

Martha Farnsworth diary

Section 10, Pages 271 - 286

Martha Van Orsdol Shaw Farnsworth kept a personal diary from 1882 through 1922 with only a few gaps. The diary starts when she is a teenager. It describes her daily activities as she was growing up in Winfield and later Silver Lake and Topeka. She marries John W. Shaw on September 4, 1889. She refers to him as Johnny or Winnie in the diary. He works for the post office. Many of Martha's diary entries are very emotional about the boys she dates and her marriage to Johnny. From the beginning of her marriage, Martha expresses her unhappiness in her marriage. It seems to stem from Johnny's drinking and his anger when he was intoxicated. This volume covers most of her marriage to Johnny who dies on October 26, 1893. Their daughter Inez is born on January 24, 1892, but dies five months later on June 27, 1892. Johnny dies in 1893 and Martha soon marries another post man Fred Farnsworth in 1894. During the time period covered by this diary Martha lives in Topeka; Springfield, Colorado; and Los Angeles, California, where Martha and Johnny went in hopes of curing his consumption. It is possible that this diary was rewritten from an earlier version because some entries are underlined in red.

Creator: Farnsworth, Martha 1867-1924

Date: January 1, 1890-December 31, 1893

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Fri 27 Oct. 1893 I went up town this morning with Jim, to get some necessary things for the funeral. Rev. B. L. Smith preached Johnny's funeral and the Mail-Carriers acted as Pall-bearers. His brother Jim, would not consent to keeping the body, until Sunday, because he died of consumption and so we buried him this evening at 6 o'clock: and tonight I am so wretched, that I feel dazed and as if I must awake from some terrible night-mare. Four years ago a Bride, hoping to be happy. Tonight a widow in abject misery. I know my heart aches as much over his death, as if I had loved him, for it is terrible to have one die, not a Christian, and especially one, who was much to us at some time in our life. But God knows the tears of my heart and the prayers of my heart for this man. I have striven to do what God would have me do.



Sat. 28 Oct. 1893 I took the funeral flowers up town this morningnd had them Photographed. Idola Moore, Runyon, Mrs. Sam Robinsonnd Frank Shaw, called this afternoon. Frank has been in Oklahomand Jim would not let me keep Johnny's body, until Frank could get home for the funeral. Mr.nd Mrs. Pettit spent the evening here.

Sun. 29 Went up to the Cemetery this morning and took the flowers to Johnny's grave and some to put on my nee girlie's Charlie Roby, Mrs. Hunternd Mrs. Bondedown called this afternoon. I spent the evening with the Pettits. I can't be content anywhere.

Mon. 30 I am keeping house for brother Jimnd two little boys, as Retta has not yet returned, nd I washed a very large washing this morning; washing beddingnd Johnny's clothes, nd putting things away nd burning many more, that I may have no reminder, of my unhappy life. My Wedding veil and gloves, were buried with Johnny.

Tues. 31 I took up the carpet, in room where Johnny was, cleaned it and the roomnd relaid the carpet. Mrs. Sam Robinson called this afternoon.



Wed. 1 Nov. 1893 Oh! so lonely, for tho' unkind, yet Johnny was the father of my child, the one ray of sunshine, in all the four years of my married life.

Thurs. 2 I must be looking about me, for something to do, because Johnny left me no means of support. I miss him more than anyone can know, for he has been a constant cause of worry^{and} anxiety to me, having, practically, been sick the whole of our married life^{and} now I feel, as if a great load had been lifted from off me^{and} my freedom, is actually a joy, tho' I sincerely grieve, that death, should be the means of this thrill of pleasure, at being free from such a miserable life.

Fri. 3 Trying to rest after my exhausting siege of nursing. Fred Farnsworth called this afternoon.

Sat. 4 Up to P.O. this morning^{and} to get Photos of my flowers^{and} called at Mrs. S. Robinson's



Topeka, Mo.

Sun. 5 Nov. 1873 Went up to the Cemetery this morning, to Johnny^{2d} and baby Mabel's graves. I am so alone I hardly know which way to turn: I am as a girl again, with the heartache of a terrible experience added to her life; 26 years old and think of what I have passed through.

