country or nation” as early as April 1865. It is clear she wanted the North and South to quickly reconcile and dismiss their differences. On July 4, 1865, Nash recorded her feelings about the nation’s anniversary. She believed that all domestic discords ended and the day was memorable because the American people survived the ordeal of the Civil War. Americans, she concluded, had
reason to celebrate peace. To Emily, the Fourth of July following the end of the Civil war meant the country could move forward and a deeper meaning of patriotism and unity emerged. Emily was ready to bury the conflict with the dead and move on.

Occasionally over the next two decades Emily reflected back on the events of the Civil War. In an 1875 entry she recalled a few lines written by a soldier who had “been through the last war.” The young man returned home to Ohio and eventually moved west. Emily was convinced that he made the transition from soldier to farmer, finding happiness in civil pursuits. Once again, she seemed convinced in the closing years of Reconstruction that North and South were past their hardships and divisions of war. The country reconciled with a “friendly feeling.”

Very late in her life and toward the end of her journal, Emily acknowledged “Dekoration Day” celebrated on May 30th, 1883 and 1884. There is no mention of celebrating the day or event directly after the war. She described flowers and services for soldiers in one of the local cemeteries and meeting houses. Like historian John Neff described, Emily and Americans celebrated Memorial Day and commemorating the dead as a way to conclude the war and provide a sense of national identity. Healing and reconciliation occurred in Geauga cemeteries and across the country, the resting place of so many Civil War dead.

Not all historians recognized a conclusion to the war and reunification of the country, as Emily described. David Blight argued that healing and justice at the end of the war meant something quite different for African Americans and some four million newly freed slaves. Blight addressed racial divisions and white supremacy from the

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1870s on. Although Emily never mentions this topic, the relevancy of racial injustice and inequality prevented reconciliation of the country. Racial inequality only served to further divide North and South, limiting the healing process. However, Blight suggested that healing occurred on battlefields not just in cemeteries. Eventually Civil War battlefields became associated with sites of memory, understanding, and sacred landmarks. This transition gradually occurred, replacing death and violence on the battlefields with memorials and eventual acceptance of the past.525

Transpiring over several decades, battlefields became places of healing rather than just death. Yet the racial divisions and inequality continued. Using the fiftieth anniversary of Gettysburg in 1913 as an example, Blight argued that the battlefield stood for national reconciliation. Veterans of both the Union and the Confederacy came together to remember. They focused on heroism and reunion, abandoning the topic of racial tension and division. Although Emily never visited any of the battlefields, her journal entries leave no doubt the Civil War left a legacy of death and destruction in her memory. Of course most of the reconciliation discussed by Blight occurred long after her death. Her views acknowledged a slow healing process which continued into the twentieth century. Emily’s insight contributes to the collective memory of the Civil War. She longed for peace and reunification of the country. To Nash, cemeteries accomplished this feat allowing mourning and the preservation of memory. The forging of collective memories and how the nation remembered the Civil War continued with cultural practices such as Memorial Day and commemorating battlefields. Collective memory includes many versions of private and individual experiences of the war. The memory of

the war may be contested, but Emily’s views add to the overall narration and conclusion of the Civil War. 526

Conclusion

Emily Nash’s thirty two pages on the Civil War provide private and personal stories about the soldiers she knew first-hand. Her words and entries reproduce those alterations in mourning behavior and funerary practices in Geauga County and echo continuous changes across the country. As a layer of the dead she witnessed and wrote about changes in technology and profound ideological differences as a result of war. Approaches to death would forever be altered. Antebellum customs, Romanticism, and the circle of mourners to witness death would all conclude by the end of the nineteenth-century. Emily Nash’s greatest contributions are her glimpses of political changes, histories of the Civil War soldiers, death-notices and a female perspective on the war itself. Far from a political commentator, Emily was chiefly and foremost concerned with how a soldier died, the care for his corpse, and his preparation for burial. Although her journal describes soldiers she knew personally and families she grieved with collectively, the implication of her death notices and observations apply to the larger American society. Emily’s writings are a vital primary source and illuminate traditional funerary customs in the broader American culture beyond Geauga County. Her journal makes clear the change, sorrow, and healing during the years of the Civil War.

526 Blight, Beyond the Battlefield, p. 181, 278.
"The wife of Lucien Dayton died in town to day her funeral is to day I cannot
go for my husband Elijah Pike is sick a bed at this time...he is got the dropsy...the doctor
says a bad case...I have taken the opportunity to have my clothes off and sleep in bed
with him it has been a long time since I have had my clothes off I have been sustained
beyond what I would expect. I have no watchers I felt done all the watching myself.”
Emily Nash March-May, 1867.527

Introduction

These simple lines reveal a great deal about the social change occurring in the
years after the Civil War for Emily Nash and Geauga County as a whole. In the two
decades following the war, Nash witnessed and experienced lasting and permanent
changes in mourning behavior and funerary practices. In 1867, the once prominent layer
of the dead, found herself alone as the only watcher or witness at the death bed of her
third husband Elijah Pike. Nash would witness change in both scientific technology and
culture involving new techniques in preserving bodies and the rise of a funerary industry.
Cultural changes removed death from the home and caregiving by the family members, to
death in an institution. The notion of funerary behavior controlled by women in the
community dissolved into anonymous death in hospitals devoid of witnesses and family.
The funeral industry evolved into a big business replacing the traditional nineteenth
century mourning behavior. Cognizant of the changes, Nash wrote about their effects on
the community and nation. For Nash, the extraordinary alterations were not casually

observed, rather her occupation and in many ways her identity was replaced by new technology and funeral homes.

Historians and sociologists alike have produced studies on changes in funerary and mourning practices in nineteenth-century America. Robert Habenstein produced one of the first histories of the American funeral home and funeral directing texts. This definitive work traced the evolution and process of elaborate nineteenth-century mourning behavior to a more anonymous big-business, undertaking service in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Habenstein focuses on the emergence of funeral homes and the basic changes resulting from intimate-death bed scenes to hospitals and funeral parlors. Like many other occupations once dominated by women, men replaced their female counterparts and created a business-like environment which effectively excluded females and their roles in caring for the deceased and preparing bodies for burial. Habenstein’s comprehensive work illuminates the history of funeral homes and directing, acknowledging the replacement of females by male business figures. From a scientific and technological approach, Habenstein’s book is quite useful in understanding the process of change regarding embalming, or new and improved casket designs. He writes little about the cultural role women played, or how and why they were replaced. Significant research on the subject of death and funerary practices focusing on the role of women and their contributions to this social institution, remain surprisingly scarce. Habenstein acknowledges that American funerals were prepared, arranged, and tended by females, but provides little explanation as to why women were eventually replaced by men. 528

528 Habenstein, American Funeral Directing, pp. 227-239, 337-347. Other sources on the topic of funeral directing include David Charles Sloane, The Last Great Necessity.
Gary Laderman’s more recent scholarly work *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death* (2003) examined the rise of the funeral industry, but also the preoccupation with death regarding films, and literature in America. His approach studied the culture of death in America. Laderman is interested in the shift that occurs after the Civil War from death at home to funeral homes. Aside from associating mourning behavior with women and their familial roles in the nineteenth century, Laderman does not focus on the shift in responsibility from women to men either.\(^529\)

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Robert Wells, and Donna DeBlasio provide examples of the professionalization of various occupations including physicians (medicine), undertakers, and teachers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Martha Ballard had no formal education as a midwife, but held the position in her community for several decades.\(^530\) Her practical knowledge gleaned through first-hand experiences, is comparable to Emily Nash. Robert Wells explored the professionalization of undertaking and medicine in Schenectady, New York. His research supports the scientific changes and technological advances found throughout the country. Donna DeBlasio writes about Betsy Mix Cowles’ observations regarding female teachers and the inequality in pay within the same profession. All of these examples provide reliable contrasts and comparisons to Emily Nash’s experiences as a layer of the dead and the professionalization of the funerary business.

As a result of recent works by Carolyn Kitch, Janice Hume, and Richard Kalish, a reliable understanding of culture and violent, catastrophic, high profile deaths can explain collective behavior and mourning in the twentieth century. In the 1870s, Nash

\(^{529}\) Laderman, *Rest in Peace*, see the chapter on “Keeping the Dead in their Place,” and “Final Frontiers.”

\(^{530}\) Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale*, p. 11, Donna DeBlasio, “Betsy Mix Cowles.”
acknowledged and described many examples of unfortunate accidents and disasters. Her writing style changed, and reflects an interest in documenting historical events and more anonymous, violent deaths. Kitch, Hume, Kalish, and Nash, all explore the more public and community expressions of grief.\(^{531}\)

By the late nineteenth-century, undertaking and funeral behavior became a professional field dominated by men. At the same time, historians examine the changing attitudes toward death and the impersonal nature of the funeral home business. Philippe Aries, in two scholarly works, addresses the shift from dying at home to dying in hospitals or nursing homes. Death became more anonymous and unfamiliar to Americans in the twentieth-century. Jessica Mitford and James Ferrell confirm the anonymity of the funeral industry, and criticize the impersonal nature of dying. Both confront the burgeoning costs of funerals today. These sources all confirm Nash’s acknowledgement and concern about permanent changes in the funeral business and mourning behavior.

This chapter introduces information about new scientific and technological means to preserve bodies in the late nineteenth-century. Burial vaults, chemical embalming, and meeting houses all indicate a shift from home to institution. Each new scientific method and cultural change, replaced the personal attention administered by Nash as a layer of the dead. By the end of the century, Nash became painfully aware of permanent changes in funerary behavior, effectively ending her service.

Nash’s journal, especially the two decades following the Civil War helps to define and explain the reasons why the changes in gender roles occurred and documents the rise of the funeral industry not just in Geauga County, but in the United States. Nash’s journal

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is valuable for precisely this reason. She does explain and experience the gender shift, even if she was not entirely aware of the transformations happening to her. By the late nineteenth-century, funeral directing and mortuary businesses were established across the country, and women’s roles in mourning rituals was usurped by professional male undertakers. The very nature of funerals and funeral directing changed from a female occupied field, to a male institutionalized, big-business. Nash’s journal portrays the complexity of this transition adding to the scholarship of mourning behavior.

This chapter also argues that violent and sensational stories captured Emily’s attention and journal entries in the late nineteenth-century. As she slowly relinquished control as a layer of the dead, she focused more on anonymous examples of catastrophes and public mourning, rather than personal accounts. These shifts can be found not only in Geauga County, but across America. Finally, comparisons are made between Emily’s realization that death is more anonymous, hidden, and impersonal with the emergence of the funerary industry. Her role as a layer of the dead ceased to exist by the late-nineteenth century. This chapter fills an important gap in historiography by examining the professionalization of undertaking, gender role challenges, scientific changes, and modifications in attitudes toward death.

