

Collection #
SC 2776

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WINANS DIARY, 1876–1877

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF
COLLECTION: 1 folder

COLLECTION
DATES: 1876–1877

PROVENANCE: Ellen van Skyke, Muncie, IN October 2001

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS: None

RELATED HOLDINGS: P 0468 Ben Winans Glass Plate Negatives Collection

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2002.0036

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Benjamin Franklin Winans was born 20 February 1859 in Brookville, Indiana. His parents King Darias and Eliza Delaney Winans had both come to Brookville from Kentucky. Ben was the youngest of twelve siblings. He attended school at the Franklin County Seminary and went to college for one year before leaving to join the workforce. At the age of fifteen he answered an advertisement for a printer's assistant at the *Brookville American* and over the next seventeen years he worked his way up from a "printer's devil" to the foreman of the shop.

In 1891 Winans opened his own printing office in Brookville. He became a well-respected business man and was very active in his community. He helped found the Fraternity Clan Ben Grampis No. I, Scotus Picti, naming himself "seer of the sacred fire" in 1892. He also held memberships with the Free and Accepted Masons and the Improved Order of Red Men. Winans was a Republican and a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

On 28 May 1902 he married widow Lilly C. Kaiser. That same year Winans purchased a state-of-the-art camera. He captured pictures of his wife and stepson Albert, as well as his beloved Brookville and the people that inhabited it. Ben made friends with other photographers of the time including John W. Baker, and the men hauled their cameras to the wilderness on photographic excursions. By 1910 photography had become an important part of Winans' business life. From 1902 until 1916 he produced over three thousand glass plate negatives. Winans continued to preside over his printing press until he fell in his shop in 1947. He was hospitalized at Fayette Memorial Hospital in Connorsville, where he remained until his death in 1949. Eugene Bock of Anderson collected Winans' glass plate negatives and in 2001 the Indiana Historical Society published a book of these unique images.

Sources:

Materials in collection

Dunaway, Donald L. *The Photography of Ben Winans of Brookville, Indiana, 1902–1926*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2001. *Indiana Historical Society Collection TR140.W56D862001*

Reifel, August J. *History of Franklin County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions*. Evansville, IN: Unigraphic, 1971. *Indiana Historical Society Collection F532.F8 R4 1971*

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of seventeen-year-old Benjamin Franklin Winans' unbound diary for 1876–77. The preface of

the diary outlines Winans' intention to document the centennial year of American independence and to realize his own self-importance. The entries consist of Winans' witty reflections on the events in his life and in the town of Brookville. Winans describes his duties in the printing office of the *Brookville American*, making reference to setting type and spending late nights getting the paper out on time. In addition, Ben describes the activities at the Methodist Episcopal Church that he attended as well as the suppers and parties that the other denominations held. Winans was active in the community, teaching a Sunday School class full of mischievous little boys, and organizing a chapter of the Young Men's Christian Association.

Winans also describes the big news of his day. He gives his opinion on the conviction of George Waybright for the murder via slingshot of Michael Francis. The July 1876 entry chronicles Brookville's Centennial Celebration complete with picnics and parades. In 1877 he discusses the presidential election scandal of the previous year, as well as the bitter cold snap that Indiana underwent in January and February.

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CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, SC 2776).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.