Mon 6 Mother Shaw^{2d} Mrs. Reed Called, this P.M.

Tues. 7 Mrs. Pettit called this afternoon. Retta got home from her visit in Mo. at 3:30 P.M.

Wed. 8 Went up town this morning^{2d} to Mother's for dinner.

Thurs. 9 With Retta today; having no home, I must stay here until I get work.

Fri. 10 Went up town this morning^{2d} called at Adola Runyon's. Called on Mrs. Pettits this evening. The Pettits have been so kind to me, all thro' Johnny's sickness^{2d} death: true friends indeed.

Sat. 11 Spent the day with Mother: not feeling well.



Sun. 12 Nov. 1893 At home at Jim^d Retta's sick with a cold, ^{and} am in an exhausted state, from so much care ^{and} worry.

Mon. 13 At Retta's, hardly able to be up ^{and} ought not to be out of bed, I have such a cold. I think I shall soon go to nursing.

Tues. 14 I feel some better today, but that is not saying much.

Wed. 15 Well I feel better today than yesterday ^{and} guess I have conquered my cold.

Thurs. 16 I went up to the Cemetery this morning to Johnny ^{and} Mabel's graves. How I wish I could hold, my "wee girlie" in my arms again. From the Cemetery I took a car ^{and} went to spend the day with Mrs. H. W. Farnsworth, 201 Topeka Ave. Was introduced to her son Jim who is home on a visit, from El Paso Texas, ^{and} I thought he looked so much like Johnny, tho' larger.

Fri. 17 I went to town with Mrs. Pettit ^{and} her babies, this morning.



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Sat. 18 Nov. 1893 Home with Retta today, helping her clean^{and} bake. I have given her all my silver-ware^{and} blankets, bedding, feather bed, bedstead^{and} practically, everything, I had left in the housekeeping line. I have given away^{and} burned up, everything so that I might not have a thing to remind me, of the old unhappy life: it is such a night-mare, that I shudder at the sight of anything, that reminds me of it. Oh, that I could make, myself forget it all.

Sun. 19 Fred Farnsworth came for me this morning^{and} took me up to his Mother's, to make arrangements, to stay with her as a nurse, as her daughter must go to her home in Calif. From Farnsworth's I took a car to the Cemetery, to Johnny^{and} "wee girlie's" graves, then to Jim Shaw's. Retta is 25 years old today.

Mon. 20 I came up to Mr. H. W. Farnsworth's about 4 P.M. today, where I shall be, for awhile.

Tues. 21 In my new home today, 201 Topeka Ave.; I have only had a short rest, but I need work and don't expect Mrs. F. to be so hard to nurse, as Johnny was: certainly not so unkind.



201 Topeka Ave, Topeka Ks.

Wed. 22 Nov. 1893 Mrs. Thos. Willits and children Adelaide, Clarand Coit, started for their home in Calif. at 3 o'clock this afternoon, accompanied as far as Albuquerque New Mex. by Mr. J. F. The hotel has been full of friends to say "goodbye" to them and tonight Mrs. Farnsworth is feeling very badly.

Thurs. 23 My little Patient is lovelynd grinning today for her children, who left yesterday. Mrs. F. has been in poor health, for some time, but is not confined to her bed.

Fri. 24 Mr. Farnsworth wanted me to vote, so I went up to "Register" at 4 o'clock P. M.

Sat. 25 Went up to the City Jail, this afternoon, with Mrs. Durin, Mrs. Burgess and some others, to vote at the Primary Election. I voted for the nomination of Col. Burgess for Mayor of Topeka.

Sun. 26 Mr. F. staid with his wife this morning, and let me go to church, so I went to my own, the First Christian. Fred going with me as far as 5th st on his way to work at P. Q.



Martha Farnsworth diary

Mon. 27 Nov. 1893 I find my Patient, kind and considerate; very affectionate. I am with her thro' the day and at night every one goes to bed ^{and} if she needs anything Mr. Farnsworth, waits upon her, so I get my rest at night. She seldom 'wakens' all night long.