**Scientific Changes**

Indications of changes and new techniques used in funerary preparation are clearly demonstrated in Nash’s journal entries. There are several strong indications of social change in funerary services noted by Emily. The first crucial change involved the use of burial vaults, first mentioned in February 1866. Vaults appear to be used to hold the body temporarily before it could be permanently interred. Sometimes Emily indicated
The length of time a body remained in the vault, from a few weeks to months. The use of vaults served as a storage facility or temporary resting place before the body was buried. Vaults were used every month of the year, not just winter when the ground was frozen. Whether the person died in August or January, in the 1870s, vaults were mentioned on a regular basis. In January 1880 Mrs. Emily Cooper had the honor of being the first body “laid in the vault for a time she is the first one laid there.”

By all indications, vaults served as temporary receptacles, not permanent structures. The body was held in a vault until it could be properly buried at a later date. Although consistently mentioned after 1880, vaults were likely chosen to house a body, or bodies, especially if the family lived some distance from the deceased.

In August 1881 Emily told the story of George Stone traveling to Bainbridge on business. While crossing a bridge he fell several hundred feet striking his head on rocks below. Two days later Mr. Stone died from the head injury. His body was brought to Troy and laid in a vault until his burial nearly one week later. All of his family attended the funeral and the delay likely allowed them to make arrangements and prepare the body, especially if they traveled a great distance.

Many of Emily’s death entries written in the 1870s and 1880s imply the person died far from home, or had their family living far away. Many of the deaths were unexpected and mourners needed time to make funeral arrangements. In another entry Emily described the death of her cousin’s widow; Miranda Jannett Nash in 1880. She raised seven children on her own and many of them left Ohio. Only three of her children returned in time to witness their mother’s death. The oldest child, H. Nash arrived only to

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533 Habenstein, American Funeral Directing, pp. 267-269.
view his mother’s remains. Emily stated the body was deposited in the vault at Chardon until the family arrived.535

Vaults were not entirely new to funerary behavior. Historically the ancient Egyptians enclosed mummies in a case covering the coffin to protect the body from decaying. Throughout the nineteenth century various patents designed stone, brick, or concrete containers to house the casket and preserve the body. By 1879, burial cases were patented throughout America with the same intention, preserving and protecting the body from the elements and grave robbers. Habenstein’s research supports Emily’s notion that vaults were used regularly to store bodies and preserve them for a later funeral.536

Emily never mentions grave robbers or any scandalous stories related to such deviant acts. Habenstein does emphasize vaults having a secondary importance in protecting bodies from theft. He discusses “mort-safes” which literally locked the body in a vault, protecting the contents from would-be thieves.537 Most likely the principle reason for storing a body in a vault prevented decay and allowed the family a sense of closure in the ability to see the deceased even after death. The basis function of vaults constructed in Geauga County in the 1880s protected the casket and contents before the funeral could be held. It is apparent there was a growing desire and reliance on vaults used in the late nineteenth century. Society still insisted the body be well-preserved and life-like. There is consistency with the emergence and use of vaults near Geauga County in 1881. William H. Bachtel of Canton, Ohio, patented and sold burial vaults made from

537 Ibid, pp. 295-30. Habenstein supports Nash and states the primary reason for using vaults involved preservation of the body. However, mort-safes also preserved bodies against decomposition.
clay.\textsuperscript{538} Because of the products proximity, it was sold in Geauga County. One noteworthy difference mentioned by Nash was the temporary nature of vaults used locally. When Mrs. Susannah Mumford died of old age in June 1883, she was laid to rest for “a short time” in a vault. Later her remains were buried.\textsuperscript{539} The body was still laid to rest in a casket and only preserved by the vault until burial at a later date. Without a doubt the frequent use of burial vaults after 1870 indicated this new technology became an important part of funerary behavior in the county. Emily’s comments and acknowledgement of burial vaults does not seem surprising or even suspicious of this new technology. She realized the benefits of having a new method of preservation and embraced the idea of delaying funerals so families could attend. To Emily, tradition was still imperative. Burial vaults became a common feature in her entries from 1870 forward.

Preservation of the body was still an important part of funerary customs. Probably the greatest technological change Emily experienced was chemical embalming. Gary Laderman believes that embalming gained legitimacy at the conclusion of the Civil War when President Lincoln’s body was preserved. It was traditional to view a corpse at this time in history and certainly Americans desired to gaze upon the body of the slain president. It was an important part of culture and mourning behavior to see the dead presidents’ physical remains. This opportunity gave Americans a sense of closure and finality not only in the person of Lincoln but also the Civil War. If embalming could be used to delay deterioration of a dead president, why not use the technology on family members. Laderman insists that Lincoln’s embalmed body set a precedent in

\textsuperscript{538} Habenstein, \textit{American Funeral Directing}, pp. 299-300.
\textsuperscript{539} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1883), p. 199.
transforming attitudes and new practices surrounding death. Even a dead body, one that experienced violence from assassination could be restored and revitalized through science.\textsuperscript{540} Lincoln helped add to the validity of scientific embalming and preservation of the dead in nineteenth century America.

Embalming and funerary vaults went together. Keeping the body from decaying and preserving it allowed mourners to gaze at the dead and comfort the family. Modern embalming slowly gained acceptance following the Civil war. Even though Doctor Thomas Holmes is commonly associated with modern embalming in the 1860s, and credited with preserving 4,028 soldiers and officers in the war, he returned to practicing medicine rather than experimenting with other funerary techniques at the war’s conclusion. Holmes was motivated by the cultural expectation of viewing the body at death. He argued that it gave families a peace of mind if they could gaze one last time upon their relative. But embalming was also a lucrative business for Holmes. In 1863 he charged an average of $100 per case.\textsuperscript{541}

The war hastened the desire to preserve bodies and in fact a total of eleven patents for embalming fluids and various chemicals were granted by 1869. Even after the war, advertisements promised bodies would appear “life like” and never turn “black”. No mutilation or extraction was involved.\textsuperscript{542} Because the remains of the dead were considered \textit{sacred}, ads like these were appealing to the bereaved. Laderman writes that in the years after the Civil War more emphasis was placed on spiritualism and the value of the soul rather than the corpse. Mourners could glimpse the dead one last time in this

\textsuperscript{541} Habenstein, \textit{American Funeral Directing}, pp. 324-325.
\textsuperscript{542} Ibid, pp. 328-330.
well-preserved state, comforting them but increased importance stressed the afterlife and spirituality over physical remains. What mattered more and more was not the physical condition of the body but the spiritual condition of the soul at death. Over the next several decades the attitude in America embraced spiritualism and viewed the corpse as a discarded shell, valued for memorializing the individual but otherwise useless. Laderman offers the flood of spiritual meetings and popularity of séances in the 1880s as evidence of this social change.

But if the body was simply a discarded container, why were so many scientific techniques used to preserve and enhance the dead’s appearance? Quite simply science made it possible and more readily available. The ideology of spiritualism may have been attractive on a philosophical level, but advances in science and medicine allowed a more life-like appearance than previously possible. Science enhanced the corpse and kept tradition of viewing the dead by family members distinctly possible. When James A. Garfield was shot and killed in 1881, Emily wrote several death entries and tributes to the late president. She specifically notes embalming was used to preserve his body so the remains could be displayed in Cleveland. Much like Lincoln’s body and death, embalming allowed observation and closure for the public.

Certainly by the late nineteenth-century, embalming became more popular because it was readily available and affordable. Scientific embalming gained legitimacy and appealed to grieving families, comforting the living. In a relatively short period of time embalming became closely associated with the newly formed funerary business and “undertaking” practice.

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545 Nash, Journal, (1881), p. 188.
Chemical embalming was likely used and justified because of health concerns about sanitation and hygiene. If bodies were embalmed to ease the grief of mourners and support the mental well-being of families, it served the purpose of eliminating epidemics or the spread of disease. Certain diseases such as cancer, tumors, heart disease or stroke presented no health hazards, but other communicable diseases like typhoid, cholera, and small pox were highly infectious and contagious. Sanitation and proper hygiene looked to embalming as a solution to eliminate disease. Once again, science intervened urging embalming as a solution to prevent the spread of disease.546

A series of epidemics struck Geauga County from 1878 through 1882 further supporting the need to embalm bodies for fear of contagion. In October 1882 Emily recorded the death of three residents from typhoid fever. By that summer there were additional deaths from the disease. It is obvious that Emily was present when victims succumbed to typhoid fever. She commented on Ziba Pool’s prayerful behavior before his death later that morning. Not only was typhoid contagious, but posed an even greater threat to Emily since she was preparing bodies and in contact with bodily fluids. Typhoid was a life threatening illness which could only be treated with antibiotics. The disease passed through bacteria present in the blood stream and intestinal tract. A high fever and rash were the only symptoms. Because it was contagious and fatal, bodies were embalmed, removed from the home and placed in a vault for further preparation before burial.547 In another particularly virile outbreak of disease, this time scarlet fever, Emily recorded death entries but was not physically present. Scarlet fever seemed to effect the

546 Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 83. Mitford claims funeral directors used this argument—the necessity of embalming—to increase their business. She argues embalming was just an added expense. Robert Wells also discusses embalming and sanitation, in *Facing the King of Terrors*, p. 196.

very young in the community. She recorded the death of babies and children in 1882. In one death entry from April 1882 Emily wrote the child died from scarlet fever but no funeral was held for fear of spreading the disease to others. She does not indicate if embalming was used, but the fear of infection was evident. Additional epidemics of contagious disease surged through the county in the late 1880s. Embalming then, became a logical solution to ward off potential illness and protect residents.

Embalming made sense in both an aesthetic and hygienic way in nineteenth century Geauga County. Since viewing the dead was still a requirement in funerary behavior, it was not unusual for family members to travel great distances to have a last look at the deceased. Preserving bodies and delaying funerals became common and frequent following the Civil War. Beginning in 1865, Emily described funerals delayed so the children of Reverend Marshall Terry could attend. The Reverend died unexpectedly and his children traveled from a great distance to view their father’s remains. Reverend Terry was laid to rest in Painesville. In another death notice Emily commented on a local woman dying of lung fever while her husband was away buying cattle in Pennsylvania. Her funeral was “put off” for so long to accommodate the family. Interestingly Emily acknowledged more deaths far from home and or a delay in burials and funerals because either the body or family had to return to the county.

Traveling and migrations to other regions of the country appear more frequently in the journal after 1870. In separate examples elderly friends Zebiah Mott and Eliza Luce died far from home. Mott went to Missouri to visit his daughter and “took sick” in

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1874, dying out west. And Luce died “out west” while visiting her son in 1878.\textsuperscript{550} Both bodies were returned to Geauga County sometime after death for burial. These changes imply more movement, traveling, and migrations of people. This meant death occurred far from home or families needed to journey to Ohio for the funeral. It was still essential for bodies to be properly tended and returned home. Most important, these changes indicate Emily was no longer preparing bodies or taking care of the dead. Other than recording death notices, Emily’s role as a layer of the dead was usurped when her friends died far from home. Whether she was cognizant of the changes early on, Emily found by the 1870s she was losing control over preparing bodies and laying out the dead. The dead were prepared, embalmed, and shipped back home. Emily played no role in the process. Her traditional role in caring and preparing the dead was swiftly changing to a professional male oriented undertaking business.

