



LancasterHistory

Frank E. Witmer's 1879 Diary, 1879, 2020

Object ID: MG0847

1 box 3 folders, 3 items, 146 pages to scan .5 cubic feet

Repository: LancasterHistory (Organization); PV7

Shelving Location: Archives North, Side 28

Scope and Content Note: This collection contains Frank E. Witmer's original 1879 diary, as well as a transcription and index prepared by Dr. David H. Wallace. The diary provides a detailed record of the daily activities of all members of the family. He primarily records the work involved in running a truck farm—planting, maintaining, and harvesting crops, and preparing for market. Other entries of interest include helping a neighbor move a carriage house; building a hog pen; canning; attendance at several Mennonite churches in the area; the process of moving from one house and barn to a new house and barn on the property; frequent visits between relatives and neighbors; and a few mentions of school and the leisure activities of the young men.

Creator: Wallace, David H.; Witmer, Frank Elmer, 1855-1931.

Conditions for Access: Please use the transcription and index in the Collections Database, MG0847_F002 and MG0847_F003. Original diary may be used by appointment—contact research@lancasterhistory.org at least two weeks prior to visit.

Conditions Governing Reproductions: Images have been provided for research purposes only. Please contact research@lancasterhistory.org for a high-resolution image and permission to publish.

LancasterHistory retains the rights to the digital images and content presented. The doctrine of fair use allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission from the copyright holder. Fair use includes comment, criticism, teaching, and private scholarship. Any images and data downloaded, printed or photocopied for these purposes should provide a citation. All other uses beyond those allowed by fair use require written permission.

Permission for reproduction and/or publication must be obtained in writing from LancasterHistory. Persons wishing to publish any material from this site must assume all responsibility for identifying and satisfying any claimants of copyright or other use restrictions. Publication fees may apply.



LancasterHistory

Language: English

Biographical and Historical Note: In 1879, Franklin E. Witmer (1855-1931), at age 23, was the eldest son of Aaron L. Witmer, farmer of West Lampeter Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and his wife Mary Ann (Herr) Witmer. The household also included his younger brothers Abraham (Abram), 21, and Jacob Elam (Elem), 19; two school-age girls Sarah Dunlap, 13, an apprentice servant, and Hettie Fritz, 8, a ward of Mr. and Mrs. Witmer; and for part of the year a teen-age boarder-farm hand, Thaddeus (Thad) Brackbill. In Frank's diary, each person's activity was recorded daily, almost as if he had set himself a deliberate project to do so.

Mr. Witmer's truck farm embraced fields of grain (wheat, oats and rye), several acres of tobacco, a varied fruit orchard, a large truck garden, and a greenhouse for vegetables and flowering plants, a small herd of dairy cattle, some hogs and chickens; enough variety to make year-round weekly visits to market in Lancaster. During the year the family moved into a new house, raised a new barn, stables, hog-pen and chicken-house, and rented the old house and barn to a tenant farmer, Jacob Dieter.

The Witmers were Mennonites, regularly attending church in Lampeter Twp. and Strasburg, and occasionally in New Providence and Lancaster. Sarah and Hettie and briefly Elam, attended the Lampeter School. Their chief source of entertainment seems to have been visiting among their extended Witmer and Herr families and neighbors, although Abram and Elam sometimes attended "singing school" and the Lampeter Lyceum and did some "driving about" of an evening. Only Abram seems to have had a special girlfriend.

Although all the men of the family did everything in the way of farm chores, each of the boys also had a specialty. Frank, the oldest, had his own corn and tobacco patches to tend and market, Abram tended to concentrate on the greenhouse and truck-garden, and Elam helped his father provide veterinary services to other farmers in the area.

Frank Witmer married Mary Ann Herr on November 30, 1881; he continued general farming in West Lampeter Township, died there on December 10, 1931, and was buried in the Mennonite cemetery in nearby Willow Street, Pennsylvania.

This history was prepared by Dr. David H. Wallace.

Source of Acquisition: Gift of Dr. David H. Wallace, 2 June 2021.

Custodial History (Provenance): Donor purchased the diary on eBay in September 2020.



LancasterHistory

Accruals: No further accruals are expected.

Preferred Citation: Frank E. Witmer's 1879 Diary (MG0847), Object ID, LancasterHistory, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

People:

Brackbill, Thaddeus
Dunlap, Sarah
Fritz, Hettie
Wallace, David Harold
Witmer, Aaron L.
Witmer, Abraham Herr
Witmer, Franklin Elmer
Witmer, Jacob Elam
Witmer, Mary Ann Herr

Subject Headings:

Truck farming
Diaries
Agriculture
Indexes

Search Terms:

Truck farming
Diaries
Farming
Agriculture
Transcriptions
Indexes
Finding aids
Manuscript groups

Processing History: Processed and finding aid prepared by HST, 16 July 2021. This collection has been documented, preserved and managed according to professional museum and archives standards. The collection was cataloged using DACS conventions.



LancasterHistory

Box 1

Folder 1 Diary of Frank E. Witmer. This diary provides a detailed record of the daily activities of all members of the family, such as farm work (planting, maintaining, and harvesting crops); building a hog pen; helping a neighbor move a carriage house; washing the buggies; canning; preparing for market; attendance at several Mennonite churches in the area; the processes involved in moving from one house and barn to a new house and barn on the property; frequent visits between relatives and neighbors; and a few mentions of school; and the leisure activities of the young men. Daily Journal for 1879, published annually for the trade, from I. B. Seeley's Truss & Bandage Establishments, 1347 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia and No. 737 Broadway, New York. Contains a counting-house calendar, rates of postage, and interest tables. 1879. (1 item, 146 pages to scan) *Please use the PDFs of the transcription and index in the Collections Database, MG0847_F002 and MG0847_F003.*

Folder 2 Transcription of the diary of Frank E. Witmer, 1879. Transcribed by Dr. David H. Wallace. November 2020. (1 item, 60 pages) *Please use the PDF in the Collections Database, MG0847_F002.*

Folder 3 Index to the diary of Frank E. Witmer, 1879. Index prepared by Dr. David H. Wallace. November 2020. (1 item, 10 pages) *Please use the PDF in the Collections Database, MG0847_F003.*