

## Old Hermit Is Snug In County Home After 18 Years of Misery

(By HENRY HOFLANDER)

In an old shack on an abandoned road located about a mile southwest of Prairie Lick there lived a real hermit. He was a man evidently between fifty and sixty years of age, generally known as "Old Man Shields." While this may or may not be his real name very little attention was paid him by the citizens of this part of our county since he had been living at this one particular spot in his own way for the past eighteen years and had been regarded as a fixed object by his neighbors. Although of an erratic temperament and queer turn of mind he was always regarded as a harmless human derelict who made his living by begging food and clothing.

This winter a move was made by several citizens in this part of the county to investigate his condition as he was thought to be mentally unbalanced. His mode of living was found to be of the most squalid character. The shack he was living in had no doors or windows, only a small part of a roof, no floor except the earth. In cold weather he built a fire upon the ground, then moved the fire and lay upon the earth that had been warmed by the fire, sleeping upon the ashes,

sometimes upon a piece of old tin without any bedding whatever.

His art of cooking, whenever he did any, would rival that of the savages in pre-historic times, although the greater part of his subsistence was gained by begging, sometimes going out six or eight miles away from his habitation. In this way, both winter and summer, he eked out his miserable existence. How he managed to live through some of the sub-zero temperatures we experienced during the past decade is a mystery.

He is very reticent about his past and became highly incensed when urged to go to our county home and enjoy the comforts offered him there.

It is thought that at one time he was a worker in the Missouri Pacific shops at Sedalia, but how, or why, he took up his hermit mode of living no one can explain.

This week, however, county authorities took action. The old hermit, who told officials that his name is Ralph Peters was taken to the county home from his shack on the Schwartz place. He was given a much-needed bath and some good home-cooked food. Mrs. Jeffress, the superintendent of the home, says he seems to enjoy being there.

## Hazell Sale To Be February 19

Aubrey Hazell, of near Pilot Grove, will hold a public sale at his home known as the Dr. Evans farm, on Tuesday, Feb. 19. He will sell some livestock, implements and other articles. Col. C. C. Jones and Archie Eichman will auction the sale.