



# Diary of Gideon Welles, Vol. 1: Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson (Classic Reprint)

*Gideon Welles*

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Excerpt from Diary of Gideon Welles, Vol. 1: Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson

It was the custom of my father all his life to keep a diary. He was a prolific writer on political subjects and his evenings were generally spent with his pen in his hand. When in Washington, it was his habit in the evening, after the family had retired, to devote his time to writing in the diary. His public duties at that period gave him no time to devote to the miscellaneous writings to which he had been accustomed. But in the diary are expressed his views on public men and measures, not only of the day but also those gathered throughout his public life. It was a relaxation to him to write; in fact, being thoroughly accustomed to it, it was a pleasure.

The question of the publication of this diary has caused me much serious reflection. It is an unreserved expression of what was from day to day in the mind of the writer. He probably thought that it would be useful as a record of the events of the time. Certainly he did not think it would be wholly unheeded.

But his expressions were not shaped by the consideration that it would be given to the world or would not be; the decision of that question he left to me. Accordingly, I have taken the advice of those in whom I know my father would have the most implicit confidence, submitting the material for consideration and review. Without exception, I believe, the decision has been that duty requires of me the publication, and the truth of history demands that under no circumstances must I fail to make this record public.

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