French, Chapman J., Diaries

Chapman J. French Diaries

1906-1912, 1928-1935, 1937-1944

Title Statement

French, Chapman J., DiariesChapman J. French Diaries, 1906-1912, 1928-1935, 1937-1944 Ms.2010.045

Author: Julia Viets, Student Assistant

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)
560 Drillfield Drive
Newman Library, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Business Number: 540-231-6308
specref@vt.edu
URL: http://spec.lib.vt.edu

2010 (CC0 1.0)

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2023-08-07 13:43:04 -0400.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2010.045

Unit Date

1906-1912, 1928-1935, 1937-1944

Language

The material in the collection is in English.

Abstract

The collection contains twenty-three diaries meticulously written by Chapman J. French, a civil engineer for Norfolk & Western Railway, made during the years of 1906-1912, 1928-1935, and 1937-1944. The diaries relate French's daily activities at home and at work. They also include such items as addresses, cost accounts, and major league baseball scores.

Creator

French, Chapman J. (Chapman Johnston)

Extent

0.4 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

The copyright status of this collection is unknown. Copyright restrictions may apply. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for assistance in determining the use of these materials.

Reproduction or digitization of materials for personal or research use can be requested using our reproduction/digitization form: http://bit.ly/scuareproduction. Reproduction or digitization of materials for publication or exhibit use can be requested using our publication/exhibition form: http://bit.ly/scuapublication. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives (specref@vt.edu or 540-231-6308) if you need assistance with forms or to submit a completed form.

Source of Acquisition

The Chapman J. French Diaries were purchased by Special Collections in 2009.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Chapman J. French Diaries were commenced and completed in June 2010.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Chapman J. French Diaries, Ms2010-045, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Chapman Johnston French was born on August 15, 1880 and died in Troutdale, Virginia on July 6, 1964. His parents were Charles D. (born January 8, 1850) and Annie C. Johnston French (born November 24, 1853 and died in August, 1934). In 1902, he graduated from Virginia Tech and became a civil engineer for Norfolk & Western Railway. He was a dedicated worker, who often spent the weekends in the office and traveled extensively around Virginia and West Virginia for his job. During this time, he lived in Narrows, Virginia with his first wife, Lela Lee Weatherly French. Later, Chapman and his wife moved to Roanoke. After Lela's death, which occurred sometime prior to 1930, Chapman married Mildred Greer and retired in 1950.

Chapman was a member of several organizations, including the American Society of Civil Engineers, Elks, the Knights of Pythias, the Groundhog Club, the National Geographic Society, the Dramatic Order of Knights of Knorassan, the Blue Ridge Game and Fish Association, and the VPI Alumni Association. As a young man, his main interests were dancing, ice-skating, photography, hunting, and listening to baseball on the radio; as he grew older, he became an avid gardener and bridge player. Chapman was close to his parents throughout his life: he often drove them to church. Additionally, he was a frequent visitor of his sister's family and an animal lover who owned various cats and dogs.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of twenty-three diaries written by Chapman J. French during the years of 1906-1912, 1928-1935, and 1937-1944. Each diary meticulously details Chapman's day-to-day life, including the weather, work projects, social outings, leisure activities, and travel information. In the back of each diary, there are cost accounts; addresses; major league baseball scores; births, deaths, and marriages lists; Christmas shopping lists; work notes and equations; and recipes, mostly of the alcoholic drink variety. Most diaries commence with a reward offer if the diary is lost, ranging from 50 cents to a dollar.

Some notable diary entries include lyrics to, "Starkle Starkle Little Twink" by Charlie Drake in a 1944 diary and a political advertisement depicting an elephant farting with the words, "Prosperity is in the air The G.O.P. Brand" in a 1932 diary. Although Chapman's journal entries usually relate just the facts of the day, he pens a strong opinion about golf in the back of a 1928 diary: "A useless game that needlessly prolongs the worthless lives of unnecessary citizens." In a 1911 diary, various word puzzles are scattered throughout the entries. In a January 4 entry of the same diary, Chapman writes, "Eat, drink, be merry, seize the present hour, know not the future holds a fairer flower. What is remembered dies, what is written lives. (Guess this won't die)."

Related Archival Materials

See the Chapman J. French Papers, Ms2009-034, also at Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives.

Keywords

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South
Railroad
Norfolk and Western Railroad Company (1881-1896)

Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the Chapman J. French Diaries by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/).

Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically.

Description of Subordinate Components

Diaries
Unit Date 1906-1912, 1928-1935, 1937-1944
box 1