

A Guide to the Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer Papers, 1920-2015 (bulk 1943-1949) SC 0280

Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer papers
1920-2015



Title Statement

A Guide to the Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer Papers, 1920-2015 (bulk 1943-1949) SC 0280

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

SC 0280

Unit ID

/repositories/4/resources/541

Unit Date

1920-2015

Unit Date

1943-1949

Language

English

Abstract

The Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer Papers, 1920-2015 (bulk 1943-1949), largely comprise correspondence between Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer during their courtship while Betty was a student at Madison College. Other papers relate to Betty's coursework at Madison College, Willis' service in the Army Air Forces, and family biographies.

Creator

Clemmer, Betty Brown

Creator

Clemmer, Willis, 1926-2013

source

Clemmer, Betty Brown

Extent

1.72 cubic feet 5 boxes

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 collection was donated by Betty Brown Clemmer in August 2018.

Processing Information

The Seawright Springs (Augusta County, Virginia) history compiled by Ralph Coffman was originally housed in a three-ring binder with each page in a plastic sleeve. The history was disbound and the plastic sleeves discarded. The pages were foldered together and in their original order in an acid-free folder. All pieces of correspondence were removed from their respective envelopes. The letters and envelopes were joined with a slip of acid-free paper and a stainless steel paper clip.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of Item], [Identifier, box/container]. Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer papers, SC 0280. James Madison University Libraries Special Collections.

Preferred Citation

[identification of item], [box #, folder #], Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer Papers, 1920-2015 (bulk 1943-1949), SC 0280, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Bio/Historical Note

Betty Brown Clemmer was born in Chesterfield County, Virginia to Ruth Leigh Moseley Brown (1905-1998) and Henry Brown (1906-1985). After graduating as valedictorian from Buckhorn High School, Betty enrolled at Madison College in the fall of 1947 to pursue her studies in home economics education. Betty was a member of the German Club and Granddaughters' Club as her mother also attended the State Teachers College at Harrisonburg. While in Harrisonburg, Betty met Willis Clemmer of Staunton, Virginia and they were engaged in March 1948. She decided to postpone her college career in January 1949 in preparation for marrying Willis in April 1949. She returned to Madison College and graduated in 1966 with a bachelor's degree. Betty went on to teach elementary school for 29 years and volunteered at the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Museum and Augusta Health Center.

Willis Clemmer (1926-2013) was born near Fairfield, Virginia to Viola Ralston Clemmer and Alva Lewis Clemmer. During WWII, while attending Lee High School in Staunton, Willis enlisted as a cadet pilot in the

Army Air Forces, returning after the war to complete his high school degree. For a short period of time in 1946, Willis also enrolled in Shenandoah College in Dayton, Virginia. After graduating from Dunsmore Business College, Willis worked for Smith's Transfer, Westinghouse, and Staunton's Public Work Department. He had a particular fascination with automobiles and was a member of the Model A Ford Club of America and the Antique Automobile Club of America.

Scope and Content

The Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer Papers, 1920-2015 (bulk 1943-1949), largely comprise correspondence between Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer during their courtship while Betty was a student at Madison College. Other papers relate to Betty's coursework at Madison College including art drawings and program cards, Willis' service in the Army Air Forces including a patch and correspondence from the Veterans Administration, and family biographies and histories related to Augusta County.

Separated Material

Two self-published local history publications were removed from the collection and cataloged separately.

Keywords

Letters (correspondence)
Love letters
Drawings (visual works)
Biographical sketches
Photographs
Harrisonburg (Va.) -- History
Augusta County (Va.) -- History
Clemmer, Betty Brown
Madison College -- Students
Madison College -- Students -- Social life and customs
Madison College -- Alumni and alumnae
Madison College -- History
James Madison University -- History

Bibliography

Obituary of Willis Lee Clemmer, *The News Leader*, July 12, 2013. *The Schoolma'am*, 1948. Harrisonburg (Va.): Madison College. *The Schoolma'am*, 1949. Harrisonburg (Va.): Madison College.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series. Series 1: Correspondence is arranged into subseries according to recipient. Each series is arranged chronologically.

