
Finding Aid for the Edward R. Marcellus First World War correspondence collection 2014.040.w.r

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Center for American War Letters Archives

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Leatherby Libraries

Chapman University

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URL: <http://www1.chapman.edu/library/archives/>

Language of Material: English

Contributing Institution: Center for American War Letters Archives

Title: Edward R. Marcellus First World War Correspondence

source: Leggee, R.E.

Identifier/Call Number: 2014.040.w.r

Physical Description: 0.5 Linear Feet(10 folders)

Date (inclusive): 1918-1919

Abstract: This collection contains the correspondence, records, and ephemera of Private Edward Richardson Marcellus from his time in France and Germany with the American Expeditionary Force during WWI.

Language of Material: The materials in this collection are primarily in English. One series contains materials in German. Leatherby Libraries, Special Collections, CAWL Archives

Storage Unit: 1

Storage Unit: 1-10

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of R.E. Leggee. This is a legacy collection from Andrew Carroll.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged by material type, author, and date. Series 1: Correspondence from Edward Marcellus -- Series 2: Correspondence from Goldie Marcellus -- Series 3: Correspondence from Peter "Papa" Marcellus -- Series 4: Other correspondence with Edward Marcellus -- Series 5: Military correspondence and documents -- Series 6: Personal records -- Series 7: Ephemera -- Series 8: German language materials.

Biographical / Historical

Edward Richardson Marcellus was born January 30, 1895 in Lincoln, Nebraska to Peter and Emma Marcellus. He had three siblings: Randolph, Hazel, and Stella. He worked as a bookkeeper for Henry H. Shufeldt & Company in 1915 in Peoria, Illinois. In 1917 at age 22 he registered for the World War I draft, listing his occupation as an accountant. He claimed that he fully supported his parents, but did not claim exemption from the draft. He married Goldie L. Brown and shared an apartment with her and her twin sister Gladys. In 1918 he began his service with the 5th Anti-Aircraft Machine Gun Battalion in the American Expeditionary Force. He served in both France and Germany. In the summer of 1919 he returned home. Goldie gave birth to a stillborn child in December of 1921. Shortly thereafter they divorced and Edward remarried Bertha "Birdie" Elizabeth Hundley. They had one daughter, Virginia, in 1924. In 1925 they moved to Decatur, Illinois and lived there for the duration of his life. For the rest of his career he worked as a salesman for Check Protector Machines. Edward died on March 20, 1970 and is buried at the Fairlawn Cemetery with Birdie, who died in 1980.

Preferred Citation

[Item title], Edward R. Marcellus First World War correspondence (2014.040.w.r), Center for American War Letters Archives, Chapman University, CA.

Content Description

This collection contains 130 correspondence between Private Edward Marcellus and his wife Goldie, father, siblings, friends, and business contacts during his service with the American Expeditionary Force in France and Germany, September 1918 to June, 1919. Marcellus was part of a small contingent of American soldiers tasked to oversee the administration of an ex-German prisoner of war camp of Russian prisoners. The collection also contains military documents, personal records, and ephemera.

Conditions Governing Use

There are no restrictions on the use of this material except where previously copyrighted material is concerned. It is the responsibility of the researcher to obtain all permissions.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

World War, 1914-1918

World War, 1914-1918--France

World War, 1914-1918 -- Homefront

Prisoners of war

Prohibition -- United States.
World War, 1914-1918 -- Germany
World War, 1914-1918 -- Prisoners and prisons.
United States -- Army -- American Expeditionary Force.
Leggee, R.E.
Marcellus, Edward

folder 1-3

Series 1. Correspondence from Edward Marcellus 1918-09-03-1919-07-02

Physical Description: .2 Linear Feet(3 folders)

Scope and Contents

This series contains 75 letters written by Edward Marcellus to his wife Goldie between September 1918 and June 1919. For the first several months of their correspondence, neither was receiving letters from the other, although they were both writing almost daily. Edward received no letters from Goldie between September and December, and in one letter dated December 29, 1918, he admits he does not know whether she is "alive or dead" because he has heard about the influenza outbreak back home.

Edward is eventually assigned to a Prisoner of War camp in Gustrow, Germany where there are 8,000 Russian and Romanian prisoners. He describes their main objective as "keeping Russian prisoners here...to keep them from going home and starting a revolution in their own country." (Letter dated March 18, 1919). Other duties include caring for prisoners and distributing supplies sent by the Red Cross.