Tues. 28 I am getting rested here, in this quiet home; spent my evening writing letters. Fred went to see his girl.

Wed. 29 Tonight Fred & I was home ^{and} we had a very pleasant, evening's visit, really our first visit since my return from California.

Thurs. 30 "Thanksgiving Day," again ^{and} although my heart has been so burdened with sorrow and trouble, all the year, yet I have so much to be thankful for. My work, in this pleasant home, is something to be especially thankful for. I wanted to go over to the Cemetery this afternoon, but it was so cold; foggy too. Fred went to see his girl, so Mr. + Mrs. Farnsworth ^{and} I had very quiet afternoon ^{and} evening.



Tues. 5. Dec 1893 Mrs. Farnsworth is a bright witty, little, woman and we have happy times together; we are alone together except at "meal times"; only for the hired girl, but she is busy with her work, so we talk; and I read much to her; sometimes play my guitar and sing to her.

Wed. 6 Passed my usual quiet day with my patient, who is very affectionate and I baby her.

Thurs. 7 Fred at home, sick all day, so I had another patient to look after.

Fri. 8 Went in to Mrs. Laurens' this morning and this afternoon, Ida - hired girl - looked after Mrs. F. and let me get out for an "airing." I went over to the Cemetery, then to Jim Shaw's where I saw Mother and Mrs. Pettit and children. Mrs. Baker called to see me, just after dinner. Fred was home this evening and tho' he is such a quiet fellow, he can be very entertaining.

Sat. 9 A quiet day with Mrs. Farnsworth.

Sun. 10 I went to Church this morning, Fred going as far as 5th St., and from church, I went to J. M. Bair's for dinner. Fred asked me this evening, if the right man came along, if I would not marry again. Oh! dear.

Mon. 11 Dec. 1893 Mrs. Farnsworth asked me if I would not go to Calif. with her next summer: she misses her children so, but the poor little woman, will not live till next summer.

Pres. 12 Ted - as Mrs. F. calls him - not very well
and to bed early. He is not a strong boy.

Wed. 13 Covering Fred's gloves with Chamois
this afternoon, as I sat with my Patient.
Mrs. F. goes to her room, after Tea, and Mr.
F. sits thro' the evening with her, so it
leaves Frednd I alone for the eveningnd
he is beginning to look at me, in a rather
strange waynd to say "funny" things. Tonight
he said we would go to Calif. together
next Summer, on his vacation. Now if he
means that seriously, I am sorry, for I
cannot think of marrying again. Oh!
such misery. I could never trust another
man, tho' I know Fred is a splendid fellow,
but he is a "moderate" drinker like the other.

Thurs. 14 Mrs. F. and I a quiet, happy day, together.

Fri. 15 Mrs. F. is failing every day. Fred asked me this evening what Johnny said when he "Proposed". Now Fred don't you try Proposing to me for I will have to say no, no, no. ~~no, no, no.~~



Sat. 16 Dec. 1893 I am afraid Fred is "smitten" for when I came down to breakfast this morning, he met mend asked if I did not say last night, that I blorped to him. Oh! if he could only realize, how I hate the thought of marriage. He and I, have always been the best of friends,nd he is so good, but I simply cannot love or trust any man again. It makes me shudder to even think of it. He is not home tonight.

Sun. 17 Fred walked with me, on his way to P.O. as far as 6th and Ave, this morning as I was going over on East side to Church at 3rd Christian Co. From Church I went to Jim Shaw'snd Mr. J. C. Pettit's, then to Cemetery and home on a car by 2:30 P.M. Fred did not go see his girl tonight.

Mon. 18 Was over to Mrs. Milham's this morning on an errand, for Mrs. F. Mr. Geo. Willits here for dinnernd Mr. Frank McGlelland of Maple Hill, was here for suppernd to stay all night with Fred. Mrs. Farnsworth still failing.