- Correspondence, 1943-1949
- Personal and Biographical Papers, 1920-2015

Description of Subordinate Components

Correspondence

Unit ID 1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15365

Unit Date 1943-1949

Scope and Content

Series 1: Correspondence, 1943-1949, largely comprises love letters between Betty Brown Clemmer and Willis Clemmer during their courtship and subsequent engagement when Betty was a student at Madison College. They are sentimental and endearing overall, but are also gossipy and newsy in nature, providing

updates on family members, community happenings, and each other's social life.

Correspondence to Betty primarily comprises letters from Willis written during their courtship and are, as a result, affectionate and longing in nature. In writing to Betty, Willis also describes his daily activities of playing sports, driving cars, and seeing movies, in addition to providing updates on family and neighbors. Letters to Betty also include early love letters from gentleman callers other than Willis. She received letters from boys who were attending Virginia Tech, Randolph Macon, and Fork Union Military Academy. Letters presumably from high school beaux are also included. Other correspondents include Betty's mother Ruth Moseley Brown, Betty's grandmother Nannie Clay Brown, and fellow Madison College students. A March 15, 1949 from one of Betty's former classmates, Bunny Maifield, describes the goings-on at Madison College including girls getting caught by the watchmen "night riding" as well as a "bunch of drunk Virginia boys came over and took over the place."

Willis' letters are primarily from Betty, but also include letters from friends and family. A selection of 1945 letters were written to Willis while he was stationed at Keesler Field in Mississippi. The content of these letters describe tales of escapades back home and friends going to Madison College on dates. While Betty's letters to Willis are mostly affectionate and playful in nature, they also document her school and home life. Of particular interest is an August 11, 1948 letter from Betty to Willis while she is home in Baskerville for the summer. She describes an incident with an African-American child stepping on a nail and not receiving proper medical care. In describing this incident, Betty uses racist language and characterizations of the child's family.

Beyond their overall sentiments of affection, Betty's letters to Willis provide insight into her life as a student at Madison College. Betty comments on her schoolwork, exams, studying, social life, entertainment, going downtown (buying food, going to the movies, going to Friddles), and rules and regulations (March 23, 1948: "All my plans for going home have gone 'hay-wire.' Dr. Duke said today that we had to have a chaperone and at this late date we can't find anyone. I could cuss him - wonder what he thinks a busload of girls are going to do in broad open daylight - must think we are terrible"). Betty frequently mentions her dissatisfaction with school and refers to Madison College as Hell or a hell-hole. Additionally, in several letters to Willis (December 4, 1947; September 28, 1948; etc.), Betty describes her presumed struggles with an apparent eating disorder.

A selection of "special letters" (as designated by the donor) concern Betty's engagement announcement, upcoming wedding, and Ruth Moseley Brown's visit to Chicago, etc. These letters are interfiled according to date and include Betty to Willis, April 13, 1949; Ruth Brown to Betty, September 17, 1947; Ruth Brown to Betty, September 15, 1947; Ruth Brown to Betty, April 8, 1948 ("hoping you'd set the world on fire before getting married"); Willis to Betty, April 11, 1949; Nannie Clay Brown to Betty, January 14, 1949 (letter after quitting school to get married); Nannie Clay Brown to Betty, May 3, 1948; Rev. Claude Moseley (uncle) to Betty, March 31, 1949; Ruth Brown to Betty, March 9, 1948.

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID 1.1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15367

Unit Date 1943-1949

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15369

Unit Date 1943

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15370

Unit Date 1944

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15371

Unit Date January 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15372

Unit Date February 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15373

Unit Date March 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15374

Unit Date April 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15375

Unit Date May 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15376

Unit Date June 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15377

Unit Date July 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15378

Unit Date August 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15379

Unit Date September-November 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15380

Unit Date January-September 1946

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15381

Unit Date October 1946

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15382

Unit Date November 1946

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15383

Unit Date December 1946

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15384

Unit Date January 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 16 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15385

Unit Date February 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 17 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15386

Unit Date March 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886401] 1 (box)