Associated with the use of vaults, embalming, and dying far from home, Emily also cited the frequent use of meeting houses for funerals. Up until 1870 funerals were traditionally held at the home of the deceased, or perhaps a church of various denominations. This tradition rapidly changed after the Civil War. Although she does not directly explain the change from funerals held in the home to the preference of meeting houses, it is plain this change accompanied the use of new technology in funerary behavior. It stands to reason the more frequent use of institutions made it more convenient to display the body once it was embalmed and prepared for visitation. Emily provided some insight as to why meeting houses were used more often by the late 1870s. On two occasions in 1878 a local structure attached to the church was used to accommodate a large number of mourners. Both Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Mary Hatch had

large funerals and there were “more [mourners] than could be seated…the steps were filled with relatives…the most relatives I ever saw to a funeral in my life.”

Although the women died several weeks apart, neither home could oblige the number of mourners. Meeting houses were practical and utilized space more effectively accommodating large numbers of mourners. Emily’s frequent and consistent reference to these institutions continued throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Whether she approved of such ostentatious displays at funerals is doubtful. Small, more traditional gatherings of family and friends suited her. Several death entries described large crowds of mourners “filling the entire church above and below…upwards of ninety carriages were in attendance on the occasion…” Clearly impressed with the turnout at Mr. Marshall Dresser’s funeral, Emily scoffed at the appropriateness of material displays of wealth for a “Christian man.”

Most important, Nash’s insight and references to meeting houses implies a more secular nature to funerals and mourning behavior. These institutions were neutral ground and not always associated with a religious institution. This secular use of space coincided with removing the body from the home and embalming it. The family was losing control over the dead. These structures were designed as spaces designated for funerals further removing relatives from this task.

Gary Laderman confirms Nash’s time frame for the frequent use of meeting houses for funerals. A secular and practical space made it easier to display the body and still keep with the tradition of viewing the remains of the deceased. Visitors could “pay their respects” at the meeting house and have one last opportunity to view the dead. In addition, the meeting house meant the body was removed from the home and prepared in

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552 Ibid, (1884) p. 204.
a special place. Family members could greet guests and mourners at the meeting house before the body was transported to the grave. This new tradition of a receiving line at the funeral became a common feature and socially sanctioned activity associated with mourning. Laderman interprets this move from home to meeting houses as a functional ceremonial space. Nash saw this change from home to an institution as the catalyst for permanent transformation in funerary behavior. Nash seemed displeased with the change in space and place. Secular institutions were an unfamiliar structure and created an anonymous space for funerals.

The persistent reoccurrence of funerals in meeting houses also meant Nash was not preparing bodies and laying out the deceased in their home. She does not provide one instance or example of going to a meeting house to lay out the dead. Early in 1875 Emily wrote about her physical disabilities. She described an inability “to walk about” and having to “get along with as little labour as possible.” At nearly seventy years old Emily suffered from health problems and paralysis associated with a stroke in the 1830s. In fact, Emily was not attending as many funerals citing her poor health the reason. “I did not go,” or, “I did not attend because I was unable,” she explained three times in April and May of 1875. On each occasion a funeral was held at the meeting house. Despite her chronic pain and suffering from a fall in her garden in the summer of 1877, she still attended meetings and prepared bodies when she was capable. The frequency of her illnesses and inability to lay out the dead would continue to plague her in the next few years. Her concerns over health led to complaints over her situation. Writing in 1879,

Emily could not attend religious meetings or funerals and had no one to help her.\textsuperscript{556} She remained at home reading the Bible and writing in her journal. Nash’s position in society was being replaced by technology, scientific innovation, and the rise of the funeral industry. Similar to the professionalization of medicine in the nineteenth century, women were replaced by trained, male undertakers in the funerary business.

**Professionalization**

Emily was aware of the changes in medicine and science in late nineteenth-century Geauga County. One of the occupations to change from a female to almost exclusively male oriented field was medicine. Although this transition took decades to accomplish, it was once apparent women almost exclusively cared for the sick and injured at home. Nearly every passage in her journal made reference to routine medical care and tending sick relatives. Rarely did Emily mention a physician being present to treat the sick or deliver a baby. Women held these duties for most of the nineteenth century. Not until 1865 is there a marked change in behavior and more frequent mention of a physician’s presence in Emily’s journal. Physicians and surgeons were trained scholars and the field of medicine became “professionalized” as a business. Because doctors were educated and trained specialists, the field became male dominated. Slowly the same responsibilities once routinely handled at home and bedsides by local women were replaced by educated, officially trained men.

The professionalization of medicine is seen in Martha Ballard’s journal as early as the eighteenth century. Perhaps because of Maine’s proximity to Boston, more professional men including physicians, are mentioned by Ballard. Similar to Nash, Martha Ballard only reported the presence of a male physician when a birth became too

\textsuperscript{556} Ibid, (1879), p. 179.
complicated or during a medical emergency. Laurel T. Ulrich states by twentieth century standards, Martha Ballard dispensed medicines and prescribed remedies, comparable to the behavior of trained physicians. Yet, her extended care, comfort, and practical experience defined her as a nurse. No local woman was referred to as “doctor” in Martha’s diary or Nash’s journal. As Ulrich confirms, women had a broad based work definition that included healing, caring, and delivering babies. Male professional physicians were distinguished by titles and training. As obstetrics became more scientific, Ballard and other healers and midwives were edged out by trained, male professionals. This situation occurred within other occupations, such as undertaking and teaching, well into the late nineteenth century.

Emily witnessed many of these transitions from local women healers to a male dominated professional field. By 1870 she regularly recorded the presence of Doctor Sheldon at various homes tending to the sick or elderly. In two instances autopsies were performed on bodies. In one disturbing account a child was stillborn and had to be dissected and removed from the mother. When the wife of Elijah Percival died unexpectedly in 1879, a local doctor performed her autopsy. He discovered she died from a “paraletic shock.” It was apparent a doctor presided and performed an autopsy.

In another revealing account Emily described her friend suffering for eighteen years from an ailment which left her bed-ridden and in great pain. After her death a large tumor weighing in excess of fifty pounds was removed proving to be the source of her discomfort. Interestingly Emily accepted the reason for her friend’s illness attributing

it to the tumor and not punishment by God or divine judgment. Writing in an earlier era, Emily automatically assumed illness and castigation were connected. With even superficial medical knowledge available to her, Emily accepted sickness and disease as logical reasons for death. Divine punishment lost ground to medical explanations.

Emily’s initial reliance on divine punishment and a lack of a doctor at death seemed fairly typical of nineteenth-century America. Robert Wells insists doctors were seldom successful in treating illness or warding off death. He suggests that even in Schenectady, New York, in the early nineteenth century, families rarely called on a physician when an illness occurred. Faith in doctors remained relatively low because they used unproved potions and methods for treating smallpox and tuberculosis such as herbal remedies, vegetable poultices, and other mixtures. Physicians simply did not have the training in this period of time to administer medicine and most of their treatments were unsuccessful. Scientific research and newly created medical schools eventually changed this situation, professionalizing the occupation of physician. Perhaps more importantly, local residents had little faith in a physician’s instruction. Nurses and midwives trained by experience, received more public approval in Maine, New York, and Ohio in the early nineteenth-century.

As a layer of the dead Emily was always interested in disease, ailments, and cause of death. Nearly all of her death entries include some explanation of the person’s demise. But most certainly Emily received information from a medical specialist. Prior to 1870 she attributed death to general ailments such as “ague” or paralytic shock. Old age was often cited as a cause of death. However, over the years, more specific causes were supplied. In 1882 Emily compiled a list of books she read and included it in her journal.

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561 Wells, Facing the King of Terrors, pp. 70-71.
Although she was a prolific reader, her list did not include any medical journals, books, or pamphlets. A physician was likely present at the death bed of many of the people she attended. Valuable knowledge and information was shared between doctor and layer of the dead.

In over a dozen death entries beginning in 1879, Emily affirmed the cause of death attributed to heart disease. Often her diagnosis was followed by the mention of a doctor or an autopsy performed. When George Patchin died the doctor pronounced the cause of death to be ossification of the heart valves. Emily was present at the death bed, but so too was a physician. Her basic knowledge of medicine implies an educated, medical professional was at the scene. Two other diseases were identified and discussed between 1884 and 1886. Emily never mentioned diabetes before 1884. Yet she attributed certain death to several local residents suffering from this malady in a two year period. A more specific cause of death, Bright’s disease, led to Mr. Calvin Sanford’s death in 1886. Bright’s disease was a complicated kidney disorder. Emily had no knowledge of the disease unless she learned of it from a presiding physician. These examples show a medicalization of death regarding treatment, diagnosis, and demise. Clearly Emily received reliable medical information from a knowledgeable source. References to diabetes and Bright’s disease only appear and coincide with the mention of a physician and autopsy.

Similar to new scientific innovations introduced in the 1870s, the medicalization of death saw the shift from a predominantly female occupied field, caring for the dead, to an almost exclusive medical industry headed by trained professional men. Once again, Emily’s role as a layer of the dead was edged out and replaced by a physician. Medical
professionals replaced female healers and those women who tended the dead and laid out bodies would be replaced by a growing funerary business. Laderman and Habenstein view the Civil War as the catalyst and stimulus for the funerary business of late nineteenth-century America. Certainly professional men like Dr. Thomas Holmes had the scientific knowledge and opportunity to travel to battlefields to administer services.\textsuperscript{562}

Embalmimg was monopolized by a series of professionals such as chemists, physicians, and other individuals associated with the medical field. Knowledge of anatomy and the body was a necessary prerequisite for embalmers. Only after the Civil War did embalming become a full-time occupation. Commercial enterprises in new chemicals and preservation products appear simultaneously connected to this new industry. Fluids, compounds and equipment necessary for proper preservation sparked a rise in associated products and commercial equipment. Once again, these new wholesale items stimulated a new and lucrative business.\textsuperscript{563} Not unlike most rural nineteenth-century women, Emily simply did not have the opportunity, education, or training to partake in this new emerging funerary business.

In the late 1870s, embalming schools and professional training led to a full-time occupation. In 1878 the Cincinnati School of Embalming offered classes to medical students teaching them proper embalming techniques. Not only did schools appear throughout the east and mid-west, but also the price of embalming rapidly decreased. Dr. Holmes charged one hundred dollars or more per body for chemical embalming during the Civil War. By 1880 trained professional male embalmers charged as little as ten


\textsuperscript{563} Habenstein, \textit{The History of American Funeral Directing}, pp. 336-337.
dollars for their services. Interestingly only male students are listed on rosters and were trained and educated in embalming techniques in Cincinnati and other schools.  

