

C Wilferth, Estella (1896-1978), Papers, 1912-1962
3035 .2 linear feet

PARTIALLY DIGITIZED in World War I collection

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

INTRODUCTION

The papers of Estella Wilferth consist of correspondence written to Estella Wilferth from friends and family members, the majority of the letters date from the World War I period. The letters cover topics concerning local events, weather, daily activities, and feelings about the war from the perspective of both soldiers and civilians.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Wilferth papers were donated by Mrs. James Painter to the State Historical Society of Missouri on 29 January 1994 (SHS Accession No. 3001).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Estella Wilferth was born on October 22, 1896 in Cole County, Missouri. Her parents were Nicholas and Mary Knerschild Wilferth. Estella had one brother Henry (1889-1982) and a sister, Hilda. She grew up in Osage City, Missouri and worked for M. Schubert who owned a general store. Except for a short period in 1917 when Wilferth lived in St. Louis, she was a lifelong resident of Cole County.

On September 18, 1926, Estella married Diederech S. "Dick" Bockhorst in Boonville, Missouri. The couple had no children and Dick Bockhorst died in 1956. Estella Wilferth Bockhorst died on July 5, 1978 at the age of 81.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists primarily of letters, graduation and wedding announcements, and greeting cards that Estella received from her friends and family members over a period of 40 years. The correspondence is arranged chronologically. During World War I, Estella corresponded with several friends and family members who had moved out of the immediate area. Many of the letters dealt specifically with local news about family and friends and the weather. Of particular interest is a letter from Thomas J. Mahan, who taught school in the Philippine Islands in 1917. Mahan wrote about his perceptions of the island and his students and how they were dealing with the ongoing war.

The bulk of the collection consists of correspondence from 1917 and 1918 that came from two soldiers who were admirers of Estella. The letters from Private Frank W. Stegeman, nicknamed Happy, were primarily love letters that spoke of his ongoing affection for her and questioned her devotion to him. Private Stegeman was stationed at Camp Funston in Kansas and describes some of the New Year activities that occurred at the camp. A letter from Theodore John Sanning, also at Camp Funston, describes his experiences in a camp hospital. Two of the letters from Private Stegeman and the letter from Theodore Sanning are dated 1917, however, the postmarks and the information in the letters themselves reflect that they were misdated and actually written in 1918 and are placed chronologically according to the correct date.

The letters from Sergeant George A. Holmes, stationed at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky, are especially interesting because Holmes expresses his desire to fight in France and when he finds out that he will likely stay in the states and train soldiers, he becomes upset and threatens to “do something to get busted” so that he will be sent into battle.

There are several letters that concern the probationary release of a minor, Cleo Ramsey, who received a life sentence for the death of an elderly Henry County man. These letters do not lend a great deal of information regarding the role that Estella and Dick Bockhorst’s played in the boy’s release.

FOLDER LIST

- f. 1 Correspondence, 1912-1917 [**PARTIALLY DIGITIZED**]
- f. 2 Correspondence, 1918 January-February [**PARTIALLY DIGITIZED**]
- f. 3 Correspondence, 1918 March-October [**PARTIALLY DIGITIZED**]
- f. 4 Correspondence, 1926-1962, n.d.

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