

A0059

William Henry Ashley (1778-1838) Collection, 1811-1975

1 box, 2 oversize folders, 1 microfilm reel

REPOSITORY

Missouri History Museum Archives

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DONOR INFORMATION

William H. Ashley's grand-niece, Mrs. Ben F. Gray, donated Ashley's diaries, the Rogers journals, drafts of letters and some business papers to the Missouri Historical Society in 1908.

RESTRICTIONS

Researchers must consult the microfilm and/or published versions of the William H. Ashley diary (March 25-June 27, 1825) and the two Harrison G. Rogers journals (November 26, 1826-January 27, 1827, and May 10-July 13, 1828) before these items will be paged to the reading room.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William H. Ashley was born in 1778 in Virginia, the county of his birth being variously given as Powhatan or Chesterfield. He came to Missouri between 1803 and 1805, when he was listed as an inhabitant and freeholder in Ste. Genevieve. Ashley had both a political and military career in Missouri, as justice of the peace for Ste. Genevieve after 1806, and as a captain (later colonel and general) in the Missouri militia. During the War of 1812, he manufactured gunpowder in Potosi and he was commissioned lieutenant colonel in the Washington County militia in 1814.

Moving to St. Louis in 1819, Ashley continued his political career as a candidate for lieutenant governor and president of the senate. Throughout the 1820s, Ashley was a participant in the fur trade, taking a number of hunters into the Rocky Mountains beginning in 1821 and made his last journey to the mountains in the spring of 1826, selling his interests in the fur trade to Smith, Jackson and Sublette. He continued to supply trade goods and supplies for the fur trade, but focused on politics, as congressman from Missouri, 1831-1834. Ashley died of pneumonia March 26, 1838.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The William H. Ashley Collection consists of his diaries, drafts of letters, and some business papers. Documents are arranged in chronological order, ending with a reference file that contains genealogical and biographical information on Ashley.

Ashley made several journeys to the Rocky Mountains from 1821 to 1826. The collection contains a draft, or copy, of his later account and his diary for the journey made in 1824 and 1825. At one time Ashley's diary was mistaken for that of William Sublette. This has been corrected but is still evident on the typescript of the diary (folder 5). The Harrison G. Rogers journals contain accounts of expeditions made with, and for, Jedediah S. Smith. After his death

in 1828, Rogers' journals were recovered from the Umpqua Indians by Jedediah Smith and turned over to William H. Ashley as executor of Rogers' estate.

The collection contains drafts of letters that might possibly be notes (folders 17-18) that relate to Ashley's observations and recommendations for a military presence in the Rocky Mountain region. It is estimated that these were written circa March 1829.

Items identified as not having been donated as part of the Ashley Collection have been returned to their original collections. A list of these manuscripts follows the document inventory.

DOCUMENT INVENTORY

Folder 1

- 1811 June 8 Document signed James Cocke, Baltimore, to William Ashley; Cocke revokes power of attorney from William Young Lewis and confers it on William H. Ashley. **(Oversize)**
- 1817 Oct 18 Notes from title books concerning sale of St. Louis property; title of lot sold by Bouju to R. Wash for General Ashley.
- 1819 May 8 United States land patent, signed James Monroe, to George Vangeson for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land. Tract of land containing 160 acres, the southwest quarter of section 14, township 57 north, range 18 west. (See also document dated August 18, 1819.) **(Oversize)**
- 1819 May 28 Deed of William G. Orr to William H. Ashley, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$100.
- 1819 June 4 Deed of Francis Fisher (late a private in Carson's Company, 15th Regiment of Infantry, U.S. Army) to William Ashley, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$75. **(Oversize)**
- 1819 June 14 Deed of John Myers (late a private in Biddle's Corps of Artillery) to William H. Ashley, 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$100. **(Oversize)**

Folder 2

- 1819 Aug 7 Deed of Samuel Berrian of the city of New York to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$110. Land comprises northwest quarter of section 26, township 56 north, range 16 west. Land obtained from Alvan Phelps (late a soldier), from the government grant for military bounty.
- 1819 Aug 10 Deed of George Williamson (late a private in Captain Sangster's Company of the 12th Infantry) to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$85. Land comprises northeast quarter, section 20, township 55 north, range 16 west.
- 1819 Aug 11 Deed of Asa C. Wood (late a private in Crane's Corps of Artillery) to William H. Ashley for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$100. Land comprises the northwest quarter of section 23, township 54 north, range 17 west.