Hebenstein and Laderman both argued that embalmers initially were not “undertakers” or funeral directors. The two roles were distinct and separate. The undertaker’s role was to “undertake” the responsibilities of caring and preparing the body and arranging a funeral. The family relinquished control over the body to a male professional who made all the final arrangements. This professionalization of death involved the scientific process of embalming carried out by one individual, and the social business side of death attended by a male professional undertaker. His services included sending out telegrams or notifications of a person’s death. He made arrangements with the church or meeting house in order to have a service. His job included contacting pastors, pallbearers, relatives, and friends. If the physician was present at the time of death, he would create a death certificate. If not, the undertaker would notify authorities and get an official death record.

Undertakers were also responsible for helping the family choose a casket. In urban areas caskets could be chosen from a catalog and provided to the family within days. The delay could also explain why vaults became necessary to house bodies before a funeral. As early as 1875 burial caskets appeared as a big business closely associated with the rise of embalming and undertaking. Just as education, services, and new chemical industries were stimulated, so to was the need for mass-manufactured caskets. The Stein Burial Casket Works produced catalogs and pictures in a wide array of designs, colors, and of course prices made available to consumers. Caskets of oak, mahogany, and

walnut trimmed in velvet or silk gave the public a choice in how their loved-one would spend eternity. Even caskets appealed to various social classes and fashion dictated refinement and taste. Depending on design and quality of wood catalogued, manufactured caskets sold for about twenty-five dollars.\textsuperscript{566}

Rural areas such as Geauga County had limited availability of caskets and funerary items. Local cabinet makers and furniture stores still provided most ready-made caskets to residents in the 1870s. Consistent with changes in funerary preparation, local newspapers carried ads for furniture stores selling coffins and caskets. It was not unusual to find an array of furniture and cabinets available to the public along with mass-constructed caskets. By 1872 William Munsell and G.T. Wallace offered dressers, bureaus, tables, coffins and caskets “on hand.” Both businesses offered undertaking services, including “stocks of shrouds and a good hearse.” Munsell and Wallace located their storefronts on the square in Chardon. By 1875 both furniture stores closed and a new salesman Henry Bickle resided in “Wallace’s old stand” in Chardon.\textsuperscript{567} Henry Bickle owned a lucrative business which sold furniture, caskets and dry goods to the public. Undertaking was listed third in his 1880 ad, almost as an afterthought in his skills and services. Mortuary business was slowly developing in Geauga County and did not stand alone as an independent franchise. Bickle’s store was a one stop-shop for furniture, caskets, malt, bitters, feed, and other necessary products. By June 1881, Bickle began advertising “embalming” as part of his undertaking services, boasting through his ads that “embalming is better than ice to preserve.”\textsuperscript{568} Techniques for embalming rapidly improved by 1881 and more ads for Bickle’s services appear in the newspaper. Yet the

\textsuperscript{566} Habenstein, \textit{American Funeral Directing}, pp. 400-401, 305
\textsuperscript{567} Geauga Republican, Advertisements, May 1872-1875
\textsuperscript{568} Geauga Republican, Advertisements, June 1880-1881.
ads still indicated undertaking and embalming did not stand alone as professional services. Throughout the 1880s Bickle still sold a wide array of products including funerary merchandise.

The ads were consistent with changes experienced by Nash in the 1880s. Because the role of embalming and undertaking was initially separate, Emily retained her role as a layer of the dead for a longer period of time, at least until the mid-1880s. Yet in a span of less than twenty years the role of a professional mourner gave way almost exclusively to a male occupation and profitable business associated with funeral homes. The embalmer, undertaker, and physician controlled the pattern of late nineteenth-century funerals. It was not until the 1880s that undertakers and embalmers merged as a professional position. This position was termed a funeral director. Emily never mentions a funeral home, or undertaker in her voluminous journal. She does mention embalming more frequently from the 1870s on, and of course physicians present at death. Records indicate mortuary businesses and modern funeral homes began appearing in Ohio as early as 1859. The first local funeral home was founded by the Burr family in Concord Township, Lake County. Although its services were available this funeral home was still too distant to attract patrons in Geauga County. It was not until the early twentieth-century that Burr Funeral Home relocated to Chardon, Ohio.

By the 1890s and early twentieth-century Americans relinquished control over the dead to an institution. Death at home became less familiar and the family lost control. A gap between the home and the living gave way to the institution of the funeral home and the dead. The two spheres would continue to widen and remain separate. In establishing

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funeral homes Americans not only gave up control of the dead to an institution, but recognized the funeral director as a professional businessman who prepared bodies and offered a full range of industries from preservation to caskets. In addition, funeral homes in towns and cities emerged as a special social space allocated for preparing and displaying the dead. Since the dead were removed from the home they were now shown in a “funeral parlor.” Bodies were embalmed, prepared, and shown in this space. On some level it seems obvious Emily was aware of the changes. She certainly writes about the evolution of female caregivers conceding to professional male physicians. She also described the apparent changes in technology and scientific alterations in funerary behavior. At times she seems to accept and almost embrace the changes perhaps because of her age and disabilities. In other instances her journal entries express sorrow for the lack of intimacy and the rejection of traditional mourning. But it is very clear that by the 1880s she no longer held the position and control once so prominent in earlier decades.

By the end of the nineteenth-century the role of the undertaker evolved into a professional position as a man who supplied appropriate services, but also funeral necessities. His role in the community permitted him to take the deceased from the home and make it available to view by mourners. The community grew to trust and respect him, much like they did when Emily Nash fulfilled the same services. As a specialty-oriented professional, he was also business minded, furnishing all of the goods associated with undertaking. Emily of course, provided care and attention but was not capable of supplying embalming, caskets, or a funeral parlor. For these reasons; science, technology,

571 Laderman, *Rest in Peace*, pp. 16-18, Wells, *Facing the King of Terrors*, pp. 196-198. Wells examines the rising costs of funerals associated with services provided by the undertaker. Most of his examples are from the early twentieth century. Wells confirms that even in Schenectady, New York, funeral homes emerged as a big business.
and a business-oriented male professional, came to define funeral directing at the close of the nineteenth century. Professionalizing death meant the new funeral director needed a close, respectable relationship with his clients and customers. Professional occupational groups emerged promoting their interests and ethics. Even a trade journal called *The Casket* discussed the business of death and embalming along with funeral directing. Letters to undertakers were published in the journal allowing communication and comradery between professionals.\textsuperscript{572}

As the demand for embalming grew, formal education and training in science and anatomy became necessary. More schools emerged in mortuary education to meet the demands of this growing occupation. By 1882 the national Funeral Director’s Association was established allowing undertakers to organize into a professional group promoting high standards, ethics, and social responsibility.\textsuperscript{573} What had once been a female relegated activity and gender-specific duty of caring for the dead was replaced almost entirely by the field of funeral directing. Most important, with every change from scientific to specific education requirements and professionalization, laying out the dead and undertaking became more restrictive toward females effectively excluding them from this once common occupation.

Other occupations became male dominated and professionalized in the nineteenth century, excluding women from attending or working in the field. Women were not permitted to attend law schools in Ohio until 1918.\textsuperscript{574} The education field did accept females because this remained a traditional area and acceptable role for women to instruct children. Stephane Booth writes that the public accepted women as educators of

\textsuperscript{572} Habenstein, *American Funeral Directing*, p. 459.
\textsuperscript{573} Ibid, p. 471.
\textsuperscript{574} Stephane Booth, *Buckeye Women*, pp. 177-178.
their young children because it extended the role as “teacher” beyond the house and into schools. Betsy Mix Cowles began her teaching career in 1830s. She received a salary of $25 a month. Her first position included working at an infant school, or kindergarten in Austinburg. By 1849, Cowles worked in the Massillion area, lectured at teachers’ institutes, and later served as a superintendent in the Canton schools. Only one of two women to be appointed as a superintendent by 1858, she earned a salary of $550 a year.\textsuperscript{575} Although Booth points out that women remained employed in the teaching field, few were ever promoted to administrative positions. Cowles seems to be an exception to the rule. Probably because she remained single throughout her life, Cowles stayed devoted to her profession and never gave up her position.\textsuperscript{576}

Donna DeBlasio distinguished between “school-keepers” and teachers in assessing Betsy’s letters. Women often chose the lesser role of school keeper, which required little to no formal training. This role offered young women a chance to work in an admirable field before getting married. After marriage, most women quit teaching and working outside the home altogether. Men on the other hand, used school keeping or teaching as a stepping stone to a better position. Betsy criticized women and men who did not take their job seriously or were not dedicated to the position. \textsuperscript{577} Although elementary teaching remained a feminized occupation, women were rarely promoted to higher positions, and men received higher salaries. Society believed women did not need the same salary as their male counterpart because they were not supporting a family. Female elementary school teachers received about $21 a month, while males in the same

\textsuperscript{575} Ibid, pp. 171-172.
\textsuperscript{576} Ibid, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{577} Donna DeBlasio, Betsy Mix Cowles, pp. 179-182.
occupation earned $36.\textsuperscript{578} Despite the teaching profession remaining open to women, discrimination and pay inequity continued. If they were not edged out of healing, or laying out the dead, women accepted subordinate roles in teaching and of course, less pay.

**Changes in Emily’s Life**

Personal changes in Emily’s life reflect alterations in her position as a layer of the dead. She slowly and reluctantly relinquished control over caring and tending the dead. Many of her journal entries indicate and reflect transitions. Her ill health and severe decline in her ability to walk surely prevented her from carrying out her duties. This was a gradual declension in her physical abilities to the point of severity in the late 1880s. In part her physical ailments extremely hindered both her mobility and visibility in the county. Until 1870 Emily attended the dying and prepared bodies regularly. After her third husband Elijah Pike died in 1867, leaving her a widow once again, she indicated loneliness and missed Pike’s companionship. Emily resumed her duties on a regular basis probably because she needed the income, and since her husband’s death and she also desired friendship and association with other residents. Laying out the dead provided a valuable service to the community and held a latent social function for Nash. By 1870 with her health beginning to fail, Emily wrote about being “lonesome and home by herself more often.”\textsuperscript{579} At first she commented on not being able to attend the circle of mourners and funerals because of the distance, but in reality her ailments took an enormous physical toll. For a period of several months in various years Nash did not prepare bodies or even attend funerals.

