

Aspero family collection of World War II ephemera

Ms. Coll. 1347

Finding aid prepared by Siel Agugliaro.

Last updated on April 19, 2018.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2018 March 15

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Aspero, Umberto Salvatore, 1899-1979
Title	Aspero family collection of World War II ephemera
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1347
Date	circa 1941-1945
Extent	0.2 linear foot (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	The Aspero family collection of World War II ephemera documents the living conditions and the deprivations endured by the Asperos and other American families during the world conflict. The collection includes rationing books and stamps, informational materials, and greeting cards from two members of the family, who served in the military during the war.

Cite as:

Aspero family collection of World War II ephemera, circa 1941-1945, MS. Coll. 1347, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Born in Italy around 1870, Francesco Aspero immigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1900, where he was employed in a shoe factory. Four years later, his wife Maria Elvira Silvestri (circa 1879-1966) joined him in the United States. The couple had numerous children, including Umberto Salvatore (born in Naples on July 21 1899, died October 1979 in Andover, Sussex County, New Jersey), Anthony Arthur (1908-1989), Margaret (born circa 1912), Eleanor (born circa 1913) Joseph Anthony (born circa 1916), Louise (1917-2014), Anna (born circa 1921), and Paul (1922-1993).

In 1929, Umberto Aspero married Rose Cerreta (1908-2003) whose family had also immigrated to the United States. They lived in Newton, New Jersey and were the parents of Gloria T. Moore (1932-1967), Elvira Growdon (1939-2009), Benedict V. (born 1940), and Stephen (born 1947, donor of this collection). Because of his relatively advanced age, Umberto himself was not enlisted during the war; however, throughout World War II, Umberto Salvatore Aspero saved ephemera such as rationing books and stamps and informational materials, as well as greeting cards that his relatives in the service sent from Europe and the U.S.

The Aspero family collection of World War II ephemera comprises materials relating to many members of the family, including Umberto's wife Rose and three of their children: Gloria T. Moore, Elvira Growdon, and Benedict V. Aspero; his father-in-law, Michele Canio Cerreta (1874-1921); his brother-in-law, Canio Cerreta (1920-2001); and his brothers, Joseph Anthony Aspero and Anthony Arthur Aspero. After WWII, Canio Cerreta (also known as Tony Jordan) worked as Associate Producer for the Ed Sullivan Show, but the collection does not include documents relating to his television career.

As a whole, the Aspero family collection of World War II ephemera offers a glimpse into the living conditions and the deprivations endured by the Asperos and other American families during the world conflict.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents rationing, civilian participation in the war effort, and to a very minor extent, two men serving in the United States military. There are 14 war ration books from the first four series issued between 1942 and 1943 by the Office of Price Administration. Although a few of the ration books are empty of stamps, there are a number that still contain stamps. These books were issued to Michele Cerreta, Umberto and Rose Aspero, and their children, Gloria, Elvira, and Benedict. The collection also contains information regarding the shortages in fuels, and includes gas rationing books, stamps, transfer certificates, and informational materials.

Civilian's participation in the war effort is documented in the collection through forms and informational materials. Researchers will find several brochures relating to war saving bonds, many of which are highly patriotic and suggest that saving bonds were a way for the citizen to "help win the war." There are also brochures and leaflets on a variety of topics, including identifying men in the Armed Forces via insignia, encouraging Americans to safeguard military information, requesting support for the United Service Organization (USO), and methods for saving waste fats issued by the Conservation Department of the War Production Board (WPB). An issue of *Army Talks* from January 6, 1945, focusing on the Army in Europe, is also included.

To a very limited degree, the collection documents two family members who served in the military. Folder 5 contains five official election war ballot mailing envelopes (absentee voting) from 1944 for the state of Massachusetts. It is possible that these were issued to Anthony Aspero, a Massachusetts' resident who served in the Army during World War II. Finally, the collection includes two greeting cards sent

from service men to Aspero family members. One card was sent in 1942 from Private Canio Cerreta, who was serving in Company C, of the 59th Medical Infantry Battalion, Fourth Platoon at Camp Barkeley, Texas. A 1944 Christmas card was sent from "Tony" (probably Anthony Aspero (1908-1989)) who was serving in Europe in the IX Engineer Command to his brother Joseph Anthony Aspero (1915-1987), an attorney in Worcester, Massachusetts. Neither card contains any written content.

Administrative Information

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Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Gift of Stephen M. and Eva Jaworski Aspero, February 6, 2018. Both are graduates from the University of Pennsylvania (respectively Wharton, MBA, 1974, and SAMP, 1973).

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- United States. Office of Price Administration.

FAMILY NAME(S)

- Aspero family.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Brochures
- Greeting cards
- Printed ephemera

SUBJECT(S)

- Rationing
- World War, 1939-1945
- World War, 1939-1945--Food supply--United States
- World War, 1939-1945--Fuel supplies
- World War, 1939-1945--Propaganda
- World War, 1939-1945--United States

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
War ration books, 1942-1943.	1	1
Gasoline rationing books, stamps, and transfer certificates, 1942-1945.	1	2
Gasoline rationing, instructions and informational materials, 1942.	1	3
Saving bonds, forms and informational material, 1941-1944, undated.	1	4
Election war ballot envelopes, circa 1944.	1	5
Brochures and informational materials, 1942-1945, undated.	1	6
<i>Army Talks</i> , Vol. III no. 1, 1945 January 6.	1	6

Greeting cards, 1942, 1944.

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