- 1819 Aug 12 Deed of Reuben Watts (late a private in Melvin's Company, 4th Infantry) to William H. Ashley, Missouri, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$235. Land comprises northeast quarter of section 20, township 55 north, range 17 west. **(Oversize)**
- 1819 Aug 18 Deed of George Vangeson (late a private in Stocton Company of Artillery), city of New York, to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$75. Land comprises southwest quarter of section 14, township 57 north, range 18 west. (See also document dated May 8, 1819.)
- 1819 Aug 26 Deed of Robert Gedney, city of New York, to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$100. Land comprises northwest quarter of section 32, township 55 north, range 19 west.
- 1819 Aug 31 Deed of Robert Charles Vose, Augusta, Maine, to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$70. Land comprises southeast quarter of section 26, township 55 north, range 18 west, in the tract appropriated for military bounties in Missouri Territory.
- Folder 3**
- 1819 Sept 10 Deed of Henry Conway, Greenbush, Rensselaer County, New York, to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$100. Land comprises northeast quarter of section 14, township 58 north, range 21 west. **(Oversize)**
- 1819 Sept 18 Deed of Asa Aikens, Windsor, Vermont, to William H. Ashley for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$80. Land comprises northwest quarter of section 28, township 55 north, range 16 west, in the tract appropriated for military bounties in Missouri Territory. Deed executed at Windsor, Vermont. **(Oversize)**
- 1819 Sept 24 Deed of Stephen B. Parker (late a matross in Craig's Corps of Light Artillery), to William H. Ashley, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$110. Land comprises southeast quarter of section 36, township 54 north, range 17 west. Deed executed at Boston, Massachusetts. **(Oversize)**
- 1819 Oct 2 Deed of Isaac O'Donald (late a private in the 16th United States Infantry) to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$80. Land comprises the northwest quarter of section 13, township 54 north, range 17 west. Deed executed at Philadelphia. **(Oversize)**

1819 Nov 22 Deed of Eliza Golden (nee Thompson), sister of James Thompson, deceased (late a sergeant in Captain Marston's Company, 5th Infantry), to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$70. Land comprises northwest quarter of section 9, township 53 north, range 17 west. Deed executed in the state of New York.

1819 Dec 21 Deed of John F. Lambert (late a private in Captain Radcliff's Company, 41st Infantry) to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$65. Land comprises the southwest quarter of section 28, township 54 north, range 17 west.

Folder 4

1820 Feb 5 Deed of Peter A. Von Hagen (late a musician in the U.S. Army), Boston, Massachusetts, to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$60. Land comprises the southeast quarter of section 7, township 55 north, range 18 west. Deed executed at Boston, Massachusetts. **(Oversize)**

1820 Feb 14 Deed of Thomas Voax, Boston, Massachusetts, to William H. Ashley, St. Louis, Missouri Territory, for 160 acres of Missouri military bounty land for \$70. Land comprises the southeast quarter, section 28, township 54 north, range 17 west.

1820 June 2 Note signed William H. Ashley, St. Louis, to Jno. F. Lambert. Requests that Lambert forward the deeds and patents deposited with him by Wm. Allen Latham [or Mr. Allen Latham].

1821 Apr 5 Document signed William H. Ashley and William Rector, surveyor of the lands of the United States in the states of Illinois and Missouri and Territory of Arkansas. Articles of agreement concerning surveying which Ashley is to do for the government under certain conditions, with a forfeiture of \$2,000 if he fails to meet the conditions. **(Oversize)**

1824 Oct 29 Letter signed William H. Ashley, Ft. Atkinson, to William Carr Lane, St. Louis. Writes of the "Pawney" Indians and an outrage against a white man in their village which they committed. Original and typed transcript.

1825[?] Fragment of document includes an explanation of topographical map of the route from Council Bluffs to the Pacific Ocean.

Folder 5

1825 March 25-June 27 Diary of William Ashley. Transcript. (30 pages, two copies) (Use this folder, the published version, or the microfilm [reel #134].)