\textsuperscript{578} Booth, *Buckeye Women*, pp. 174-175.
It is clear that by 1875 Nash found it next to impossible to continue working because of illness. She lamented on two occasions of “disease crushing me” and cut off from society and friends. She was housebound and felt neglected by her neighbors. More significantly she complained “[I] am not able to my work” and having to get along with as “little labor as possible.”\textsuperscript{580} Fearful of remaining an invalid and without work and funds, she convalesced at home until she was healthy enough to resume some labor. Yet her financial situation declined as a result of not working. In May 1875 she sold her cows because she could no longer care for or milk them. Again in the winter of 1884 Emily complained about the excessive cold and inability to care for her hens. She feared they were freezing to death and felt sorry for the animals. She sarcastically noted, feeling sorry “does not keep them alive.” Reluctantly she sold her chickens too. Without constant help and physically impaired, she slowly gave up control of her farm.\textsuperscript{581}

Concerned over her health and finances, Emily complained in several lengthy entries about losing money and not having an income in her old age. Interestingly, her comments display desperation over her infirmities, but also indicate her financial independence. She longed for work and was dependent on her own income and needed funds. Most of her life Nash served as a layer of the dead and received compensation. Although she never reports how much she received, Nash continued to live very independently. Living without financial resources greatly troubled her. Her entries allude to the significant role she fulfilled in the community and the independence she experienced as a result of her own labor. Nash found it exceedingly difficult to surrender her role later in life. In a very revealing entry dated January 1880, Emily complained

\textsuperscript{580} Ibid, (1875), p. 151, 153.  
about the amount of money she spent on trying to find a remedy for “this palsy.”

Apparently she sought out various physicians to no avail. Local newspapers carried frequent ads describing medical services by local doctors and even drugs such as cocaine and elixirs proclaimed cures. She concluded that death was the only release from her disease. Yet the latent undertone of this statement indicates she had funds available and “spent lots of dollars” on her health.\textsuperscript{582} Emily had a disposable income to some extent. She used her resources not just for subsistence, but attempts to cure her sickness and find treatment. Despite her illness, Emily managed to work when she was able. Even in 1886, at nearly eighty years of age she participated in a circle of mourners and prepared the body of a local woman for a funeral. She held onto her home, a small parcel of land and her occupation for as long as possible. It was not just the economic advantage of laying out and burying the dead, Emily longed for the social contact and community connections as well.

Being lonesome and housebound gave Nash at least one distinct advantage. She had the opportunity to record more death entries in her journal. Since she could not physically travel, she focused on writing and recording her thoughts about residents and even events. Her journal entries, especially those written after 1876 when she was at home, are quite detailed and more elaborate than those of earlier decades. On at least two occasions Emily acknowledged her intention was to record history with “paper and pen.”\textsuperscript{583} Her death notices were longer, more detailed, and contain historical facts about the person’s life. Nash was cognizant that her writing had importance and “some things

\textsuperscript{583} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1883), p. 198.
left on paper” could contribute to history.\textsuperscript{584} Her death entries are written similarly to published obituaries found in local newspapers. In January 1876, Emily’s former brother-in-law died. She read about Captain Levi Patchin’s death in a local newspaper. What followed in her journal was a brief history of Patchin’s arrival to Geauga County and pioneer history of his family.\textsuperscript{585} This obituary format became standard and she copied it in numerous death entries in her own journal. The emphasis was on the era, and not necessarily the individual. It is clear Nash was not present at Patchin’s bedside, nor did she lay out his body. Yet she provided a detailed account of his life, accomplishments, and death.

Influenced by published obituaries, Nash attended several pioneer meetings in Burton. Calling the meetings “interesting,” the descendants of the first settlers began assembling to share stories and chronicle information on the county. Her historical awareness shows a decisive change in writing style. Empowered by attending pioneer meetings and an interest in history, Nash recorded more factual narratives and memoirs about early settlers in the county. Her death entries became more refined, elaborate, and polished like those in the newspapers. Coupled with historical significance, she wanted to tell more about the pioneers and settlers before they were all gone.\textsuperscript{586}

When her sister Louisa Nash died suddenly in 1876, Emily could not attend the funeral due to a bout of illness. She wished she could have comforted her sister and been with her in her final hours. It was doubly difficult not witnessing her death and not attending the funeral. Emily’s solution was to record a lengthy death entry about Louisa. As a final tribute Nash attested, “her memory lives with me an angel of good and of

\textsuperscript{584} Ibid, (1887), p. 232.
\textsuperscript{585} Ibid, (1876), p. 159.
\textsuperscript{586} Ibid, (1876), p. 160.
The realization in recording a person’s life provided a satisfying activity for Nash when she could no longer preside or attend funerals. In this fashion of recording longer death entries with accompanying histories, Emily attended the funeral of Amos Burroughs and wrote an elaborate eulogy in January 1876. Burroughs arrived in Geauga County in 1812 shortly after the Nash family. He was born in Plainfield, Massachusetts, in 1798; Emily’s birthplace. He came to Burton with his family and married one of Emily’s sisters. Nash described the wilderness of pioneer Ohio in 1812 and the family farm. His parents settled in a country where beasts roamed with pleasure, wrote Emily. “What great changes have taken place since then.”588 The emphasis is more on Burroughs’ accomplishments as an early settler in rustic Ohio. Her usual comments such as cause of death (heart ailment) and Christian behavior are still included, but affirming her brother-in-laws contributions as a settler and role-model for others is highly regarded. Another close friend, Osman Beals died of fever in 1884. Once again Emily paid tribute not as much to the person of Beals, but his family and history. His family included early settlers and one of the first homesteads. His longevity and family history imparts patriotism and social value to the county. His personal attributes are hardly mentioned, instead Beals’ family origins and residency mattered.589

In another lengthy death entry, Emily wrote respectfully of the Reverend Orvill Blake of Mantua who died of typhoid fever. After praising his religious service and Christian fortitude, she chronicled the minister’s arrival from Connecticut to Portage County in 1826. She even recorded the number of funeral sermons preached (380) and

couples married (200). He was a “useful man” Nash concluded.\textsuperscript{590} Once again the avid journalist sought to record Blake’s attributes and accomplishments along with a brief history of his family and pioneer connections. As she stated several times in her journal, history was important to record. If she could not witness death and lay out the body, she could write useful and factual accounts related to the county.

Emily’s newfound interest in history was likely compounded by her advanced years and deaths of close friends and family. Sadly she faced the realization that many of her long-time friends were dying and her efforts to record notable attributes in death entries became more substantial. Her oldest and dearest childhood friend Sally Pratt Truman died suddenly while visiting a relative in Minnesota in 1878. Her tribute to Sally emphasized migrating to Ohio from Massachusetts and residing in Troy, near Nash. Her body was brought home and buried in a local cemetery. The two women were married on the same day in August 1828. They resided for nearly six decades on farms next to one-another. They shared joy and sorrow in a lasting, life-long friendship. “I looked upon her to be the best friend I had upon this earth,” cried Nash after the funeral. “I am left to mourn her absence as a sister…I mourn her loss.”\textsuperscript{591} There were other heart-felt eulogies and death entries over the next decade. When Colonel Henry Ford died in Burton in November 1886, Emily was shocked by his unexpected departure, and his death affected the entire community. Not only did Ford belong to one of the founding families, but he was also the brother of the late governor Seabury Ford. During the Civil War Ford secured enlistments from the county and helped those families who lost a son or father during the war. Emily praised Ford’s integrity and personal service toward local

\textsuperscript{590} Ibid, (1877), p. 163.
residents. Later in his life Ford founded a bank and spent most of time there as a senior partner. After attending his funeral service, Emily remarked on the large crowd gathered and the many mourners paying their respects. She concluded, “our friend has gone…no more will we look into his pleasant face.”

Later that same month (November 1886) another pillar of the community died: Peter Hitchcock. Noting his Civil War service and business affiliations, Nash acknowledged, “he will be greatly missed.” Her reminiscent death entries recalled the past, founders, pioneers, and veterans. Her writing hints of memories and a nostalgia of an earlier era when she was young and regularly engaged in friendships with these people. Her death notices glorified both Ford and Hitchcock in connection to their war records and business ventures. Most importantly, she knew them personally and had a close connection with their families. The Nashes, Fords, and Hitchcocks were among the earliest pioneers to the county. The solemnity of her friends dying made her own situation more vicarious. Emily suffered from chronic illness, loss of income, and now the demise of her close friends. Her death entries provide appropriate tribute to those people who shaped the history of Geauga County. Without Emily’s records and journal entries, much of this history would be lost or recorded as simple statistics and faceless facts. Emily’s journal and records would later serve as the basis for the Pioneer History of Geauga County. The biographical sketches included in the Pioneer History are attributed to Nash’s record-keeping and death notices.

Authors Janice Hume and Carolyn Kitch examined published obituaries in American newspapers over several decades. Both agreed that obituaries illuminate

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cultural values and changes in American attitudes toward death. One objective of obituaries is to connect the deceased with historical events.\textsuperscript{594} In this sense, Emily Nash was recording the lives of her friends in her journal while emphasizing their contributions to local and even national history. Emily’s death notices fall short of full-fledged published obituaries, and of course were never intended to be read. On the other hand, her notices reflect collective behavior by including individuals such as Ford and Hitchcock to wider historical events which meaningfully represent Geauga history. Emily felt their accomplishments noteworthy and many residents, even Americans in general, would agree. Individual stories solidified a relationship between everyday citizens and Ohio’s past. There was a decisive connection between the deceased and history.

In the last decade of her life Emily’s writing and journal entries became profoundly more religious, sometimes covering two pages of Scripture and biblical references. Religious text occupied a great deal of her time and writing. Unable to work because of her disabilities, she occupied her days with journal entries on religion and reflected on local events. One fascinating change in her writing style was the inclusion of rather scandalous death stories ranging from crimes, accidents, murders, and suicides. Emily occasionally relayed stories and deaths of this nature early on in her journal, but in reality they were rarely mentioned. When she did discuss a tragedy there was a moral lesson included, or a warning to readers. However, by the mid-1880s rural areas were more accessible and crimes more commonly reported. The relative isolation of rural Geauga County was lost to travel and railroad transportation. Likely influenced by local media and less work to occupy her days, Nash spent considerable time writing and

describing violent events, deaths, and accidents than previous eras. At least three local newspapers, the Jeffersonian Democrat, Geauga Republican, and Painesville Telegraph circulated throughout the county. Exposed to articles found in the newspapers, Nash incorporated many ideas and stories into her journal.

Although her writing portends excessive religiosity in places, society in general tended toward more secular news. Hume and Kitch observed newspapers from the late nineteenth century carrying sensational stories and were often read for their sheer entertainment value. Violent deaths sold newspapers. The media, and even published obituaries were less concerned with morality and instead intrigued by turbulent and horrific deaths. Emily appears to have embraced some of these same qualities in her journal. Newspaper obituaries clarify cultural values from any era. We can better understand changing norms and values by examining Nash’s inclusion of violent stories. Emily always included cause of death in her journal. In 1835 she told the story of the unfortunate neighbor who was mistakenly shot to death. The man was a heavy drinker and his neighbor thought he was a bear. Emily concluded, “if the man had been brought up in the way of holiness perhaps he would not have been killed.” Emily rationalized his death and offered advice and religious council. In contrast, her later journal entries still included cause of death but emphasized less religious finality and more scientific reasoning. No longer convinced God was the sole cause of death, Emily sought a medical explanation. Heart disease, old age, paralytic shock, were more frequently included as cause of death. By the 1880s few if any of her journal entries stated death was due to divine punishment. This change reflects a more rational, scientific, medical explanation.

