

DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

This section provides basic data about the collection and a brief overview of its contents.

Repository: Kansas State Historical Society (Topeka)

Creator: Altman, S. A. (Solomon Aaron), 1853-1943.

Titles: S. A. Altman diaries
Diaries

Dates: 1875 – 1936

Quantity: 20 v. on 2 35mm microfilm reels

Abstract:

Solomon Aaron Altman was born in Elderton, Pa., Apr. 23, 1853; left by train for Kansas aged 21 (March 12, 1875). After becoming a Lincoln County resident he taught school for a period of time. Solomon was a farmer until 1919. Afterwards he was a salesman. He married Mary Stites at age 29 and the union produced 10 children (4 sons, and 6 daughters).

Weather is an oft-mentioned topic. He concentrates on his travels and his teaching and progresses to family, friends and farming. After he leaves farming, traveling salesman duties and family and friends make up the bulk of entries. The final diaries deal with fellow Lincoln County residents' obituaries or his medical problems. The entries seem to show a different slant after World War I. His son Duane died shortly after his induction into the Army in 1918. Solomon's struggles to get death benefits from government sources for over a year are evident in the diaries. His strong faith in both American and Protestant ideals is shown throughout his writings. The 1920s entries deal with his involvement in the Ku Klux Klan. He was a proud member of the KKK and was a proponent of their vision of America peopled by "true Americans." The 1907 volume includes a few entries for 1916, 1935 and 1936. The people named as subjects are his immediate family. His family is described through either visits or family celebrations. As many neighbors and friends are mentioned, this microfilm would be a good source for Lincoln County genealogy. The Mar. 4, 1879, document lists an initiation for an unknown secret society on its reverse.

Identification:

Microfilm MF 5792 – MF 5793
Manuscript collection no. 778

Notes:

This finding aid describes materials held by the Kansas State Historical Society. Materials may be used in the Research Room in the society's Center for Historical Research during regular research hours. Support for telephone, mail, and online reference and research is limited.

In a continuing effort to improve the completeness and accuracy of finding aids, revisions are made as more or new information becomes available. Consequently, this finding aid may differ slightly from what appears on the Kansas State Historical Society's web site.

Descriptions are often based on a preliminary inspection of the material. As such, they may contain misspellings or other inaccuracies based on sources within the materials. As the collections are arranged and as time permits, these finding aids are improved and corrected. If you spot an error, please feel free to report it to the reference staff or an archivist.

BIOGRAPHY

This section contains a chronicle of the organization that created the records.

Solomon Aaron Altman was born to David & Elizabeth Altman in Elderton, Pennsylvania, on April 23, 1853. Solomon, and his brother Will, left by train for Kansas when he was 21 (March 12, 1875). He both stayed, and worked, at various train stops along the way. He eventually took the train to Atchison, Kansas. After that point he walked west to reach Lincoln Centre, Kansas, on November 5, 1875. (From January 14, 1870, through November 29, 1878, inclusive, the present city of Lincoln [Lincoln County, Kansas] was known as Lincoln Centre.) He homesteaded on a farm and buildings that he started from scratch. Solomon A. Altman died on June 5, 1943, at home in Lincoln, Kansas.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS

This section contains a description and analysis of the contents of the collection.

Solomon Aaron Altman kept a personal diary for a number of years. His first entry was dated Friday, March 12, 1875, and the last was dated as Friday, March 6, 1936. However, it should be noted that there are gaps in the diaries. It is not known if this was due to a lack of entries being made or a loss of the physical diaries.

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Solomon Aaron Altman's diaries give an extended view of both his life and life in general in and around Lincoln city and Lincoln County, Kansas, for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century time frame. Weather is a common thread throughout. In one sense he concentrates on his travels and his teaching early on. As the years progress and his life changes, he is more concerned with family, friends and farming. As he retires from farming the emphasis shifts to his traveling salesman duties and continues with family and friends. The later years deal quite a bit with fellow Lincoln County residents' obituaries and his various medical ailments.

It would seem that the First World War changed his views on certain matters. His son Duane died from pneumonia, which had started as the flu. This illness and subsequent death resulted from his induction into the Army in 1918. Solomon's struggles to get death benefits from government sources for over a year are evident in the diaries.

Before the war and his son's death, Solomon had belonged to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I. O. O. F.) However, Ku Klux Klan (KKK) membership and various rallies and meetings mark the 1920s. He had always voted as a Republican and that did not change over time.