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Tues. 19 Dec. 1893 Mrs. Farnsworth thinks so much of me^{and} can hardly let me out of her sight; she is so affectionate^{and} I pet her a great deal, ^{and} she just seems to be "wrapped up" in me. She says, I do more for her, than her own daughter would do. Fred Gordon, came home with Fred for supper^{and} to spend the evening.

Wed. 20 Mrs. F. is failing so, that she takes almost my constant time, ^{and} each night I must stay in her room over night, except that Mr. F. stays with her for couple of hours after supper. Tonight Fred said to me, "I was wondering how long it would be, before you could marry." I can never marry. So far as waiting is concerned, I could marry now. I staid with the other^{and} took care of him. He was so brutal ^{and} unkind, he became repulsive to me. I loathed him, yet I staid with him^{and} took care of him, as I felt it my duty to do; but now I am free to marry if I wish. I do not want to. Oh! the horror of it.

Martha Farnsworth diary

^{201 Topeka Ks.}
Thurs. 21 Dec. 1893 Fred took me over to North Topeka, this evening, to see some friends of his, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Carey and I find Mrs. Carey an old acquaintance who use to be, Effie Priddy, at Silver Lake. When we got home, near 10 o'clock we found Mr. Farnsworth sick, tho' not bad.

Fri. 22 Mr. Farnsworth, not able to speak out loud this morning; we called Dr. Munroe who has not yet decided what is his trouble.

Sat. 23 Both Mr. & Mrs. Farnsworth very sick and I go constantly from one room to another. Fred staid with them about two hours, after supper, that I might get a little sleep as I barely got a doze last night.

Sun. 24 I wrote letters to all the Farnsworth children tonight, to tell them of the dangerous illness of their parents. We don't know what a moment may bring. Fred went to see his girl and we had to send for him. Dr. Munroe here until late tonight. I was up all night last night and must be tonight.

Martha Farnsworth diary

Mon. 25 "Christmas Day" and Fred has half Holidaynd is home; while some of the neighbors came in this afternoon, to stay with my Patients, to let me get out in the air, Fred walked with me: I took a very short walk to rivernd back as I do not feel like leaving my two Patients even a moment.

Tues. 26 Went out for a little walk alone this afternoon, as my Patients are improvingnd Mrs. Ourein came in to stay, while I was out. Fred stays with them evenings, while I take a two hours sleep. I do not undress day or night.

Wed. 27 A Rainy morning. Cousin Nellie Dicknd Ned Adams married today and as we read the account in Paper this evening Fred asked if I did not wish it was hend I. Poor Fred, how can I ever love, or trust any one again, enough to marry them, when I found married life so unhappy.



Martha Farnsworth diary

Thurs. 28 Dec. 1893 My Patients much better^{and} Mr. Farnsworth can be up so Ida, looked after them long enough for me to ride to town with Fred after dinner, to go to Express Office^{and} get my Bed Spread, just sent me from the World's Fair, where I got a Prize on it, of \$3.⁰⁰ I walked home.

Fri. 29 The folks are still improving and I slept from supper until 8:30 when Fred called me^{and} now I sit thro' the night alone, as I use to do: I sit by Mrs. F.'s bedside in a big rocker holding her hand, as I use to do Johnny. She says she can just feel the good come from me^{and} she is only happy when I am right beside her. Now she clings to me all the time.

Sat. 30 Mrs. F. not so well. I am afraid life is most over for her, and I will lose a dear friend.



Martha Farnsworth diary

Sun. 31 Dec. 1873 Standing with me, by
his mother's bedside, this evening.
Fred said I could set my own time
to be married. Oh! Fred when will you
ever quit talking so, to me. I cannot
trust any man enough to marry
him. I am afraid. I have been so
unhappy, that now my greatest
joy is to be free. Fred is so good
and our friendship has always been
such a happy one, I don't want
it spoiled, by the thought of
marriage. I could never be so
happy as now in my freedom.

Tonight closes a most unhappy
year in my life. So full of
care, sorrow, misery. God grant
the New Year, may bring more
of joy.