



RUFUS V. HAYS
6625 Milhaven Drive
MISSION, KANSAS

15 MERT

MARTIN

Mr. Don Reynolds
St. Joseph Museum
St. Joseph,
Missouri

He Was an Author

(Continued From Page 1F.)

has written in the fly leaf of "Jesse James Was My Neighbor."

In the preface to a historical volume, Ramon F. Adams writes, "My good friend Martin E. Ismert, an outstanding collector, allowed me the privilege and freedom of his home for a whole week to examine his most unusual collection."

CROY'S BOOK, "Trigger Marshal," was born in a conversation on Martin Ismert's back porch.

"We were sitting there and Martin told me, 'Homer, you know there is a great story down in Oklahoma about the last of the great marshals that never has been handled in any important way,'" Croy recalls. "Then he told me about Chris Madsen and the next day I took a train down to Guthrie to talk with the marshal's son."

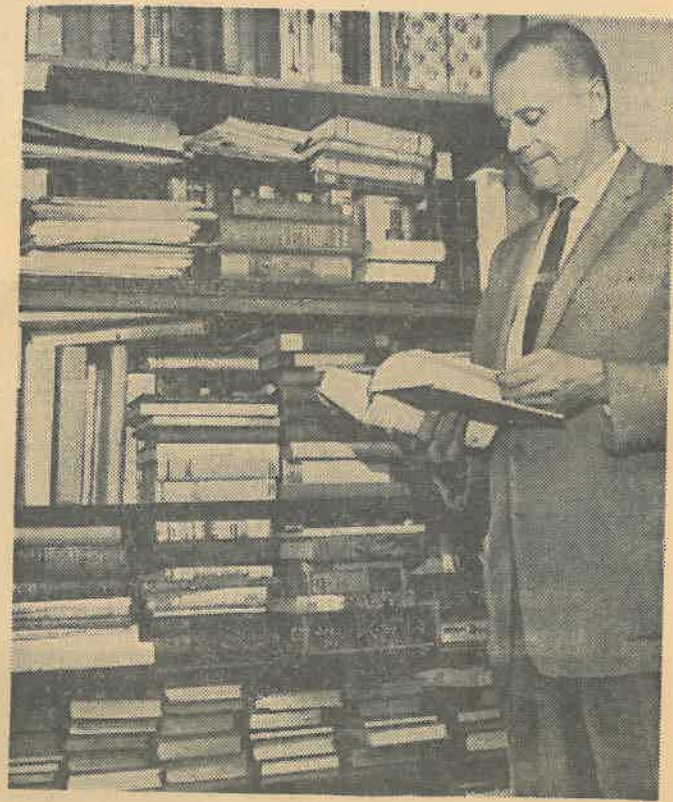
Croy used his host's knowledge and files on dozens of occasions.

THE FINAL YEARS of Ismert's life were devoted completely to his work. He was a widower, and in the back bedroom of the first floor of the house where he kept his writing desk, he surrounded himself with items of his collection that were most precious to him. He shunned publicity, fearing that it might attract thieves who would rob him or crackpots who would try to prey upon him.

"This was his life and love," Mansfield said, indicating with the sweep of his hand the volumes of books . . . yellowed posters . . . photographs of men like Bill Tilghman and Arkansas Tom, the last of the Doolin gang . . . court documents, from which names like Belle Starr and Gratton Dalton leap out at the unsuspecting reader.

Ismert read his books, sometimes staying up until dawn to finish one he found intriguing. He penned notes in the margins and left correspondence with the authors scattered through the pages. Occasionally the notes were critical, like this gem to a careless writer: "Not so."

Coming to Kansas City in 1905, Ismert's first job was with the Ismert-Hincke Milling company, which his grandfather helped to found. He was with this firm until 1923. Later, he worked with



A BOOKCASE DOUBLE STACKED with pamphlets and volumes describing the deeds of heroes and outlaws of the West, is examined by Theodore J. Ismert, the oldest of Ismert's four sons. The collection, estimated in size at more than 10,000 volumes, overflows into several rooms at the Ismert home.



THIS TINTYPE from the Ismert collection, and previously unpublished, is said to be a photograph of William Clark Quantrill. Ismert believed that the picture was taken in Missouri while the guerrilla leader was recovering from wounds on his face.

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His first hobby was stamps and covers, but eventually he turned to what might generally be classed as Western Americana. His interests and efforts seem to have mushroomed like a chain reaction, jumping from one subject to another. Entire shelves and closets deal with outlaws and Missouri history. A box contains documents on Bat Masterson; another on Gen. Jo Shelby. Bookcases are packed with volumes on mountain men and Indians. One shelf



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is devoted to ladies of easy virtue who moved West with the frontier.

"I have been coming over here for years, as many as five times a week, and I never saw all of this collection until we catalogued it," Mansfield confided.

EVEN HIS FAMILY does not know why Martin Ismert began collecting with such zeal. As a boy in Springfield he had seen Frank James start the horse races (as apparently did every other male in Missouri over 50 years of age). Later, when he was in the milling business here, he became acquainted with

worked. Or, perhaps, it all started when he was a boy listening to stories told by his grandfather, Martin Stewart, who had been a vegetable farmer along the Missouri river bottoms in the 1850s.

One of these is recounted in Ismert's words by Homer Croy in "The Last of the Great Outlaws."

"One evening Grandpa was trying to round up his cows down by the Missouri river, when suddenly he came upon a camp of five wild-looking men—enough to scare the wits out of anybody. . . . Grandfather

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the author's Civil war s y m-
pathies: It is edged in black:

"The ground has got his body
and the devil has got his soul
You bet your bottom dollar
We made him hunt his hole."