The people listed as subjects in the "Controlled Access Headings" section of this finding aid, *below*, are all of his immediate family consisting of his wife and ten children. His family is mentioned very often in the context of personal visits or medical problems including hospitalization.

Interestingly the diaries are not completely in sequential order. The 1907 volume includes a few entries for 1916, 1935 and 1936. This is noted in the "Description of Subordinate Components," *below*, but should be kept in mind by the researcher.

The strength of these diaries lies in Lincoln County history and genealogy. They appear to offer a sense of rural life in that part of Kansas for parts of two centuries. The KKK material might prove beneficial to researchers but is not as detailed as the social history aspects offered by these diaries.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION

This section describes the order in which the collection's elements have been placed.

Arranged chronologically.

ADJUNCT DESCRIPTIVE DATA

This section includes lists of sources used in the preparation of this finding aid, collections on similar

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subjects that may be of interest to researchers, items cataloged separately, and items removed from the collection.

Related Materials:

Olive Capper miscellaneous collection.....	Misc.: Capper
Anna M. Cooley collection.....	Ms. coll. (MC) 20
Anna M. Cooley, Correspondence Concerning Land in Lincoln County (available through interlibrary loan).....	Microfilm MS 1074.02
William E. George miscellaneous collection.....	Misc.: George
Ku Klux Klan history collection.....	MC 608
Lincoln County history collection.....	MC 704
John Malone collection.....	MC 767
William Allen White collection.....	MC 87
William Allen White, Correspondence, 1899-1939 (not available through interlibrary loan).....	Microfilm MS 43-51

Other finding aid: Copies of this finding aid are available in the Research Room of the Kansas State Historical Society; on its web site, <http://www.ksks.org>; and on each microfilm roll.

CONTROLLED ACCESS HEADINGS

The terms listed below may include names, places, subjects, occupations, titles, and other words describing this collection. These terms are used in the ATLAS catalog used by the Kansas State Historical Society and affiliated libraries in Topeka, <http://lib.wuacc.edu/search>, as well as libraries and archives subscribing to OCLC, an international library/archives database. Searches on these words should produce a description of this collection as well as other books and collections that may be of interest. Topical terms are Library of Congress subject headings.

Personal names:

Altman, Arthur Gilbert, 1883-1965.
Altman, David George, 1892-1896.
Altman, Duane Aaron, 1900-1918.
Altman, Mary Stites, 1864-1950.
Altman, S. A. (Solomon Aaron), 1853-1943.
Channer, Edith Freda Altman, 1903-1994.
Hunter, Winona Altman, 1890-1947.
Lessor, Lulu Christina Altman, 1886-1955.
Lessor, Neola Blanche Altman, 1889-1988.
Lyons, Ina May Altman, 1896-1989.
Robinson, Perneca Grace Altman, 1884-1963.

Corporate names:

Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Center Lodge, No. 111 (Lincoln, Kan.)

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Ku Klux Klan (1915-)
National Farmers' Union (U.S.)

Geographic names:

Kansas - History.
Lincoln (Kan.) - History.
Lincoln County (Kan.) - History.

Subjects:

American diaries - Kansas - Lincoln County.
Farm life - Kansas - Lincoln County - History - 19th century.
Farm life - Kansas - Lincoln County - History - 20th century.
Farmers - Kansas - Lincoln County - Diaries.

Titles:

The fellowship forum.

Form / Genre:

Diaries.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

This section provides more detailed information about this collection that may be helpful to those wishing to use it, including its history, restrictions, copyright information, other formats, and a suggested citation form.

Restrictions on access: None.

Restrictions on use:

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Preferred citation: S. A. Altman diaries, 1875-1936, MF 5792 – MF 5793, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

Acquisition information: Gift: Marlin and Marvin Jeffers, 2002; Accession no. 2002-398.

Processing information: Processed by Joseph Laframboise, 2003.