Diary is published in:

1. Dale L. Morgan, editor, *The West of William H. Ashley* (Denver, Colorado: The Old West Publishing Company, 1964) (Missouri History Museum Library call number: Oversize/978/M821)

2. Published in three parts, edited by Dale L. Morgan, in the *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society*:

Part 1: Volume XI, Number 1 (October 1954), pages 9-40

Part 2: Volume XI, Number 2 (January 1955), pages 158-186

Part 3: Volume XI, Number 3 (April 1955), pages 279-302

Folder 6

1825 March 25-June 27

Diary of William Ashley. Original. (93 pages; plus 34 pages of accounts and notes in the back of the volume)

Folder 7

1825 Dec

William Ashley's account of a voyage across the Rocky Mountains to Fort Atkinson. Preservation photocopy.

Folder 8

1825 Dec

William Ashley's account of a voyage across the Rocky Mountains to Fort Atkinson. Original. (32 pages)

Folder 9

1826 Nov 26-1827 Jan 27

Harrison G. Rogers' journal, in the southwest with Jedediah Smith. Typescript. (27 pages)

Folder 10

1826 Nov 26-1827 Jan 27

Harrison G. Rogers' journal, in the southwest with Jedediah Smith. Original. (38 pages)

Published in Harrison Clifford Dale, editor, *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1918), pages 197-228.

Also published in Harrison Clifford Dale, editor, *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829* (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1941), pages 193-224.

Folder 11

1828 May 10-July 13

Harrison G. Rogers' journal, in the southwest with Jedediah Smith. Typescript (33 pages) and preservation photocopy.

Folder 12

1828 May 10-July 13 Harrison G. Rogers' journal, in the southwest with Jedediah Smith. Original. (43 pages)

Published in Harrison Clifford Dale, editor, *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1918), pages 237-271.

Also published in Harrison Clifford Dale, editor, *The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829* (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1941), pages 242-275.

Folder 13

1828 Oct 23 Receipt from B. Pratte to William H. Ashley, \$100 for sale of some land. Document dated Receiver's Office, St. Louis.

1828 Oct 24 Letter signed William H. Ashley, St. Louis, to dear sir. Report on the fur trade west of the Rocky Mountains. Intrusion of the Hudson Bay Co. into U.S. territory; transfers his interest in fur trade to Smith, Jackson and Sublette. (7 pages)

1828 Dec 26 Fragment of letter dated St. Louis, addressed to "dear sir" (not in Ashley's handwriting). Report about fur trade west of the Rocky Mountains. (4 pages)

Folder 14

1828 [1829?] Jan Letter of William H. Ashley to dear sir. Appears to be a draft of letter dated January 11, 1829. (2 pages)

1829 Jan 7 Letter of William H. Ashley to dear sir. Appears to be a draft of letter dated January 11, 1829. (3 pages)

1829 Jan 11 Letter signed William H. Ashley, St. Louis, to dear sir. Ashley has sold fur interests to Smith, Jackson and Sublette. Blackfeet Indians causing trouble, supplied by the British with ammunition. (14 pages)

Folder 15

1829 circa Jan 20 Fragment of letter begins: "I think that you must agree with me . . ." Describes the country (including the scarcity of game and unpleasant, rainy weather) near mouth of Columbia River, while admitting no personal knowledge of the area. May be a draft of a letter to Thomas Hart Benton. (3 pages)

1829 circa Jan 20 Fragment of letter begins: "The government generally will, I suppose, be the first consideration with you . . ." "I am not in

possession of all the information necessary to decide whether the establishment of a military post on the coast of the Pacific . . ." May be a draft of a letter to Thomas Hart Benton. (4 pages)

1829 circa Jan 20
Fragment of letter begins: "It seems that this design . . ." Sublette's traders have sold goods to Indians; attacks of Blackfoot Indians on William Tullock, and plunder of furs; need of military force to protect the fur trade. (3 pages)

1829 circa Jan 20
Fragment of letter begins: ". . . to the Blackfeet – This fact was communicated . . ." Blackfeet Indian attack; wealth of the Hudson Bay Co. Believed to be fragment of a draft of Ashley's letter to Thomas Hart Benton, January 20, 1829. (3 pages)

Folder 16

1829 circa Feb
Draft of letter (fragment) begins: "When writing to you on the 20th . . ." Rocky Mountain region and military establishment at the mouth of the Columbia River. (2 pages)

1829 Feb 23
Draft of letter dated Washington begins: "Dear Genl, I arrived here a week ago . . ." Relates to the four draft fragments dated circa March 1829 (see below). Discusses requirements of a military force in the Rocky Mountains. (8 pages)

Folder 17

Four drafts of letters (one dated March 1829; other three drafts are undated):

