

A Guide to the Bertha Couchman Hess and Ethel Virginia Dunn Correspondence, 1918-1927 SC 0063

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1918-1927



Title Statement

A Guide to the Bertha Couchman Hess and Ethel Virginia Dunn Correspondence, 1918-1927 SC 0063

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit Date

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English

Abstract

The Bertha Couchman Hess and Ethel Virginia Dunn Correspondence, 1918-1927, is comprised of four postcards and seven letters written by Hess and Dunn, her niece, to their family in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Couchman authored three postcards while visiting Harrisonburg in August 1918 and the remainder of the correspondence was written by Dunn while she was a student at the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg and while she was a teacher in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Creator

Hess, Bertha Couchman, 1884-1980

Creator

Dunn, Ethel Virginia, 1903-2002

Extent

0.12 cubic feet 2 letter folders

Repository

James Madison University Libraries Special Collections

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open to research. Researchers must register and agree to copyright and privacy laws before using this collection. Please contact Research Services staff before visiting the James Madison University Special Collections Library to use this collection.

Use Restrictions

The copyright interests in this collection have been transferred to the James Madison University Special Collections Library. For more information, contact the Special Collections Library Reference Desk (library-special@jmu.edu).

Acquisition Information

The correspondence was donated to Special Collections by Maxine N. Evans in September 2002. Evans' mother, Evelyn Staples Nuse was Ethel Virginia Dunn's first cousin. Evans' grandmother, Alice Couchman Staples, was Bertha Couchman Hess' sister.

Processing Information

At some point during initial processing and for unknown reasons, the envelopes that accompanied the letters in this collection were photocopied and the originals discarded. The letters were dated based on the postmark on the envelopes and based on information provided by the donor. In order to streamline the process of applying collection numbers, Special Collections staff completed a large-scale renumbering campaign in the spring of 2017. **This collection was previously cataloged as SU 2002-0910.**

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], [box #, folder #], Bertha Couchman Hess and Ethel Virginia Dunn Correspondence, 1918-1927, SC 0063, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA.

Bio/Historical Note

Bertha Couchman Hess was born April 20, 1884 to David Calvin Couchman and Lucy Gordon Couchman of West Virginia. She married Robert Newton Hess (1880-1854) on June 20 1917 in Martinsburg, West Virginia. She died in April 1980 and is buried at Darkesville Cemetery in Berkeley County, West Virginia.

Ethel Virginia Dunn, Hess' niece, was born September 29, 1903 to William Nelson Dunn and Mary Catherine Couchman Dunn of Martinsburg, West Virginia. Dunn matriculated into the State Normal School for Women at Harrisonburg in 1923 and attended for two years. She was a member of the Choral Club, Racquet Tennis Club, Athletic Association, and Y. W. C. A. She went on to attend Rutgers University where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in education. Dunn was a school teacher Morgantown, West Virginia for four years before continuing her career in New Brunswick, New Jersey where she taught for 44 years. Dunn died February 9, 2002 and is buried at Rosedale Cemetery in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Scope and Content

The Bertha Couchman Hess and Ethel Virginia Dunn Correspondence, 1918-1927, is comprised of four postcards and seven letters written by Hess and her niece Dunn to their family in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Couchman authored three postcards while visiting Harrisonburg in August 1918 and the remainder of the

correspondence was written by Dunn while she was a student at the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg and while she was a teacher in Morgantown, West Virginia.

In Hess' three postcards to family she mentions that she is having a nice time (she attended the fair) and that Harrisonburg is a "beautiful little town" of about 6,000 people. The postcards feature scenic views of Harrisonburg and the State Normal School for Women.

Dunn's correspondence dates primarily from her time as a student at the State Normal School for Women. In a postcard written to her grandmother, postmarked October 19, 1923, Dunn describes how she plans to spend her free time: "I am going on a hike Saturday. We are going up to the mountains for chestnuts. This certainly is a pretty little town and I like it real well." The postcard features a view of the court house. An additional five letters are included from Dunn's time as a student and are dated 1924-1925. She wrote to her grandmother, Lucy Gordon Couchman, and her Aunt Bert, presumably the aforementioned Bertha Couchman Hess. Dunn's letters include descriptions of Harrisonburg and campus: "This is a very pretty town and the view of the mountains are lovely. I never saw such lovely sunsets before. We have a beautiful school. There are eight large stone buildings with red tile roofs." She also provides detailed accounts of life as a student including descriptions of classes, roommates, social events, meals, weather, and receiving care packages. She makes frequent mention of her cousin Sadie and Aunt Laura who live in town. Dunn also describes a trip to Clifton Forge, Virginia in March 1925, during the holiday between quarters.

Dunn's last letter is dated November 29, 1927 at which point she is teaching school in Morgantown, West Virginia. She describes the Thanksgiving holiday during which she threw a party for her students. Her class also put together a box of groceries for a needy family.

Keywords

Education, Higher -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg

Universities and colleges -- Virginia -- Harrisonburg -- History

Harrisonburg (Va.) -- History

Morgantown (W. Va.) -- History

Letters (correspondence)

Postcards

State Normal School for Women at Harrisonburg (Harrisonburg, Va.) -- Students -- Correspondence

State Normal School for Women at Harrisonburg (Harrisonburg, Va.) -- History

State Teachers College at Harrisonburg (Harrisonburg, Va.) -- Students -- Correspondence

State Teachers College at Harrisonburg (Harrisonburg, Va.) -- History

James Madison University -- Students -- Correspondence

James Madison University -- History

Bibliography

Obituary for Ethel V. Dunn, *The Herald-Mail*, February 11, 2002.

The Schoolma'am, 1924. Harrisonburg (Va.): State Normal School for Women.

The Schoolma'am, 1925. Harrisonburg (Va.): State Teachers College.

Provenance

The donor came into possession of a "Xerox size box" of materials saved by Barbara Lucinda (Lucy) Gordon Couchman, Bertha Couchman Hess' mother and Ethel Virginia Dunn's grandmother, and Alice Couchman Staples, the donor's grandmother. The materials that make up this collection were contained within that box.

Arrangement

The correspondence is arranged by author in two letter folders and further arranged chronologically.

Description of Subordinate Components

Bertha Couchman Hess Postcards

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/2342

Unit Date 1918

Mixed Materials [1000886509] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Ethel Virginia Dunn Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/2343

Unit Date 1923-1927

Mixed Materials [1000886509] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)