
Finding Aid for the Chester McKay First World War Correspondence Collection 2017.150.w.r

Center for American War Letters Archives

Leatherby Libraries

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

Language of Material: English

Contributing Institution: Center for American War Letters Archives

Title: Chester McKay First World War correspondence

creator: McKay, Chester M., 1888-1947

source: McKay, Hilda, 1891-1920

source: Conner, LA

Identifier/Call Number: 2017.150.w.r

Physical Description: .22 Linear feet(6 folders)

Date (inclusive): 1918-1922

Abstract: This collection contains 27 letters to Private Chester McKay, who served overseas with the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe at the end of World War I. Most of the letters were written by his wife, Hilda McKay. The collection also includes letters written to Chester McKay by other family members. In addition to the letters, there are nine photographs, several blank postcards, and other documents.

Leatherby Libraries, Special Collections, CAWL Archives

Physical Description: Two of the pictures in the Graphic Materials series arrived torn in half and were placed in plastic sleeves.

Storage Unit: WWI 3

Storage Unit: 11-16

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of LA Conner.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged by material type, author, and date. Series 1: Correspondence from Hilda McKay to Chester McKay -- Series 2: Correspondence from Family Members to Chester McKay -- Series 3: Other Correspondence -- Series 4: Graphic Materials -- Series 5: Ephemera.

Preferred Citation

[Item title, Box number, Folder number], Hilda McKay First World War correspondence (2017.150.w.r), Center for American War Letters Archives, Chapman University, CA.

Content Description

This collection contains 27 letters written to Army Private Chester M. McKay at the end of the First World War. He served with the Tank Corps in the US Expeditionary Forces. The collection was donated by LA Conner, who says they were in his mother's possession and he found them after she died. He writes that his mother, Verdie Conner, was a friend of the McKay family.

Most of the letters are written by McKay's wife, Hilda. In the letters she discusses her loneliness and writes about activities on the homefront at the end of World War I. She also writes frequently about news of soldiers returning home.

There are also letters from other family members, including Chester McKay's sister, Nettie, and his brother-in-law, Harry, who also served in World War I. Additionally, there is a letter from a man named George, who may have been McKay's brother-in-law.

Another letter is from a woman named Louise, whose relationship to Chester and Hilda McKay is unknown. The letter is addressed to Chester and she also mentions Hilda in the correspondence.

The collection also contains nine photographs, although there are no captions and the subjects are not identified. In one photograph, a soldier is standing next to a product sign written in French. Additionally, there are several blank postcards and a clipping of a magazine series called "Training Camp Tales" that ran in a publication titled "People's Favorite Magazine."

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. For further copyright information, please contact the archivist.

Biographical / Historical

Chester Miles McKay was born on August 8, 1888 in Harrison County, Texas. He was inducted into the Army on June 27, 1918 and sailed overseas on the Leviathan in late October of 1918, just before the war ended. Private McKay was assigned to the Tank Corps of the American Expeditionary Forces. He served with Casual Company A. He served overseas in France from November 1918 to May 1919 and was honorably discharged on June 9, 1919. McKay died on June 26, 1947.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Correspondence -- World War, 1914-1918
World War, 1914-1918
Wilson, Woodrow, 1856-1924
World War, 1914-1918 -- Homefront
McKay, Hilda, 1891-1920
Conner, LA

document-box WWI
3, folder 11-12

Series 1. Correspondence from Hilda McKay to Chester McKay 1918-10-26-1919-05-31

Physical Description: .075 Linear Feet(2 folders)

Scope and Contents

This series contains 14 letters written to Army Private Chester McKay from his wife, Hilda, who lived in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania. The correspondence was written at the end of World War I while Chester was serving overseas. He was sent over at the very end of the war.

The correspondence describes activities on the homefront to mark the end of the war and Hilda frequently relays news reports of soldiers returning home.

A November 23, 1918 letter mentions a parade in Wilkinsburg.

A December 23, 1918 letter mentions a celebration in honor of President Wilson in Brest, France.

In a January 11, 1919 letter, she writes about the 80th Division coming home and the process of delousing before the soldiers came home.

document-box WWI
3, folder 13

Series 2. Correspondence from Family Members to Chester McKay 1918-10-22-1919-02-17

Physical Description: .07 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains 11 letters written by various family members to Chester McKay, while he was serving overseas at the end of World War I. Many of the letters were written by McKay's sister, Nettie. There are also letters from his brother-in-law, Harry, who was also serving in World War I, and a man named George, who may have been McKay's brother-in-law.

In a Nov 18, 1918 letter, Nettie writes about how soldiers are allowed to wear uniforms for three months "after they are mustered out." It also mentions censorship rules being raised.

One letter from George dated February 17, 1919 indicates that Chester McKay is in the hospital although the reason is unclear.

A November 23rd letter from George also mentions a parade for servicemembers and discusses casualty lists and how Wilkinsburg, PA has been "somewhat prominent" in them.

Other letters discuss activities on the homefront and sports events.

document-box WWI
3, folder 14

Series 3. Other correspondence 1918-12-14-1918-12-30

Physical Description: .025 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains two letters. One was written by a woman name Louise to Chester McKay. The letter also mentions Hilda although her connection to the McKays is unclear. The other letter is from George to Harry, who was serving in World War I. The letters suggest that George and Harry are Chester McKay's brothers-in-law. The letter discusses soldiers returning home and the events of the holidays. It also makes mention of censorship restrictions being lifted.

document-box WWI
3, folder 15

Series 4. Graphic Materials

Physical Description: .035 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Physical Description: Two of the pictures arrived torn in half and were placed in plastic sleeves.

Scope and Contents

This series contains nine photographs and several postcards with no writing. The photographs do not have captions and the subjects are not identified. In one photograph, a soldier is standing next to a product sign written in French. There are also pictures of what appears to be a family and other pictures show an unidentified woman posing for pictures. Additionally, there are several pictures of children. A couple of the pictures appear to be class pictures.

document-box WWI
3, folder 16

Series 5. Ephemera 1918-1922

Physical Description: .025 Linear Feet(1 folder)

Scope and Contents

This series contains two documents: a page from the publication "People's Favorite Magazine" and a June 1922 document to Chester McKay from the Home Owners Loan Association in Houston, Texas. The page from "People's Favorite Magazine" is of a series titled "Training Camp Tales." A search of the title indicates that a series of that name was published in "People's Favorite Magazine" in 1918.