

Collection #
M 1290
DVD 1077-1078

HARMAN AND SARAH COTTERMAN DIARIES, 1875-1933

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Processed by

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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 3 manuscript boxes (42 diaries)
2 DVDs

COLLECTION DATES: 1875-1933

PROVENANCE: William T. Cotterman (for Cotterman Family)
10219 Leeward Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: All diaries have been digitized and may be accessed on the DVD.

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2017.0087

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Harman Cotterman was born 15 July 1856 on a farm three miles south of Logansport in Cass County, Indiana. On his 19th birthday he began keeping a diary of his daily activities, which continued throughout his lifetime.

In 1876 Harman wrote of receiving a letter “from over the hills and far away”. The presumed author of the letter, Sarah Vance, was living with her grandparents at the time on a neighboring farm. Several mysterious coded diary entries followed suggesting a courtship. In October 1877 Harman and Sarah were married. They produced six children.

Maintaining a livelihood was a continual struggle, and Harman wrote of moving several times over the years. He moved to Kent in Jefferson County, Indiana in 1907 and back to Cass County, Indiana in 1911. Despite these hardships, time was found for travel to visit family, social events, religious services, and giving singing lessons. In his latter days Harman took up shoe and harness repair because farming was too hard on his health. He also served as postmaster, first in Kent, Indiana, and then for Onward, Indiana.

Harman Cotterman died from cancer on 16 April 1919 at the age of 62. After his death, Sarah began keeping a diary until a few years before her own death in 1937.

Sources:

Collection materials

Information from donor

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of 42 diaries detailing farm life in rural Indiana after the Civil War and before World War II. They follow the seasonal patterns of plowing, sowing, and threshing, and each diary ends with a yearly summary of the farmer's fortunes.

The diaries of Harman span 1875 to 1919, the year he died. Sarah's diaries begin in 1921, with her last entry on 6 January 1933. Together, the diaries span almost six decades and describe family life and local history in the Indiana heartland.

The diaries are organized by the author and then the year, with the DVDs listed at the end. The DVDs contain Cotterman genealogy information, scans of all the diaries, and a document written by grandson Vance Cotterman about Harman and Sarah. Included with the DVD is an inventory of the diaries with notes.

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Sarah's Diary, 1932-1933

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The Diaries of Harman Cotterman and His Wife Sarah
E. Vance, 1875-1932 (2 copies)

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