595 Hume and Kitch, Journalism in a Culture of Grief, “Introduction,” p. xix
to cessation of life. Similar to changes and inclusion of scientific technology in funerary behavior, Emily incorporated scientific observations in her cause of death.

Aside from Janice Hume and Carolyn Kitch, Richard A. Kalish addressed the reactions toward death from disasters and war. Referring to the media, Kalish studies the psychological and sociological effects massive deaths had on the public. He argues although people respond when first hearing about a disaster, attitudes greatly diminish once the story leaves the front page. Kalish writes that humans “shield” themselves from tragedy and develop apathy toward enormous numbers of deaths.\textsuperscript{597} Perhaps a sign of modern times, the public no longer respects the deceased and mass deaths are treated collectively rather than as an individual, personal responses toward death. Instead of viewing a tragedy as a personal loss, people adopt attitudes of indifference.\textsuperscript{598} Hume, Kitch, and Kalish acknowledge the role of the media in shaping behavior toward death. The response of the community to war, earthquakes, and plane crashes, is less personal and more anonymous. Emily’s writing mimics the differential reactions described by these scholars.

The shift in Nash’s death notices include sometimes sensational stories and a decrease in morality. In the past Nash upheld a moral level in defining individuals, but by the 1880s there was more emphasis on startling even lurid disasters affecting the county. Nash still felt responsible in writing appropriate characterizations of the deceased, however, there is a marked shift in focusing less on the individual and more on the horrific event. Naturally Emily was presiding less and less at death-bed scenes, so the

\textsuperscript{597} Richard A. Kalish, editor, \textit{Death and Dying: Views from Many Cultures} (New York: Baywood Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 119-120. Kalish refers to a number of disasters, airplane crashes, and wars in the Middle East. Although his examples are dated, they still apply to modern reactions toward massive deaths.

\textsuperscript{598} Ibid, p. 142.
descriptions were more anonymous and less personal. Society also began to accept and embrace examples of collective, anonymous death. There was a general detached attitude in Nash’s writing reflecting changes in the broader society. The individual character of the person was downplayed and a direct attempt to focus on the person’s social networks and circumstances of death were emphasized. Emily stressed public deaths, often violent and tragic more often after 1880. Influenced by the media and surrounding culture, Emily’s death notices transcend the personal private spheres of grief and involved a more public, community of grief.

Accidental deaths proved to be both shocking and provocative stories to Emily. Often intended to report the event and provide graphic details, Emily did not plan to teach a lesson or even provide a warning in her death notices. Hiram Carlton was killed when the engine in a blacksmith shop exploded. He was torn apart and fragments scattered several yards. His clothes were found up a tree “his tongue on the road and arm here a leg there the top of his head in another direction his wife found his naked body first... “As shallow and callous as her report seems, Emily sadly stated, death came sudden and unexpected.”

On the day of Carlton’s funeral Emily added, “What remained of his body was placed in a coffin and buried. Only later did they find part of his liver and it received a separate burial.” “I did not see it” admitted Emily, “It was an awful time for the people surely.” In another particularly violent boiler explosion in 1880, two men were killed in Garettsville. The flesh was literally cooked off of one body. Both his head and legs were broken, wrote Nash. The victim lived for two agonizing hours before succumbing to his injuries. Calling the accident “dreadful,” Nash concluded the entry by

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600 Ibid.
stating the victim’s widow and son could live comfortably off of an inheritance. Her matter-of-fact account of the boiler explosion leaves little emotional analysis or commentary. Certainly it was tragic and the victims suffered considerably, but it was a “terrific accident,” not divine punishment.

Another explosion occurred in the same city in June 1881. This time a Baptist church was destroyed by arsonists. The church was “blown to attumes and spoiled,” Emily railed in her journal. She hoped the “rouges would be hunted out and punished according to the crime.” Certainly Emily let her feelings be known in this entry. She likely responded anxiously and vehemently because a religious institution was destroyed. This event illustrates the conflict and hostility over religion surfacing in the county in the late nineteenth century. Although Emily acknowledged and accepted the presence of Baptist churches in the area, new religious institutions outside the traditional Congregational Church proved to be challenging to some. Religion lost ground to evil actions, thieves, and murderers. Emily was convinced this act was a harbinger of future violence and calamity.

Local businesses burned by misfortune, accident, or arson. In the summer of 1868 a number of buildings in Chardon “burnt to ashes.” The courthouse was damaged along with the headquarters of a small newspaper the Chardon Democrat. Houses were also destroyed in the conflagration. Emily suspected arsonists were to blame. A suspicious house fire was mentioned in the spring of 1875. Emily reported arsonists were accused but others believed the home owner was responsible. She did not divulge why she suspected Mr. Leonard Stroud, only affirmed conspiratorially, “others think he done it

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too.”\textsuperscript{604} When an additional dry goods store burned “to ashes,” Emily stated it was under suspicious pretenses. She offered her opinion believing the fire resulted from excessive cigar smoking by the owner. Mr. Sutler’s entire business burned, along with its contents.\textsuperscript{605} In each tragedy Nash reported the vents as historical episodes. Not entirely objective, she offered opinion, but interestingly looked for logical and rational explanations. She does not even consider or suggest godly intention or religious castigation. Emily’s views slowly gave way to a new interpretation sensitive of disasters and unfortunate circumstances.

Other violent events were addressed much the same way. Deviating from her earlier theologically based reasoning, Emily reported events in a more matter-of-fact approach. The same Mr. Leonard Stroud whose house suspiciously burned in an earlier journal entry, committed a heinous murder and suicide. In a harrowing entry spanning several paragraphs, Emily described the encounter. Stroud apparently argued with his stepson Lemuel Sperry over property. Mr. Stroud confronted his wife Phebe Sperry Stroud in a heated argument in front of their farm. Stroud slashed his wife, mortally wounding her with a butcher knife. He “ripped open her bowels cutting her hands severely.” Mrs. Stroud managed to escape to a neighbor’s house, only to die the next day. Dismayed and frenzied, Mr. Stroud “cut his own throat from ear to ear and lay upon the ground” where he eventually perished. Nash attended the dual funerals adding afterwards, Mrs. Stroud was a “ladey who won the love and respect of all.” Mr. Stroud,

\textsuperscript{604} Ibid, (1875), p. 152.
\textsuperscript{605} Ibid, (1883), p. 200.
Emily insisted, “was a fiend in human shape.” They had a bad marriage, concluded Emily.\textsuperscript{606}

More suicides, accidental deaths, and even a catastrophic train wreck occupied her time and journal entries through the mid-1880s. More anonymous and less personal, Emily’s death notices convey historical encounters in graphic detail. Her writing style most definitely imparts a more “secular” and factual basis of death. These stories relay information about community values and collective views shared in the county.

Emily’s writing style changes reflect trends described by Hume, Kitch, and Kalish. The authors acknowledge the general anonymity occurring in funerary behavior by the early twentieth century. Where funerals once took place at home they are now removed to funeral parlors or mortuary businesses. Community members are removed from the process of dying and control given to hospitals, nursing homes, and undertakers. Because death and dying is so unfamiliar today, there is more emphasis on violent deaths or tragedies capturing the public’s attention. Individual deaths are removed and distant, whereas violent sometimes catastrophic deaths are played out in our living-rooms through the media.\textsuperscript{607} The authors focus more on the influence of the media and the changing values regarding death in the twentieth-century. Certainly Emily was influenced by information she read about local residents, especially when she could no longer function as a layer of the dead. Her death notices emphasize tragedies, scandalous accounts, and are often detached almost factual reports on events throughout the 1880s.

Hume and Kitch state the purpose in reporting disasters and violent death achieves a sense of communion throughout society. People read and watch a tragedy

\textsuperscript{606} Nash, \textit{Journal}, (1878), pp. 167-168.

unfold and have a shared sense of death. The receiver (public) does not have to know the victim personally to identify with the situation. Uninvolved people respond to the death of soldiers, murders, natural disasters, and terrorist acts in a collective way. Television and other media transmit grief and sorrow related to death to a public audience. The authors emphasize this collective mourning behavior which identifies attitudes in the twentieth century and beyond.\(^{608}\) Kalish argues if the disaster remains in the media and is “newsworthy,” people will respond. However, apathy sets in with continued exposure to violence and death. Even the ambiguity of death creates collective reactions in mourning, at least while the story circulates.\(^{609}\) Whether describing the assassination of President Garfield, devastating fires or explosions in the county, Emily’s death notices from the late nineteenth-century exemplify this tendency. Her notices and journal entries allowed expression of public grief and communal mourning behavior. In this sense her writing style, especially in the last few years of her life reflected trends in American culture.

Emily’s final journal entries include impersonal death notices in the same general, collective mourning style outlined by Hume and Kitch. She referred to the death of several community leaders in 1887 and even lamented over frequent political meetings by “rowdies” at the Congregational Church. Her last death notice is dated March 18, 1887, eleven months before her own demise. In this entry, Nash discussed the spiritual and personal attributes of Eliza Hotchkiss. In her traditional style she reported Mrs. Hotchkiss died of a lung complaint, was a member of the Methodist Church and left a number of children to mourn her memory. Eliza was a good Christian and mother, according to Nash. It is apparent Emily attended both the funeral and burial of Mrs. Hotchkiss. The

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\(^{609}\) Kalish, Death and Dying, pp. 142-143.
remainder of her last entry focused on Scripture and her own opposition to alcohol. She stressed temperance and reading the Bible. Interestingly, her comments elude social change by mentioning new churches (Methodists), political and secular events at her church, and the need to reform society by abolishing alcohol. Emily’s world, journal entries, and death notices echo the changing attitudes and permanent alterations toward death in America by 1887.

**Anonymity of Death: Changes in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Mourning Behavior**

Modern historians examine, ruminate, and ponder the meaning of changes in funerary behavior in the late nineteenth -century and early twentieth -century. Offering their own ideas and insights, many of these scholarly views support Nash’s perceptions and examples. Philippe Aries authored two profound books, numerous chapters, and countless articles on the evolution of modern attitudes toward death. Aries’ thesis stresses the forbidden shameful nature of death that resulted once it was removed from the home. Institutions such as hospitals and funeral homes made death unfamiliar and unobserved. Family no longer dies at home and hospitals are associated with the process. Witnesses and the circle of mourners are all removed from the death bed scene. Because death is removed from the home it has become displaced and distant from relatives. It is sterile, scientific and controlled by technology. According to Aries, death has lost its meaning. This profound statement reflects transitions described by Emily. The anonymity of death resulted when the family lost control and the event taken out of

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612 Aries, *Western Attitudes Toward Death*, p. 89.
the home. For Emily and the circle of mourners, the dramatic act of dying took days. It was imperative to wait, watch, and observe the event. Today the act is completed in a nursing home or hospital, often alone, and the moment of death has lost its meaning altogether. Modern Americans have lost their patience in waiting for the final act to occur. Emily would agree with Aries perspective.

