



# Alice & Phoebe Cary

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

## Introduction

Alice (1820-1871) and Phoebe Cary (1824-1871) were 19<sup>th</sup> century American poets born and raised outside Cincinnati, Ohio, on their family's Clovernook Farm. Although they lacked formal education, their mother encouraged their interest in literature and writing, and in 1838, Alice published her first poem in a local newspaper. Alice and Phoebe continued to publish locally until 1847 when Alice began to write for the *National Era*. The Cary sisters gained national attention and were admired by several well-known writers, including Edgar Allan Poe. Their 1850 publication *Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary* allowed them to move to New York City. Here they made their living writing poetry and prose for periodicals and independent publications, and were at the center of the literary and social scene. The tenets of their Universalist upbringing and passion for social justice, especially for women's rights, were often reflected in their writing. The sisters died months apart in 1871 and are buried in Brooklyn, New York.

## Important Dates

- April 26, 1820: Alice Cary is born near Mt. Healthy, Ohio, to Robert and Elizabeth Jessup Cary.
- September 4, 1824: Phoebe Cary is born near Mt. Healthy, Ohio.
- 1838: Alice's poem "The Child of Sorrow" is published in *The Sentinel*, Cincinnati's Universalist newspaper.
- 1847: Alice begins to write for the *National Era*, Washington, D.C.'s abolitionist newspaper.
- 1849: Alice and Phoebe contribute to Rufus Griswold's *The Female Poets of America* anthology.
- 1850: *Poems of Alice and Phoebe Cary* is published, and the sisters move to New York City.
- 1852: Alice publishes *Clovernook: or, Recollections of Our Neighborhood in the West*.
- February 12, 1871: Alice Cary dies of tuberculosis in New York.
- July 31, 1871: Phoebe Cary dies of hepatitis in Newport, Rhode Island.
- 1876: Composer Robert Ambrose scores Phoebe's popular "Nearer Home" hymn which becomes one of the most widely-sold pieces of sheet music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: Alice Cary, Alice Carey, Phoebe Cary, Phoebe Carey, poem, poetry, Clovernook, Clover Nook, sisters.
- Search by the titles of their literary works in proximity or as phrases.
- The Cary sisters were well-known and their works as well as biographical articles continued to be published after their deaths, so be sure to search newspapers from all states and time periods.

## Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Clover Nook: By Alice Carey](#)" *National Era* (Washington, DC), January 1, 1852, Image 2, col. 1-2.
- "[Alice Cary and Her Poetry](#)" *Cincinnati Daily Press* (Cincinnati, OH), October 4, 1860, Image 2, col. 3.
- "[Coming Home](#)" *Hancock Jeffersonian* (Findlay, OH), January 8, 1869, Image 1, col. 3.
- "[Death of Alice Cary](#)" *States and Union* (Ashland, OH), February 22, 1871, Image 4, col. 2-3.
- "[Phoebe Cary](#)" *Urbana Union* (Urbana, OH), August 16, 1871, Image 1, col. 7.
- "[Nearer Home](#)" *Times Dispatch* (Richmond, VA), June 29, 1904, Image 6, col. 4-5.