DESCRIPTION OF SUBORDINATE COMPONENTS

Volume List

MICROFILM #	VOL. #	DATES HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VOLUME
MF 5792	1	<p>Mar. 1875 through June 1880</p> <p>July 4, 1876 – for the centennial celebration, he was going to pull a wagon carrying 13 girls signifying the original colonies, and one woman to signify the country, however a gun salute scared the horses, and that changed everything</p> <p>Dec. 19, 1876 – elected trustee at the I.O.O.F. Lodge</p> <p>July 29, 1877 – a doctor attempted to extricate a tooth, however it broke off close to the gum line, with a sharp edge protruding; to make matters worse, it was 104 degrees F. in the shade on that day</p> <p>Aug. 11, 1879 – attended Normal School (Teacher's College)</p> <p>Sept. 10, 1879 – received Teacher's Certificate</p> <p>Sept. 15, 1879 – signed a contract with District 29</p>
MF 5792	2	<p>July 1880 through May 1881</p> <p>Dec. 31, 1880 – his teaching usually passed without incident, but he gave a "severe whipping" this day.</p> <p>Jan. 13, 1881 – there was a fire near their school house where pigs were killed and a cow was badly burned</p>
		<p>Apr. 1882 through Feb. 1887</p> <p>Apr. 15, 1882 – "during which time she made me a happy mortal by accepting a proposition I had made to her sometime ago to become my wife and thus make my life a happy one"</p> <p>Apr. 23, 1882 – reflected on a happy 29th birthday</p> <p>June 4, 1882 – married Mary Stites at 5 P.M. They celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on June 4, 1907.</p> <p>Feb. 12, 1887 – mentioned how the Saline Bridge collapsed on July 25, 1884, resulting in both his fire engine and himself falling into 8 feet of water</p>
MF 5792	4	<p>Jan. 1907 through Aug. 1907</p> <p>NOTE: There are also entries in this volume for the following dates: Dec. 1916, Nov. 1935, Feb. 1936, Mar. 1936</p> <p>Jan. 31, 1907 – had honor to preside over farmers meeting "A. S. of E. (American Society of Equity)" with H. B. Sherman speaking</p> <p>Feb. 12, 1907 – received membership certificate in A. O. U. W. (Ancient Order of United Workmen)</p>
MF 5792	5	<p>Jan. 1910 through Feb. 1919</p> <p>NOTE: Some entries for Dec. 1916 are found in the Jan. 1907 through Aug. 1907 volume, no. 4</p>

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MICROFILM #	VOL. #	DATES HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VOLUME
MF 5792	5	<p>Jan. 20, 1910 – saw Halley's comet Dec. 13, 1916 – described how a son killed his father in self defense Jan. 11, 1918 – "was -24 F with snow drifts five feet deep and sixty feet wide, some eggs in the case froze so hard that they cracked open" June 30, 1918 – "two years of entire wheat failures and almost the same with feed of all kinds have reduced the farmer that he has no surplus cash, and the majority of them living on borrowed capital is the cause" Oct. 27, 1918 – son Duane had recently enlisted in the Army when he became ill with the Spanish Influenza, died a short time later as flu became pneumonia (also gave detailed obituary listing family members)</p>
MF 5792	6	<p>Feb. 1919 through Feb. 1920 Apr. 14, 1919 – "worked hard to keep the Farmers Union Store from being closed out, but a bunch of traitors succeeded in having it ordered sold" June 22, 1919 – "decided to close out my farming implements and stock at public auction," rented a house and sold "Pitkin's Products" Dec. 28 1919 – volunteered to be District No. 85 enumerator for 1920 census, began work on Friday, Jan. 2, 1920</p>
MF 5792	7	<p>Feb. 1920 through Apr. 1921 Mar. 18, 1920 – formation of the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union (National Farmers' Union) Apr. 18, 1920 – described his frustrations with a high school bond issue and the manner in which it was executed Sept. 18, 1920 – bemoaned what happened to the county fair, "it has become a gambling den," where everything is so expensive to buy Jan. 27, 1921 – lost leg in car accident</p>
MF 5792	8	<p>Apr. 1921 through Sept. 1921 Apr. 29, 1921 – "102nd anniversary of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows observed last Tuesday. Lodges of Lincoln, Hoxie, Moreland, Hill City, Plainville, Codell, Natoma, Paradise, Waldo, Luray, and Lucas participated in the celebration." May 5, 1921 – showed displeasure over the way a meeting was being held. The meeting dealt with a proposed new high school for Lincoln "and as is all public business done, so was this done. The slate was all prepared by a select few, and, Railroaded through" Aug. 10, 1921 – reviewed the Horner Chautauqua and enjoyed what he took in</p>
MF 5792	9	<p>Sept. 1921 through Dec. 1921 Sept. 27, 1921 – told of Lincoln County Fair, and a baseball game between Dorrance and Lincoln Oct. 25, 1921 – described the proposed day of prayer requested by President Harding and slated for November 21. It would be a holiday and the prayers would be for firstly the speedy disarmament of nations and secondly to defeat the "Brewers Bill" or if you prefer to pray for prohibition</p>
MF 5792	10	<p>Dec. 1921 through Sept. 1922 Dec. 13, 1921 – described procedures that he followed to purchase a "Fit Well Artificial Limb Company" device used for an above-the-knee amputation Jan. 2, 1922 – "small pox scourge took a large toll from the middle aged sown to eighteen and while it has almost passed into history, typhoid and pneumonia is gathering a rich harvest from the cradle up regardless of age</p>