On March 3, 1846, while at-
tending a political convention,
Millard Fillmore wrote a let-
ter to a cousin, Mrs. A. L.
Dixon. He had been consid-
ered as a candidate for the
vice-presidency, but Fillmore
saw that "someone else will
be nominated and I shall be
left for the pursuit of the even
tenor of my plodding life as
I choose."

A few weeks later the Whig
party made Fillmore a
prophet indeed, and he wrote
again to his cousin:

"You perceive I was right in
saying that I should not be
nominated for the vice-presi-
dent. You must not however,
infer that I am disappointed or
low spirited. On the contrary
I am in good health and fine
spirits, confident of the success
of the Whig cause and rejoic-
ing at the benefit which the
country will derive from it."

A brave front to hide bitter
disappointment perhaps, but
four years later even Mil-
lard Fillmore would have his
day. In 1850 he was elected
as the 13th president of the
United States.

A letter from a captain of
the dragoons at Ft. Leaven-
worth in 1841 asks the adjutant
general of the U. S. Army in
Washington to send him some
copies of a book on cavalry
tactics—a wonderfully direct
system of procurement. How
many hands, one wonders,
would shuffle this request to-
day?

COLLECTORS do not like to
discuss how legal documents
from courthouse files find
their way into private col-
lections. "There are ways,"
they explain mysteriously. Is-

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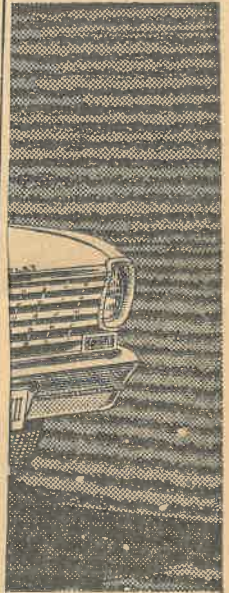
lection wherever he could find
it. Documents, books and old
newspapers came out of
musty, long-forgotten family
trunks. He traded with other
collectors and purchased and
sold items from dealers. He
kept a "want book" for items
he intended to acquire.

He kept another record, too:
too: "The Black Book, Caveat
Emptor," it is titled. Inside
is a list of persons who had
misrepresented items Ismert
purchased from them. He nev-
er forgot or forgave unless
the seller made an adjust-
ment. A typical entry:

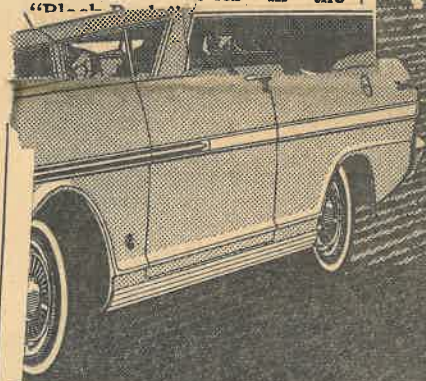
"Sold me Mink's Southern
Missouri and Northern Arkan-
sas. Several pages upside
down. Promised to make
good."

By another name there is
one pungent notation: "A slick-
er."

Although Ismert was a col-
lector for about three decades
there are no more than a
handful of entries in the
"Black Book."



as since kids.



or delivers lots of current even in heavy traffic.



Hope we can get together
soon - We'll return from
New York around Oct 20th
& Doc will be around most
of the time until then -
Maybe we can arrange
something -

FEATURES
SPORTS AND

Martin Ismert:

Man of the West.

HE DEAD
Age. 71-one Years
ROBBERY CONTEMPLATED
Of a Bank at Platte City--To Have Place Last Night

The Frontier Villains Rode Through His Library.

By Robert Pearman.
(A Member of The Star's Staff.)

ON a cold winter night about six years ago the doorbell rang at a frame house at 51 West Fifty-third street terrace. The melody of the musical chimes filled the rooms of the quiet household.

A white-haired, distinguished-looking man named Martin E. Ismert arose from his easy chair, picked his way among the stacks and shelves of books and papers and files to answer the door.

The caller was an elderly woman. Her face was hidden by a heavy black veil and her clothing was in the style of another era. Her car, parked in front of the house, was a hard-used Model T.

The woman identified herself as Aggie Groves. She knew Mr. Ismert was a collector, she said, and she had some material she wanted to sell.

One glance told Ismert that the items she brought with her were most unusual. A close examination convinced him of their authenticity.

There were pictures of Belle Starr and her illegitimate daughter she called Pearl Younger. There were pictures of Bill Doolin, the gentleman outlaw, and of others, equally infamous, whose faces Ismert recognized on sight.

THE WOMAN with the hidden face made two more trips to Kansas City to deal with the collector. When she arrived it always appeared that she had driven a considerable distance, farther than one would expect her dilapidated car to carry her. Then, one



MARTIN ISMERT became an authority on lore of the Old West while assembling, over a period of three decades, what is believed to be one of the largest private collections of Western Americana. In this family snapshot he was photographed on a visit to the grave of James Butler (Wild Bill) Hickok.

Missouri novelist. Croy is one of the few men ever allowed the freedom of browsing at will through the memorabilia of pioneers and outlaws.

Starting sometime in the '30s, Ismert compiled a collection that overflowed five rooms, bulged out of 83 cases, closets, boxes and storage cabinets.

It is believed there are more than 10,000 books, including 200 copies of a single title and one volume of a book about Sam Bass, thought to be the

fortunately there are no funds for an acquisition of that size.

ISMERT, born in Springfield, Mo., in 1889, was not a writer himself. His one published work appeared in 1961 in a quarterly published by the Kansas City posse of The Westerners, of which he was a member. The article was an indictment of the historical inaccuracy of William Elsey Connelley's book, "Quantrill and the Border Wars."

Ismert was one of the un-