This is a daybook of a mercantile operation in Washington County, Missouri, attributed to John Perry, Jr. The trade included dry goods, groceries, hardware, lumber, and blacksmithing services. The Springfield Iron Furnace, the Cedar Creek Forge, Samuel T. Dunklin & Co., and Rozier & Desloge were among the customers.

John Perry, Jr., was a member of a prominent family in Washington County. His father, John Perry, Sr., moved into the area around 1806, buying the Basil Valle property on the north side of Jefferson Street in Mine à Breton (later Potosi). He entered the mercantile business, as his sons, John Jr. and Samuel, and a nephew, James Franklin Perry, did later. The elder Perry engaged in mining to some extent, as did many of his contemporary entrepreneurs in that early mining center. Perry mined his own lands and traded in minerals at his store in Potosi. He used receipts from the mineral trade to buy goods, which he then sold, investing the profits in additional goods and real property. John Perry, Jr., assumed this successful business upon the death of his father in 1825. The younger Perry likewise prospered, remaining in Potosi until his death.

This daybook has been attributed to John Perry, Jr., but it cannot be identified with him for certain. There are no marks on the volume to indicate ownership or the place of business. The main entry in the name of the younger John Perry has been based upon the volume’s provenance through a descendant of the Perry family, the time period covered by the volume, and the names of the establishment’s patrons.

Entries in the volume begin on 11 February 1839 and continue through 11 June 1840. The transactions involved domestic goods, groceries, and a wide range of building supplies and hardware. Connections with Washington County’s mining industry are evident in numerous entries involving bar-iron and castings from the “C. C. Forge” on Cedar Creek near Caledonia, Missouri, and pig metal from the “Furnace,” probably the Springfield Iron Furnace south of Potosi. Other customers included Rozier & Desloge and Samuel T. Dunklin & Company in Potosi.

There are many similarities between this daybook and one for 1834-1835 in the Springfield Furnace collections at the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia (#C1263). The method of entry, handwriting, and types of business noted are very similar. Some of the same customers are noted in both volumes. However, the size of the daybook attributed to Perry is smaller than that of the books attributed to the Springfield Iron Furnace.
Perry, John, 1787-1850
Potosi (Mo.)
Rozier (and Desloge) [SEE Desloge and Rozier.]
Samuel T. Dunklin and Company
Springfield Iron Furnace (Washington County, Mo.)
Washington County (Mo.)