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MICROFILM #	VOL. #	DATES HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VOLUME
		or person"
		Sept. 1922 through Sept. 1924
MF 5792	11	<p>May 21, 1923 – listed all of the graduates of Lincoln High School for 1923</p> <p>Dec. 11, 1923 – "KKK's purpose is to unite all the Protestant peoples, regardless of their Denomination, into one great co-operative organization, or Brotherhood, for the purpose of overcoming the evils of the present day that are drawing us gradually into the meshes of the satanic fiends who worship the One Man God, the Pope"</p> <p>Feb. 11, 1924 – "tragic death last Wednesday evening she attempted to save her child from harm in the corral where it had followed her, and a vicious mule kicked her on the head as she reached down to catch the child, crushing the skull"</p>
		Sept. 1924 through Sept. 1925
MF 5792	12	<p>Oct. 8, 1924 – complained against wheat pool combines</p> <p>Nov. 10, 1924 – pleased that Ben Paulen is governor elect, "Now the KKK's can have a chance to cooperate with the Protestants to Christianize not only the Nation but the whole world."</p> <p>July 15, 1925 – mentioned a parade which both involved the Klan and as such angered the Knights of Columbus</p>
		Sept. 1925 through Apr. 1926
MF 5793	13	<p>Nov. 23, 1925 – described "Brotherhood" meeting and accompanying dinner and lecture; the Brotherhood was a local Presbyterian Church association to which S. A. Altman not only belonged but was an officer of as well.</p> <p>Dec. 30, 1925 – described in detail his wife's operation and recuperation from gall bladder surgery</p>
		Apr. 1926 through Apr. 1927
MF 5793	14	<p>Mar. 19, 1926 – noted "the Pope will make America Catholic by the first of June 1926"</p> <p>Apr. 26, 1926 – hoped that all Klansmen in Kansas would vote as a block and vote only for those who are "true Americans" and therefore accept Klan ideals for the U.S.</p> <p>May 17, 1926 – described how a drunk driver was involved in a car crash that cut his nose completely off of his face and injured two sober people in the car that he hit.</p> <p>Sept. 24, 1926 – mentioned "Fellowship Forum" (KKK newspaper), "a paper whose mission is to raise the morale of our American people, and break the clutch of the Pope of Rome on our beloved Nation, and make America for Americans"</p>
		Apr. 1927 through Oct. 1928
MF 5793	15	<p>Dec. 10, 1927 – described a Klan initiation ceremony</p> <p>July 12, 1928 – told of worst flooding since 1903</p>
		Oct. 1928 through Mar. 1929
MF 5793	16	<p>Nov. 1, 1928 – fell in hen house and could not "wear it off"; that only made it worse.</p> <p>Feb. 3, 1929 – described his stroke which occurred in the kitchen</p>
		Mar. 1929 through Nov. 1929
MF 5793	17	<p>Apr. 21, 1929 – flood in Salina Valley</p> <p>Aug. 9, 1929 – included James Mitchell's obituary (born a slave)</p> <p>Oct. 5, 1929 – described broom sale</p>

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MICROFILM #	VOL. #	DATES HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VOLUME
MF 5793	18	<p align="center">Nov. 1929 through Apr. 1930</p> <p>Nov. 29, 1929 – described Thanksgiving dinner Feb. 6, 1930 – described violent illness</p>
MF 5793	19	<p align="center">Apr. 1930 through Dec. 1930</p> <p>Aug. 12, 1930 – described Depression for farmers in Lincoln County No date (page 32) – "A Klansmen" a poem that extols the virtues of the K.K.K. Nov. 6, 1930 – pleased "Dr." John R. Brinkley (governor's race) is leading in Lincoln County</p>
MF 5793	20	<p align="center">Dec. 1930 through Feb. 1936</p> <p><i>NOTE: Some entries for Nov. 1935, Feb. 1936, and Mar. 1936 are found in the Jan. 1907 through Aug. 1907 volume, no. 4</i></p> <p>Dec. 30, 1930 – special election regarding pool hall in city, most were against it Jan. 1, 1931 – talked of church politics regarding the pastor June 7, 1932 – Solomon and Mary celebrated "Golden Wedding Anniversary" Feb. 24, 1936 – "dust storm that shut sunshine down to nothing but a red streak in the sky."</p>