

J. Clark Easton, Soldier, World War I Letters, Diaries, and Other Material, 1917-1919, 1963 A&M 3584

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Abstract

Papers of West Virginia University history professor, Jason Clark Easton, documenting his experiences as a student at Yale University (1914-1916) and as a soldier in the 77th Division of the United States Army during World War I, including his services as an interpreter on General Pershing's staff during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. There is correspondence from Easton to his mother in Lacrosse, Wisconsin regarding his years at Yale University, his army training, the time he spent on the front lines at Division Headquarters, and as an interpreter at the Peace Conference in Paris. A 32-page letter from 29 November 1918 narrates in some detail his experiences in Europe, including his observation of the frontline and a war torn continent. There are also several post cards of pre and post World War I Europe and candid photograph post cards (possibly taken by Easton) of General Pershing (two items) and of President Woodrow Wilson in France for the Peace Conference (one item). The collection also includes Easton's journals (6 items, 1917 through 1919) containing recordings of events, observations, stories, and word 'sketchings' of his wartime experiences. There are two photographs of Jason Clark Easton from WWI, biographical information, and a scrapbook of memorabilia and letters from students, colleagues, and friends commemorating Dr. Easton's teaching career and retirement from the faculty of West Virginia University in 1963.

Creator

Easton, Jason Clark, 1892-1972

Extent

0.08 Linear Feet Summary: 10 in. (2 document cases, 5 in. each)

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Biographical / Historical

Jason Clark Easton was born in 1892 to Lucien and Mary Easton of Lacrosse, Wisconsin. Easton entered the Westminster School in Simsbury, Connecticut in 1907, graduating in 1911. He attended Yale University in 1911-1915, earning a B.A. in history.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, known today as World War I (WWI) or the First World War, the United States was initially determined to remain neutral, but later joined the Allies in 1917, sending hundreds of thousands of troops to Europe, including Clark Easton. The bespectacled college graduate began his army career as a sergeant in the 77th Division. He was made a non-commissioned instead of a commissioned officer due to his compromised eyesight. The 77th Division saw its share of fighting on the Western Front, including the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in August, 1918. This successful advance was planned by Colonel George C. Marshall. By September, Easton was promoted to Second Lieutenant and sent to Intelligence School to be trained as an interpreter. After the Armistice of November 11, 1918, Clark Easton was assigned to General Pershing's staff during the 1919 Peace Conference. Another promotion to First Lieutenant followed as Easton witnessed the creation of a treaty agreement that would deeply affect the world for generations.

Easton came home in the fall of 1919 with an honorable discharge in hand, taking jobs in banking and investments in Lacrosse and later in Chicago. In 1931 Easton returned to his academic pursuits at Northwestern University, graduating in 1932 with a M.A. in History, and earning his PHD in History at the

University of Wisconsin in 1937. Dr. Easton taught briefly at the University of Idaho before beginning a thirty five year career at West Virginia University in 1938. He was married to Joy Bromberg, a West Virginia native and teacher, who was born in Charleston on 20 June 1925. Dr Jason Clark Easton died in 1972 in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Scope and Contents

There are seven series in this collection, including:

1. Biographical Information
2. Correspondence
3. Diaries
4. Post Cards
5. Photographs
6. WWI Maps
7. Retirement Scrapbook

1. Biographical Information. Includes army discharge papers; an article from the 'Morgantown Post' (1963/05/22) regarding his retirement from the West Virginia University faculty; and a clipping of Dr. Easton's obituary (1972).

2. Correspondence. Includes letters of Jason Clark Easton. Most are addressed to his mother in Lacrosse, Wisconsin, and span the years 1914 to 1925. These include:

1914-1916; Easton's letters from Yale University regarding financial matters, his activities, and studies. There are also two letters from Plattsburg, New York, where Easton began military training.

1917/05-12; Letters to his family regarding his training and army life at Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

1918/01-08; Easton's first correspondence from overseas, somewhere in France, where his division had been deployed to the frontlines. There is also a letter to Mrs. Easton from Clark's friend, Army Sergeant Frank Hood, also leaving for Europe.

1918/09-12; Letters regarding enrollment in the Army Intelligence School and his commission as a Second Lieutenant. Also includes a long letter home after the Armistice explaining in more detail what he had experienced since his arrival in Europe, including observations of the frontline and a war torn continent.

1919/02-12; Letters regarding his promotion to First Lieutenant and his job as a member of General Pershing's staff and interpreter at the Paris Peace Conference. Includes descriptions of many historic sites and landmarks he visited, and notice of his homecoming in early fall.

1920-1925; Letters regarding his life after the army, including letters to his mother about job interviews and visits with his sister in New York.

3. Diaries. Includes six journals of Jason Clark Easton dating from July 1918 to September 1919. Four of these contain his uncensored observations and experiences during the war years. The remaining two are small journals used for recording financial records, addresses, and shopping and laundry lists. In addition there are lists of duties, responsibilities, procedures, military abbreviations, ranks of the Allied and German armies, and codes.

1918; Includes descriptions of his experiences overseas, on the frontline at Division Headquarters, air raids, trench life, billets and food, and how the indigenous people suffered. There is also a word 'sketching' written by Clark Easton in the third person pertaining to the life of an infantryman fighting the war, among other subjects.

1919; Easton journals his observations of the Paris Peace Conference, his impressions of the 'Big Four' (Allied leaders), particularly France's Clemenceau. Easton praises an excellent lecture by Colonel George C. Marshall pertaining to how to study and plan battles. He also remembers friends and Yale classmates who have been killed. He records rhymes, jokes, poems, newspaper headlines, and stories he had collected. Some of the entries are written in French or German.

4. Post Cards. There are several post cards, including photograph post cards of pre and post war Europe. These include two candid photographs of General Pershing, and one of President Woodrow Wilson in Paris for

the 1919 Peace Conference.

5. Photographs. Two photo portraits of Jason Clark Easton in uniform; ca. 1918.

6. Maps. Includes maps of France and western Europe; ca. 1917-1919.

7. Retirement Scrapbook. Contains memorabilia, clippings, and several letters from Dr. Easton's colleagues, students, and friends commemorating his successful teaching career and his retirement from the West Virginia University faculty after 35 years of service.

Related A&M Collections

2324, 3584

Keywords

Easton, Jason Clark, 1892-1972