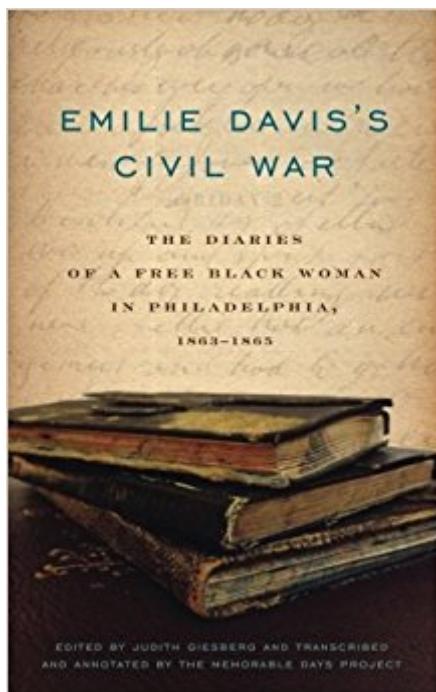


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Emilie Davis's Civil War: The Diaries Of A Free Black Woman In Philadelphia, 1863–1865



Synopsis

Emilie Davis was a free African American woman who lived in Philadelphia during the Civil War. She worked as a seamstress, attended the Institute for Colored Youth, and was an active member of her community. She lived an average life in her day, but what sets her apart is that she kept a diary. Her daily entries from 1863 to 1865 touch on the momentous and the mundane: she discusses her own and her community's reactions to events of the war, such as the Battle of Gettysburg, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the assassination of President Lincoln, as well as the minutiae of social life in Philadelphia's black community. Her diaries allow the reader to experience the Civil War in "real time" and are a counterpoint to more widely known diaries of the period. Judith Giesberg has written an accessible introduction, situating Davis and her diaries within the historical, cultural, and political context of wartime Philadelphia. In addition to furnishing a new window through which to view the war's major events, Davis's diaries give us a rare look at how the war was experienced as a part of everyday life—how its dramatic turns and lulls and its pervasive, agonizing uncertainty affected a northern city with a vibrant black community.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Emilie Davis's diary surely will find an appreciative audience among scholars and readers interested in African Americans during the Civil War era. Its entries, covering January 1863 through December 1865, yield valuable information on multiple topics, including daily life among

Philadelphia's free black community, reactions to news from the war's political and military fronts, and the centrality of religion in Davis's world. Judith Giesberg and her coeditors have framed the diary beautifully and placed students of the conflict much in their debt. *Emilie Davis: Civil War* offers a rare "interior view of the daily life and doings of a young black Philadelphian during the Civil War. In brief but regular daily jottings, Emilie Davis recorded the rhythms of life in the city; the associations in clubs, school, and church that formed the marrow of the black community; the feelings she had about loved ones, friends, and public figures; and moments when the war brought home death and dangers. This book commands attention because sustained private views from black women are few, and those few we have are from more educated and affluent writers than Davis. The diaries also benefit from a perceptive introduction by Judith Giesberg and excellent annotation throughout. The result is a book that is at once a rarity and a necessity. It allows us to enter a place and meet a people we hardly know • black Philadelphia during wartime • and by doing so, in critical ways, it turns the narrative of the home front upside down and inside out. *Emilie Davis: Civil War: The Diaries of a Free Black Woman in Philadelphia, 1863-1865* is both an important educational tool and a vivid depiction of everyday life in a country at war to end the greatest injustice it has ever committed. *Hope Wabuke, The Root* "This book and its digital counterpart are priceless additions to the study of the northern Civil War home front." • Tyler Sperrazza, *Civil War Monitor*

Judith Giesberg is Professor of History at Villanova University.

Amazing description of her life. A wonderful book on so many levels.

I started to read this book and found it insightful so far.

Emilie Davis provides wonderful insight into the day to day life of a free black woman living during

the Civil War and living in Philadelphia, one of the hubs for the abolitionist movement. Emilie was a remarkable young lady, she focused on her education and was involved in the very active Civil Rights movement of Philadelphia. She sees Frederick Douglass speak on several occasions, watches Union soldiers pass through, and describes the funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln. Thanks to those who transcribed her diaries, Emilie Davis will live through the ages. This is a terrific resource for educators and I cannot wait to utilize this book in my own classes!

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