

Information Sheet

**R Hershey, Charley, 1869-
188 Diaries, 1883-1888.
Five folders.**

MICROFILM

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are diaries of a young itinerant peddler from Joplin in Jasper County, Missouri. Hershey and his brothers canvassed the mining towns in Jasper County and in Kansas. They made a journey down the White River in Arkansas in 1884, and went to California, Nevada, Utah, and Colorado in 1886. The collection also includes a fragment of a short story, "Goldeye's Trip to the Hills," n.d.

Nothing is known of the author of these diaries, or how they came into the possession of the Joplin Historical Society. The text indicates only that Charley Hershey lived in Joplin, that he had two brothers, Austin and Sam, who worked with him, and uncles in Ellsworth, Kansas, and Pennsylvania. Charley was nineteen years old on 11 May 1888.

The diaries consist of daily records of travel and business, with very brief descriptions of the towns and sights visited along the way. The entries are written in a flowery, pseudo-poetic style which evidences some literary ambition on the part of the author, who refers to himself as "Goldeye." The style often stands in amusing contrast to the unorthodox orthography which is found throughout the diaries.

The peddling business apparently consisted of door-to-door sales of housewares and notions. Charley and his brothers also sold greeting cards and magazine subscriptions. The latter included *Solidarity*, an anarchist journal and the only title mentioned specifically. Figures on sales are generally entered at the end of each month. Although they worked as far south as Granby and as far west as Pittsburg, Kansas, business seems to have been best in the mining communities of Jasper County, Missouri. Periods of slow sales were spent hauling wood and trapping around Joplin.

Fur-trapping was the object of a trip by the Hershey brothers down the flooded White River in 1884, which led to the most unusual incident related in the diaries. Finding trapping impossible, the brothers moved downstream toward Jacksonport, Arkansas. They determined to go into the log-rafting business, by gathering stray logs floated by the high water from landings upstream. The promising scheme fell apart when a group of local inhabitants (Charley called them "Ku Kluxers") made preparations to disrupt passage of the rafts down river. The brothers wound up abandoning their plans and camp, fleeing into the swamps. There they were separated, and spent nearly a week's uncomfortable sojourn before being safely reunited. Charley called the Arkansas adventure, "The Turible[sic] Times in the Swamps and the Narrow Escapes from the Swamp Devils."

A typescript of the first two diaries, 1883-1884 and 1886, has been prepared by the Joplin Historical Society and has been filmed in front of the originals. Several sketches from pages of the books have been copied on 35mm color transparencies. These have been filed in the Information Folder.

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1 May 1984

Joplin Historical Society

Loaned for microfilming

Shelf List

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Folder 1: Typescript of diaries, 1883-1886.

This typescript, prepared by the Joplin Historical Society, includes the first two diaries, dated through July 1886.

Folder 2: Diary, 7 October 1883--30 September 1884.

Hershey's trip down the White River into Arkansas and his run-in with "Ku Kluxers" are described in this diary.

Folder 3: Diary, 1 January 1886--31 July 1886. "Goldeye's Weather and Transaction Book."

Hershey and his brothers left for California in April 1886. They spent most of April and May in California, June in Nevada and Utah, and July in Colorado. The diary entries contain descriptions of travels and sights in the west.

Folder 4: Diary, 1 January 1888--31 December 1888.

Entries in this volume record many short peddling trips to Carthage, Oronogo, and Carl Junction. Hershey also traveled south to Granby and Neosho, and west to Pittsburg, Kansas.

Folder 5: "A Story of Goldeye's Trip to the Hills, or, a Visit to the Old Ranger's Ranch," n.d.

A four-page fragment of a short story written by Charley Hershey, nicknamed "Gold-eye."

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