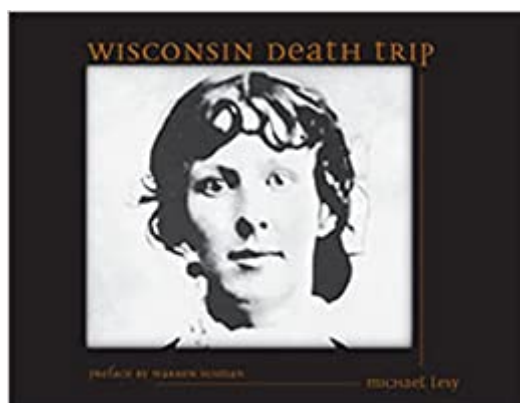


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# Wisconsin Death Trip



## Synopsis

First published in 1973, this remarkable book about life in a small turn-of-the-century Wisconsin town has become a cult classic. Lesy has collected and arranged photographs taken between 1890 and 1910 by a Black River Falls photographer, Charles Van Schaik.

## Book Information

Series: Wisconsin

Paperback: 148 pages

Publisher: University of New Mexico Press; 2 Reprint edition (January 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0826321933

ISBN-13: 978-0826321930

Product Dimensions: 11.1 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.9 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 98 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #59,401 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > Midwest](#) #25 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Collections, Catalogues & Exhibitions](#) #28 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Collections, Catalogs & Exhibitions](#)

## Customer Reviews

The last decade of the 19th century was, for some Americans, a time when great fortunes were to be made. For many others, however, the period was a time of economic dislocation, when the gap between city and countryside, rich and poor, grew ever wider. As the Indian Wars ended and the Gilded Age extended into America's first Imperial Age, social critics such as Mark Twain and William Dean Howells began to examine the dark side of the American dream: violence, poverty, degenerate behavior, suicide, and insanity. In the late 1960s, another desperate time, historian Michael Lesy took a long look at fin-de-si cle America. Examining a collection of several thousand glass plate negatives and historical documents from Jackson County, Wisconsin, he concocted a sprawling treatise on a past that had been willfully forgotten, a brooding rejoinder to Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*. First published in 1973, Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip*, now reissued in a handsome paperbound edition, became a key text of the counterculture, a book to shelve alongside *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and *Custer Died for Your Sins*--and it sometimes reads like a hip product of its time. Lesy documents the unsettling record of one small

corner of rural America, turning up accounts of barn burnings, attacks by gangs of armed tramps, threatening and obscene letters, death by diphtheria and smallpox (the Wisconsin townsfolk had, some years, to attend several funerals a week), alcoholism, madness, business and bank failures, and even a case or two of witchcraft. After reading Lesy's texts and viewing the sometimes unsettling images he's turned up, you would be forgiven for thinking that no one in small-town Wisconsin in our great-great-grandparents' time was well-adjusted--which is, of course, not the case. Hyperbole notwithstanding, this is a remarkable study, one that Lesy himself rightly calls an experiment in both history and alchemy. --Gregory McNamee

As the title suggests, this is a truly strange book. Published in 1973, it is essentially a collection of photos taken in Black River Falls, WI, by Charles Van Schaik between 1890 and 1910. The subject matter ranges from children in coffins, to farm animals, to family portraits of some of the grimmest-looking people imaginable; the photos are accompanied by snippets from newspapers. The whole package seems to confirm that the good old days were actually awful. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Bought this years ago at a tag sale and then lost track of it. Fascinating record of brutal and weird crimes committed in Wisconsin in late 1800's into early 1900's. Actually kind of timely, as human behavior is universal.

Shattering look at life in the 1890's. This one will stick with you. And it's true! Let's all give thanks we live in the 21st century.

Interesting reading for the people of Wisconsin.

I've been searching for this book for so long I thought it must be out of print, so I was extremely happy to find it on . As is pointed out in some other reviews, it paints a pretty grim portrait of the Not So Good Old Days, and it's not for the faint-hearted. Still worth buying, but DO NOT buy the paperback. I was extremely disappointed in the overall quality of the book. It started falling apart the very first day I got it, and now it's a nothing more than a sheaf of pages.

As powerful and fascinating as it was when it debuted nearly 40 years ago. Unlike any other book you have ever read.

I'm originally from Wisconsin and boy, are we a strange lot!

Hard to describe, but really enjoyed this book. The tidbits, articles, and photos are all very true to our Northern ancestries - be it Wisconsin, Minnesota, or the Dakotas. The newspaper reporters back then were very creative and dramatic, yet very blunt, too.

Interesting book but really crappy printing...pages very thick & flimsy

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