Container 18 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15387

Unit Date April 1947

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Container 1 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15388

Unit Date May 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

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Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15389

Unit Date July-August 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15390

Unit Date September 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15391

Unit Date October 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15392

Unit Date November 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15393

Unit Date December 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15394

Unit Date January 1948

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Container 8 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15395

Unit Date February 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15396

Unit Date March 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15397

Unit Date April 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15398

Unit Date May 1948

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Container 12 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15399

Unit Date June 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886402] 2 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15400

Unit Date July 1948

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Container 1 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15401

Unit Date August 1948

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Container 2 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15402

Unit Date September 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15403

Unit Date October-November 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15404

Unit Date December 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15405

Unit Date January 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15406

Unit Date February 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15407

Unit Date March 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15408

Unit Date April 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence (folder 1 of 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15409

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Correspondence (folder 2 of 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15410

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials [1000886403] 3 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID 1.2

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15368

Unit Date 1944-1949

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15411

Unit Date 1944

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15412

Unit Date March 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15413

Unit Date April 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15414

Unit Date May-August 1945

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15415

Unit Date 1946

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Container 5 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15416

Unit Date 1947

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15417

Unit Date January 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15418

Unit Date February 1948

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Container 8 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15419

Unit Date March 1948

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Container 9 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15420

Unit Date April 1948

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Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15421

Unit Date May 1948

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Container 11 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15422

Unit Date June 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15423

Unit Date July 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886404] 4 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15424

Unit Date August 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15425

Unit Date September 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15426

Unit Date October-December 1948

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15427

Unit Date January 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15428

Unit Date February 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15429

Unit Date March 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15430

Unit Date April 1949

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Willis Clemmer Correspondence

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15431

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Personal and Biographical Papers

Unit ID 2

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15366

Unit Date 1920-2015

Scope and Content

Series 2: Personal and Biographical Papers, 1920-2015, comprise personal papers belonging to Betty and Willis Clemmer as well as personal and family biographies. Materials also relate to Augusta County history.

This series includes photographs - originals and facsimiles - of the Clemmers as well as Ruth Moseley Brown during her high school and college years.

The Clemmers' personal papers include materials and coursework from Betty's time at Madison College, specifically drawings from Basic Art 2 in which she was assigned to draw home furnishings and clothing. Alimae Aiken was Betty's instructor. Willis' transcripts from Lee High School and documents from the Veterans Administration are included.

The series also comprises several Clemmer family biographies, autobiographies, and histories related to Augusta County, Virginia. Willis' reminiscences, written in 1993-1994, document his memories of growing up in Augusta County. A history of Seawright Springs (Mt. Solon) compiled by Augusta County historian Ralph Coffman includes photographs and other materials related to the resort. The Seawright Springs

history includes a partial transcript of Alexander Stuart Coffman's 1864 diary and a transcript of a March 26, 1907 letter from Charles Curry (a lawyer in Staunton) to an A. C. Gorden regarding the geography and folklore of specific Augusta County locations.

Photographs

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15432

Unit Date 1920-2013

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Willis Clemmer personal papers

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15433

Unit Date 1944-1948

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 10 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Madison College Art 2 drawings

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15434

Unit Date circa 1947-1949

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer Madison College grade report, program cards, and The Breeze clipping

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15435

Unit Date 1948-1949

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 12 (folder)

"I Remember" by Willis Clemmer

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15436

Unit Date 1993-1994

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 13 (folder)

Betty Brown Clemmer biographies

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15437

Unit Date 1997

Unit Date 2015

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 14 (folder)

Seawright Springs (Augusta County, Virginia) history compiled by Ralph Coffman

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15438

Unit Date March 2002

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 15 (folder)

"The Big Depression" Remembered by Betty Brown Clemmer, Willis Clemmer, and Nancy Brown Latham. Told to Susan Wayne

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15439

Unit Date September 2005

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 16 (folder)

Ruth Leigh Moseley Brown biography

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/15440

Unit Date undated

Mixed Materials [1000886405] 5 (box)

Container 17 (folder)