1. Draft of letter dated Washington City, March 1829. Draft begins: "Sir, You request me to communicate to you . . ." Discusses requirements of a military force in the Rocky Mountains. (8 pages)

2. Draft of letter, undated (fragment). Draft begins: "The equipage[?] for each horse . . ." Equipment for horses, organization of parties of 60 to 80 men for defense in the Indian country. (4 pages)

3. Draft of letter, undated (fragment). Draft begins: "and acquiring a knowledge of things . . ." Ease of Indian attack, proposes mobile military command, familiar with Indian country. (4 pages)

4. Undated fragment. Draft begins: "In compliance with your request in situation . . ." Descriptions of manner of equipment and moving parties of men through Indian country. (partial leaf, 2 pages)

Folder 18

Nine drafts estimated to have been written circa March 1829:

1. Draft of letter. Draft begins: "and will not therefore yet commence hostilities . . ." Possibility of Pawnee Indians moving to the head waters of the south branch of the Platte River, to operate

with the Arapahos, Kiowas and Blackfoot. Very similar to above fragment, not readily identifiable as Ashley's handwriting but matches that in his diary of 1825. (4 pages)

2. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: "The several tribes with whom we have intercourse west of the mountains . . ." Estimates numbers of warriors in tribes west of Missouri. (2 pages)

3. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: ". . . the robberies committed on our Sante Fee road . . ." Indian attacks along the Santa Fe road, probably by Arapahos; Major Dougherty's opinions of the Pawnees. (4 pages)

4. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: ". . . and have no doubt but they are now . . ." Defensive positions, Indians attacks and the British. (2 pages)

5. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: "notwithstanding all this I am . . ." Fear of unidentified Indian tribe aligning with the Arapaho and Blackfoot near the head waters of the south branch of the Platte River. (4 pages)

6. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: "Mr. Sublette is now in this neighborhood . . ." Sublette preparing for an expedition next spring; operations of the Hudson Bay Co. (2 pages)

7. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: ". . . they have considered at all times hostile to our trade . . ." Attempts to drive Indians from U.S. territory, while British traders supply Blackfoot tribes with arms and ammunition. (2 pages)

8. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: "you request me also to give you . . ." First paragraph regarding movement of parties of men; second a request for patent to be placed on tract of 600 acres, as legal representative of John Jones. (1 leaf, 1 page)

9. Draft of letter/notes (fragment). Draft begins: "on the arrival of the party at their camping ground . . ." Using packs as breastworks against night attacks of Indians; grass as supplemental food for horses during the night (in camp); setting up night camp and care of horses. (2 pages)

Folder 19

1829 March 8

Draft of letters (fragment) (4 pages):

1. Begins: "Dear Sir. We are yet in Washington . . ." Weather in Virginia. (1 page)

2. Begins: "at day light (when in a dangerous part of the country). . ." Concerns mounted guards for camps and the creation of breastworks for defense against Indian attack. (3 pages)

1829 March 10

Draft of letter dated Washington City (fragment). Begins: "Sir, From my first observations in the region of the Rocky Mountains . . ." First four pages appear to be a draft of one letter. Pages 5-7 appear to be a draft of another letter, much like the first draft dated March 1829 (8 pages) (folder 17).

1829 Nov 12 Document signed H.L. Hoffman, H. von Phul. Deed of pew No. 30, Christ Church Cathedral (St. Louis, Missouri), to William H. Ashley, for \$125.

Folder 20

1830 July 7 Letter signed Thomas Griffin, Fulton, Mo., to General Ashley. Regarding mortgage on slaves and land.

1831 Feb 24 Letter signed Sp. Pettis [Spencer D. Pettis], Washington, to General William H. Ashley. Letter of introduction for Mr. Luther H. Read of Washington.

1836 Jan 16 Letter signed Edward B. Cabell, Keytesville, to General William H. Ashley. Regarding military bounty lands in Missouri.

1836 Apr 10 Printed document titled "To the People of Missouri," dated Washington, signed W.H. Ashley. Reply to a speech made by L.F. Linn, U.S. senator from Missouri on the northern boundary of the state. With envelope addressed in Ashley's writing to George Brackenridge, Washington County, Mo.

1836 Oct 19 Letter signed Sophia P. Gregory, Mt. Airy, to General Ashley. Cooper County, Mo. Seeks aid in starting a girl's school. Mentions a letter of introduction from Dr. Woodfolk of St. Louis.