In *Western Attitudes Toward Death*, Aries insists death is considered a forbidden, almost pornographic topic. It is an event we attempt to hide and hide from it. He references the Victorian attitudes toward sex and a reluctance to acknowledge it as part of life. Death has become a taboo subject, pornographic and society is ashamed of it. The topic is generally hidden or avoided at all costs. Children no longer exposed to death find it frightening and confusing. Emily’s writing record the surface of this profound change occurring. She would be shocked and dismayed over the treatment of the dead and the lack of traditional mourning. The pornography of death also resulted from excessive emotional outpouring. Strong emotions must be avoided at hospitals and funerals. Aries insists society is embarrassed by grief and emotional expression. In the past sexual expression was discouraged and embarrassing, today it is public displays of grief. One is expected to grieve in private, be strong and return to normalcy as quickly as possible. This attitude or lack of emotional response is the antithesis of Emily’s experiences. Emotion was encouraged and mourning an outlet for the bereaved. The circle of mourners and layer of the dead provided solace and comfort for the family. The family was guided through the process of death by Emily and community. The acceptable death in the twentieth century means the family is limited in expressing sorrow and it is

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613 Ibid, pp. 92-93.
614 Ibid, p. 93.
615 Ibid, p. 87.
mandatory not to make others uncomfortable with your pain. Grieve in private, cry in secret. Death was still routinely observed by Nash, but even her journal indicates this change taking place. Most important there is a decisive shift from the family playing an instrumental role in the process of death, expressing pain and sorrow, to the anonymity of the situation and an emphasis on avoiding death, remaining stoic and protecting society from embarrassment.

There is at least one other area where Emily’s writing generally agreed with Aries’ assumptions. He argues the sick and dying were a burden to the family and removed to an institution. Nursing homes and hospitals usurped the care given by family. One can argue those institutions emerged replacing the family’s traditional responsibilities. Aries states the sick person was troublesome and a burden to the family. Death became forbidden because it was not observed. Emily provides plenty of examples where residents committed suicide rather than remain a burden to their family. She did not witness the emergence of hospitals or nursing homes, but the concept of relieving the family of this duty is evident. On two separate occasions suicides were described in great detail. Each victim felt they weighed down their family because of illness or a continuous disability. Nancy Fox hanged herself because she was an invalid for so long. “She suffered a great deal’ explained Nash. “She thought it best to end her suffering by hanging.” Emily specifically noted Thomas Scott hung himself “with a rope around his neck because he was poor and dependent on relatives and [an] unfeeling world…he felt he was a burden to them and better be dead than a burden to relatives.”

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616 Aries, *Western Attitudes Toward Death*, pp. 88-89.
Although she was sympathetic to their deaths, Nash explained the victims felt dependent, and a hindrance to their families.

In the nineteenth-century, medical experts informed individuals of their impending death; in this manner people were aware of their own fate. Aries states today the sick are spared details of their own death. They are lied to and not told of their own fate. Sparing the victim the knowledge of death is part of disguising the event and protecting the family from the pain of revealing information to their loved one. In many ways the dying person is as much an outsider to death as the family. A doctor or medical specialist is more likely charged with telling the person about his/her fate to relieve the family from this unsavory act. However, all of this adds to the anonymity of the process of death.618 On the contrary, Emily experienced quite different situations in nineteenth-century Geauga County. She implied nearly all residents she tended knew their fate, or were prepared for the inevitable outcome. Some accepted their fate stoically, others struggled with the knowledge, but they were still aware. Many of her death entries describe the person bearing his/her suffering with great fortitude or “composed and evidently resigned to the will of God.”619 The widow of Ashbell Gilmore died of heart disease and while the illness progressed, she accepted her fate with great composure. Other residents expressed sorrow after hearing about their impending death, but demonstrated patience and finally acceptance. Even after Orinda Hosmer was informed of her illness (croup eracipelas), according to Emily, she maintained her faith and positive attitude. “She bore her suffering with pious resignation.”620 As long as death occurred within the household and was witnessed, victims felt comforted and supported

618 Aries Western Attitudes Toward Death, p. 89.
by friends. To Emily, death was still a privilege to observe—a courtesy to bestow upon her friends. Hiding death from the sufferer only ensured the process was anonymous and unfamiliar. Certainly the “age of the beautiful death” ended when the event became invisible, hidden, sterilized, and scientific. 621

If the subject of death has become a taboo topic and Americans prefer to ignore its presence, Jessica Mitford set a new standard by writing and questioning the “American Way of Death” in 1963. Mitford’s strongly worded book criticized the funeral industry for functioning as a big business, exploiting the public and minimizing the event of death. Her book examined and reproved the high costs and economic increases for caskets, flowers, clothing, musicians, and other services provided by funeral directors. She questioned the practicality and ethics of morticians in the twentieth century. Because funerals are removed from the home most people are ignorant to the process and funeral directors exploit this weakness. Her harsh, stark comments were accompanied by statistics and facts on the cost of funerals. As a comparison a casket averaged about $25.00 in the 1880s and in 1963 the same casket cost approximately $708.00. 622 Mitford believes the general public is misinformed and mislead about funerals. Because the bereaved are disoriented, funeral directors attempt and often convince families to purchase the most costly, ornate services available. Grieving families are encouraged to keep their loved ones in a certain standard of luxury, even in death. Embalming, special clothing, and ornate satin-lined caskets are all unnecessary, but support this expanding and lucrative business. Interestingly, Mitford suggests the body’s appearance including wardrobe and make-up is for the family; it provides a “memory picture” of the deceased.

621 Philippe Aries, The Hour of Our Death, p. 448.
The memory picture is the last glimpse of the body and the person must look natural and life-like.\textsuperscript{623} Of course this is identical to the behavior displayed in the nineteenth century. The body was shown to the family to allow closure and acknowledge the end of life. However, Mitford believes a burgeoning price tag has been added when Americans are most vulnerable. Emily witnessed the emergence of the funeral industry as a big business, but never recognized the profound changes discussed by Mitford. In the late nineteenth-century witnessing death comforted the dying person and the family. Death was a central part of life. In the twentieth century the emphasis is on allowing the grieving family to feel better and quickly resume a normal routine. Emphasis is on the living. Grief therapy, the casket, flowers, service, and gravesite all come at a great financial cost today. The family has little to no control over the funerary business.\textsuperscript{624} Although Mitford led a crusade against the funeral industry, her goal was to make consumers aware of extraordinary costs and unnecessary expenses. At the same time her book confirms the sterile distant role death and funerals play in contemporary society.

Less critical and aggressive toward the institution and funeral directors, James Ferrell provided useful information regarding the psychological changes occurring in cemeteries in the twentieth century. Ferrell also wrote about “grief therapy” but states modern cemeteries provide this service because the bereaved can go to the grave site and mourn the departed in private.\textsuperscript{625} Society does expect grief to be private and emotional outbursts unacceptable. Ferrell’s views on death are similar to both Mitford and Aries. However Ferrell states cemeteries provide the grieving person an appropriate place to display their emotions. Flowers, wreathes, and simple monuments facilitate emotions and

\textsuperscript{623} Ibid, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{624} Ibid, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{625} James Ferrell, \textit{Inventing the American Way of Death}, p. 133.
expressions of mourning. Ferrell's assessment of the modern cemetery is not the garden-park design popular in the nineteenth-century but an acceptable, appropriate place or space to mourn the dead. Funeral homes with their parlors and grieving rooms are specially designed spaces for displaying grief. Modern cemeteries share this same function. Both Mitford and Ferrell affirm anonymity and isolation associated with death. Death and dying are relegated to certain places, times, and spaces in present culture. Twentieth century witnessed the changes and focus from the dying person as the central figure, to emphasis on the living, and how they adjust to death. Most importantly contemporary society expects the living to resume normalcy as quickly as possible.

Gary Laderman generally agrees with Aries, Mitford, and Ferrell when describing death as a commodity and lucrative business. But he also examines the radical changes in science and technology enhancing and preserving bodies both during and after the Civil War. In one sense the dead body has lost its symbolic importance as part of ritual and mourning behavior, but on the other hand it is a valuable product in the funeral industry and has spurred a number of complex commercial networks; caskets, flowers, cemetery plots. Laderman believes the dead body is valuable today, but only in an economic sense. Admittedly, Emily always saw the body as a valuable item. She did in fact make a living from the dead. The obvious difference was the symbolic meaning of the body and the important role death played in the family and community. To Emily and nineteenth-century society, death was part of life, it was accepted and understood. Over time that meaning is lost and Americans have attempted to hide from it to spare the living any added pain. In Emily’s day the focus of funerals and mourning behavior was the

627 Ibid, p. 175.
deceased. Rituals were carried out for the person. The body was sacred and held meaning for the family and community. The profound shift away from the body and death, centering on the living is a product of the twentieth-century. Emily would be appalled and dismayed by the disregard for the deceased and minimal attention given to mourning behavior.

The role of the funeral director and ethical concerns over the business of dying is still a modern affair. Laderman resumes this discussion and controversy in his most recent work. Even Kitch and Hume examine morbid, disturbing stories over the improper disposal of human remains in the Tri-State Crematory scandal. Instead of properly cremating bodies, funeral directors at the Tri-State Crematory in Georgia discarded 300 corpses outside the facility in 2005. The owners of the crematory were sentenced to twelve years in prison. There is still a general expectation that bodies deserve respect and funeral directors are charged with this responsibility. Even if society expects the bereaved to recover quickly and grieve privately, the dead demand respect. When families were deprived of the ability to mourn properly or bury their relative according to custom, they lashed out and complained about inappropriate funeral services. The responsibility of death is accorded to a business professional and Americans expect service. Despite controversy in proper disposal of human remains in recent years, the need for consumer protection remains. Americans agree they pay for a commodity and want professional service provided. Arguably, Emily Nash would be greatly disturbed by corruption, exploitation, and general apathy toward the dead.