In many letters it is evident that Edward's morale is quite low. He and the other men are upset because they feel that the war is over and that they should be sent home. He especially wants to get home because his father is ill and Goldie cannot support herself financially. In many letters he mentions his attempts at getting a discharge, and asks if Goldie has had any success applying for a discharge on his behalf. By April and May the tone of his letters becomes quite urgent as he becomes more and more desperate to get home.

Another letter of interest is dated April 7, 1919 where he alludes to prohibition when he remarks that Peoria has "stopped making booze" and that he expects the rest of "the U.S.A. will soon be dry."

folder 4

Series 2. Correspondence from Goldie Marcellus 1918-09-01-1919-05-21

Physical Description: .1 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains 35 letters written by Goldie Marcellus to her husband Edward dating between September 1, 1918 and May 21, 1919. Goldie consistently writes of missing her husband and never knowing if he receives her letters. In one letter dated February 2, 1919 she indicates she has written over 50 letters and doesn't know if he has received any of them. Throughout the course of her letters she maintains a positive attitude, but the later letters indicate she is rapidly running out of money and needs Ed to come home. She writes that she is trying to get him discharged. Other interesting letters include one dated October 23, 1918 where she describes an outbreak of influenza in camps at home where over 5,000 enlisted men have died, and she considers Ed lucky to be "over there." In another letter dated November 27, 1918 she expresses her opinion that she believes the Germans will lose because they lack God. Letters beginning in May of 1919 have typed responses from Edward in between the lines of Goldie's letters.

folder 5

Series 3. Correspondence from Peter "Papa" Marcellus 1918-09-30-1919-05-17

Physical Description: .02 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains six correspondence written by Edward's father, Peter Marcellus, from Pittsburgh, PA to Edward and Goldie. He signs his letters "Papa." One letter dated September 30, 1918 was written to his son Edward and describes his poor health and struggle to meet his monthly expenses. Despite his troubles, he mentions that he always remembers there are thousands of people worse off than he is. He writes four letters to his daughter-in-law Goldie, also describing his deteriorating health and the family's efforts to secure Edward a discharge.

folder 6

Series 4. Other correspondence with Edward Marcellus 1918-04-19-1919-05-25

Physical Description: .04 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains 14 correspondence written to or from Edward Marcellus. Correspondents include a colleague, Edward's manager Mr. H.S. Austrian of the Henry H. Shufeldt & Co., a friend named Margareta Lett, his brother Randolph Marcellus, a friend named Clarence. F. Spindler, his sisters Hazel and Stella, a friend named A.W. Bennett, a friend named Kenneth Creble, his father Peter, and a Mr. N.D. Chapin, Director of the Interstate Commerce Department at La Salle Extension University in Chicago, IL. The letters describe life back home in Peoria, IL, and business Edward conducted while serving overseas.

folder 7

Series 5. Military correspondence and documents 1919-02-06-1919-06-02

Physical Description: .08 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains various military correspondence and documents. Included is a four page instruction document entitled "Instructions for Representatives of Inter-Allied Commission Appointed to Russian Prisoner Camps." Also included are two copies of a special orders document dated February 13, 1919 listing the officers and enlisted men who were to report to duty at Russian Prisoners of War Camps in Gustrow, Germany. There is also a report dated February 22, 1919 on the number of prisoners, the conditions of the camp, and health conditions of prisoners.

Correspondence includes several memos written by Edward in April of 1919 requesting he be discharged on account of his father being ill and his wife being unable to support herself. One responding memo indicated the request was disapproved; however, two subsequent telegrams from the end of May and early June show his request for discharge was eventually granted.

folder 8

Series 6. Personal records 1916-1919

Physical Description: .08 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains the personal records and documents of Edward Marcellus. Included is correspondence, documents, and lessons from the Ransomerian School of Penmanship dated 1916. Also included is a personal account written by Edward entitled "Seeing Germany," a handwritten English-German vocabulary list, and two maps of Berlin.

folder 9

Series 7. Ephemera

Physical Description: .08 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains ephemeral items saved by Edward Marcellus. Included are blank souvenir postcards, a notebook, a commencement ceremony invitation, ration stamps, a business card from the Hotel du Pavillon, a leather billfold, and a program for "Cinderella" dated May 3, 1919. Also included is a newspaper clipping entitled "Peoria Boy is Ready to Sail: Edward Marcellus is Provided with Overseas Helmet and Other Provisions in Preparation for Embarkation."

folder 10

Series 8. German language materials

Physical Description: .08 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains materials that are written in German. Included are a directory of the streets in Berlin, a map of Berlin, two newspapers, and other documents.