Folder 21

1837 Aug 13 Letter signed W.H. Ashley, St. Louis, to Jos. W. Royall, Smithsville, Virginia. Purchase of a house and 80 acres of land; the house to be the more comfortable of the two suggested. (4 pages)

1837 Dec 6 Letter signed W.H. Ashley, St. Louis, to Jos. W. Royall, Smithsville, Powhatan County, Virginia. Death of Mr. Steiger [Ashley's brother-in-law]; payment of Martha Ashley to sister Steiger. (4 pages)

1838 Feb 24 Letter signed W.H. Ashley, St. Louis, to Joseph W. Royall, Smithsville, Powhatan County, Virginia. Asks Royall to execute deed in favor of the two children. (4 pages)

1838 Dec 18 Letter signed Henry A. Wise, Washington, to Beverly Allen (administrator of Wm. H. Ashley estate), St. Louis, Mo. Bad debt Ashley put into Wise's hands for collection.

1839 June 15 Page from account book listing Ashley's debts to Henry Shaw, receipted by Henry Shaw from Ashley's estate.

- 1839 Oct 5 Document signed Beverly Allen. Order to pay Pierre Chouteau for his claim against Ashley's estate.
- 1839 Nov-1840 Feb Map of E[lizabeth] Ashley's mound property, east of Broadway between Biddle and Bates Streets, St. Louis, Mo. (**Oversize**)
- Folder 22**
circa 1909 Notes made by Walter B. Douglas on the estate of William Ashley, 1838. (8 pages)
- Folder 23**
circa 1920 **Reference File**
Handwritten biographical sketch of William H. Ashley by G.C. Broadhead, with emphasis on the 1823 expedition. (7 pages)
- 1922 June 25 Photocopy of newspaper clipping, "Back Trailing on the Old Frontiers," from the *Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch*.
- circa 1925 Mimeograph biographical sketch of William H. Ashley. (1 page)
- circa 1935 Typescript, "Ashley and His Men," taken from *The History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. I, Chapter XV, "The Rocky Mountain Fur Company." (3 pages)
- 1938 May 5 Typescript biography of William H. Ashley, based on Houck's *History of Missouri*, Vol. 3. Issued by the Missouri Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. (1 page)
- circa 1950 Typescript genealogy notes on William H. Ashley. (1 page)
- 1975 April "William H. Ashley, Land Speculator," by Martin M. Love. Reprinted from *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 2.

Materials Returned to Original Collections, May 1998

- 1826 Oct 14 Letter of William Ashley to Gentlemen[?] regarding Rocky Mountain expedition for beaver. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Feb 2 Letter signed Wm. H. Ashley, Lancaster, to Pierre Chouteau, Philadelphia. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Feb 10 Letter of P. Chouteau, Jr., Philadelphia, to Genl. W.H. Ashley. French. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Feb 28 Letter signed W.H. Ashley, St. Louis, to Genl. Bernard Pratte. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Apr 4 Letter signed W.H. Ashley, Franklin, Mo., to B. Pratte and Co. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Apr 11 Letter signed Wm. H. Ashley, Lexington, to Mr. Bernard Pratt. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Apr 14 Fragment: Ashley account with B[ernard] P[ratte] and Co. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 May 31 Typescript of *Missouri Republican* story of three men. "Gregory, Nichols and one other" captured by Indians. **Missouri History Museum Library, William H. Ashley Vertical File**
- 1827 June 7 Typescript of letter of William H. Ashley to Charless of the *Missouri Republican*, June 5, 1827. **Missouri History Museum Library, William H. Ashley Vertical File**
- 1827 Oct 16 Note signed James B. Braffen, Lexington. **Chouteau Family Papers**
- 1827 Oct 31 Typescript of letter of W.H. Ashley, St. Louis, to Mr. Orr of the *Missouri Observer* and *St. Louis Advertiser*. **Missouri History Museum Library, William H. Ashley Vertical File**
- 1829 Apr 18-1830 Apr 16 Smith, Jackson and Sublette in account with W.H. Ashley. **William L. Sublette Collection**
- 1836 June 16 Printed Proclamation of W.H. Ashley to the People of Missouri, dated Washington, announcing his candidacy for governor. **John Fletcher Darby Papers**
- no date Typescript of letter of Edward Dobyens to John G. Hickman, about William H. Ashley. **Edward Dobyens Papers**