Laderman examines the most recent attitudes toward death in present day society. He writes about the morbid fascination with death as entertainment. Flesh-eating zombies

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and the dead returning to life is almost an obsession with American popular culture.\textsuperscript{629} Where sex once sold as a commodity, it is now replaced by death. Once again the emphasis is on life and almost a seemingly disrespect for the dead body exists. Whether feature films or popular television, Americans still have a connection to death but it is much more anonymous and unfamiliar. Flesh-eating zombies are the stuff of science fiction and not your relatives or family. Laderman states Americans are enamored and entertained by death as part of popular imagination. Perhaps horror films of this genre reveal America’s deep-seeded fear of death and are really an effort to make sense of the event.\textsuperscript{630} Horror films transcend so many cultural taboos—mistreatment of the corpse, cannibalism, and mass-epidemics. Yet the focus is anonymity of the body reducing the dead to an object, and the emphasis on survival and the living. In many ways consumerism and patterns of consumption pertaining to death continue. Laderman’s discussion and analysis of the fascination and preoccupation with the entertainment of death is similar to what Nash described in her sensational journal entries describing violence and scandals in the late nineteenth-century. Violence sold then and it does today. Disasters, explosions and murders identified collective behavior in Geauga County and across America. Tragedy, death, terrorist attacks and natural disasters have the same results today. Emily wrote to record history, but also capture the sensational stories. Laderman insists Americans are still preoccupied with the more absurd, gory, and violent tales of death and dying.

\textsuperscript{629} Laderman, \textit{Rest in Peace}, p.33.
\textsuperscript{630} Ibid, p. 121.
Conclusion

Emily did not live long enough to witness most of the changes in customs described by Laderman, Mitford, and Ferrell. She died at her nephew, John Nash’s residence in February 1888. She was aware of the many transitions over the nineteenth century of intimate death bed scenes and the traditional circle of mourners giving way to the rise of the professional funeral business. Interestingly, the Geauga Leader published a full two-column obituary explaining her final demise and contributions to the community. Neither of her three surviving siblings attended her funeral service. Her older sister lived in Michigan, and a brother and sister residing in the county were too feeble to attend her service. Probate Court Records indicate Martin Holcomb, Emily’s son-in-law who resided in Michigan, paid $2.00 for lettering on her tomb-stone, and $50.00 for a “casket, robe, and hearse” transporting the body to the Troy Township Cemetery. She left a sum of $672.00 to her son-in-law, along with her belongings. Although more common in 1888 than any time in her life, the published obituary acknowledged “Mrs. Pike’s enormous contributions as a pioneer to the county and pillar of the first Congregational Church.”631 Similar in style to her own death entries, the obituary acclaimed Nash’s contributions and investments in Geauga County. Emily’s passion for writing and keeping records was also noted. At the end of her life she was obviously aware of the journal’s significance. Her voluminous journal, well-over five hundred pages was bequeathed to the Reverend Fairbanks who gave her eulogy and funeral sermon at the Congregational Church. Recognizing the significance of the manuscript and detailed record of Geauga deaths, the

631 Geauga Leader, Obituary of Mrs. Emily Pike, 1888, Probate Records, p. 130 Drawer 34, Chardon Public Library Genealogy Room.
reverend donated the journal to the historical society. A copy of the original journal resides in the Chardon Public Library, Genealogy Room.

The community valued Emily’s collection of events, county history, death notices, and service as a layer of the dead. The history of Geauga County’s early death record was largely constructed from the journal. Emily kept meticulous records even before the county recorded such data. Over four hundred death notices are documented by Nash from 1813 to 1867 alone. The county began official registration only in 1867. Those deaths, many personally witnessed and prepared by Emily Nash, would be missing from official records had she not documented them. Whether she was aware of it at the time or not, Emily was in the truest sense a journalist and chronicler of events. She made the most valuable contribution to her community. She ensured that every person she attended received last respects: she tended the child’s sickness, she eased the mother’s dying, she prepared the farmer’s body for burial. She made sure no one passed from this world alone. Her journal and profession as a layer of the dead are extraordinary accounts bearing witness to the intricate connections between gender, family life, and death in nineteenth-century Geauga County.
CONCLUSION

Few historians have addressed the subject of female layers of the dead. As part of women’s historiography, Emily Nash’s story contributes to our knowledge of the topic of female labor, the family, and domestic spheres occupied by women. Far from peripheral and marginal work, Emily’s labor and her particular occupation of preparing the dead, adds to our understanding of women’s positions and their roles in rural nineteenth-century Ohio. Her life and journal illuminates not just cultural and socio-economic changes in the state, but the larger American society. Women worked farms, nurtured families, cared for children, aided the sick, and buried the dead.

Emily’s story clarifies women’s history by adding to critical works such as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s books on *A Midwife’s Tale: The Journal of Martha Ballard* and *Good Wives Images and Reality in Northern New England*. Both books focus on the contributions of women and how society was affected by them. As Ulrich wrote, the history of women is important because they were half the community and shaped society.632 Women’s lives were very different from their male counterparts. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron DeHart reinforce this view by asking questions about the need to study women, what they did, how they worked, and view their experiences within the context of *women’s history*.633 Gendered history provides a key to understanding men and women and their separate experiences. Some historical sources credit women as layers of the dead, but only in minor way. Emily Nash witnessed death, prepared bodies for burial, and recorded journal entries. For over seven decades, her journal revealed life

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and death, mourning and burial rituals in nineteenth-century America, from a female perspective. Her journal contributes to the historiography of women, female labor, and mourning behavior.

Robert Habenstein and Gary Laderman only superficially recognize the role of women in preparing bodies or laying out the dead. This study, not only acknowledges the valuable contributions made by women to the household, but also emphasizes the position held by Nash in the community. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich indicates the value of Martha Ballard’s journal and position as a midwife, when many people simply dismissed the content as “trivial” or “women’s work,” not worth researching. Ulrich discovered the broader context of the diary of Martha Ballard relates to larger themes in eighteenth-century history. Childbirth, women’s work, medicines, and household economics, are all subplots in the diary. Nash’s journal must be examined the same way. To understand Emily’s occupation of preparing bodies for burial, reveals the importance of the Second Great Awakening and the connection between women and the church.

Nash’s lifestyle informs us about economics in rural Geauga County. Although she never disclosed any information about payments, it is apparent Emily received compensation. She lived most of her life as a widow, and supported herself. It is often difficult to reconcile Nash’s traditional views of women and their proper place, when she defied her own examples. Nash lived at a time when women were expected to take care of their homes and family and did not engage in the male sphere of economics beyond the household. Emily did care for her husband(s) and daughter, but she steadily, and consistently worked outside the home to support herself economically. At times she continued working because she needed the income, but her journal entries also disclose

how she longed for companionship and feared being alone. Ironically, burying the dead afforded Nash sociability and connections with her neighbors.

One of the most fascinating comparisons is between Betsy Mix Cowles and Emily Nash. From the similarities in their upbringing, religion, and geography, it seems likely to assume they had much in common. Cowles could not have been more dissimilar to Nash. Emily showed little to no interest in anti-slavery, despite her obvious awareness and family’s connections to the moral cause. The same is true for women’s rights and suffrage. Both of these concerns consumed the life and work of Cowles. Local newspapers carried advertisements for Women’s Suffrage Clubs and even a guest appearance and lecture by Susan B. Anthony in South Newbury, in 1879.635 But Emily remained silent about the issue. Why she showed little interest is perplexing. Her firm religious views likely narrowed her thinking and she accepted the subordinate role of both African Americans and women in society. Emily filtered many issues about slavery, gender, and certainly death, through the lens of religion.

The intriguing thesis presented by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Ann Douglas, and Barbara Welter relating religion and authority to women’s rights, is completely lost on Emily Nash. If she did have any thoughts or ideas regarding women’s rights, her journal does not reflect them. It is a disappointing realization that Nash did not connect the social movements of anti-slavery and women’s rights with the Second Great Awakening, or at least she did not feel the urge to write about or support either movement.636 On the other

hand, Nash readily accepted the role of women in the temperance movement and eagerly participated in meetings and lectures.

In many ways Nash had more in common with midwife Martha Ballard from the eighteenth-century, than Betsy Mix Cowles from the nineteenth-century. Both Ballard and Nash lived and worked in more traditional, conventional areas of female duties: delivering babies and burying the dead. College educated, Cowles supported herself by teaching. Yet, Nash, Ballard, and Cowles all supported themselves economically and lived relatively independent lives.

Nash’s journal and this study also compares death notices from contemporary twenty-first century historians to those written in the nineteenth-century. Since so little scholarship on the history of obituaries exists, or their changes over time, Nash’s examples, characterizations, and framing categories are priceless. Her death notices tell us not just about the victim’s demise, but how society viewed them. Religion, occupation, status, family, and moral disposition were all important to society. Nash’s death entries contribute to the much needed, and sparsely researched topic of obituaries.

Documenting Emily’s life and writing during the Civil War proved to be one of the most meaningful contributions to this dissertation. Other primary sources written on the home front, such as Frances Peter, Esther Hill Hawks, and Mary B. Chesnut, advocate support and even complement many of Emily’s experiences. However, Nash’s journal is unique because of her position as a layer of the dead. No other journal or diary written on the home front contains this type of information. Nash observed the changes and alterations in mourning behavior as she lamented over her friends dying far from home without the circle of mourners. Nash affirms the “good death” ended with the Civil War.
Her journal counters Drew Gilpin Faust’s assertion that the “good death” continued and lasted throughout the war.\textsuperscript{637} Letters from soldiers and research provided by Robert Wells in Schenectady, New York, all point to the demise of the “good death” and permanent changes in mourning behavior.

Research for this dissertation also indicates that Emily lost her position as a layer of the dead to male professionals in the late nineteenth-century. Jessica Mitford is perhaps the most critical in analyzing the impersonal nature of undertaking in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{638} Emily did not live long enough to see the completed process of modern funeral homes, but she did witness considerable changes in her lifetime. Science and technology, along with male, educated professionals, edged her out of a personal care-giving role. The anonymity of death and the unfamiliar process of dying is the thesis of modern historians such as Gary Laderman and Philippe Aires.\textsuperscript{639} Interestingly, Emily witnessed some of the transitions and social changes in the last years of her life. Preparation of bodies for burial became a male dominated, profession handled by an institution.

Thus far, no other scholarly sources exist comparing a female layer of the dead to modern funeral enterprises. This project fills an important gap in the historiography of women, mourning, and funerary behavior of the nineteenth-century. The changes in customs and beliefs are critical in understanding the meaning of death in this era. Before she died in 1888, Emily gave her voluminous journal, now over five hundred pages, to a local minister for safe keeping. Realizing the immense value of the manuscript, the minister gave it to the local historical society. Just over one hundred years later, former

\textsuperscript{637} Drew Gilpin Faust, \textit{This Republic of Suffering}.  
\textsuperscript{638} Jessica Mitford, \textit{The American Way of Death}.  
\textsuperscript{639} Gary Laderman, \textit{Rest in Peace}, Philippe Aires, \textit{Western Attitudes Toward Death}.  

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county genealogist Jeannette Grovesnor, typed and transcribed the journal. Today the original writings of Emily Nash Patchin Halkins Pike, reside in the Chardon Public Library, Genealogy Room. Several transcribed copies are privately owned. The document contains over four hundred recorded and observed deaths. Those deaths, many personally witnessed and prepared by Nash, would be lost to history without her journal.
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