

Herbert S. Williams papers

Ms. Coll. 1416

Finding aid prepared by Cory Austin Knudson.

Last updated on September 26, 2019.

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

2019 September 24

Table of Contents

Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Related Materials	6
Controlled Access Headings.....	6
Collection Inventory.....	7
Series I. Letters from Williams to family.....	7
Series II. Official military communications.....	7
Series III. Family and biographical material.....	7

Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Williams, Herbert S., 1881-1950
Title	Herbert S. Williams papers
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1416
Date [bulk]	1917-1919
Date [inclusive]	1908-1950
Extent	0.2 linear foot (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>This collection is principally composed of correspondence from U.S. Army Veterinary Corps Lieutenant Colonel Herbert S. Williams (1881-1950) to his family members, and in particular his sister Emily, nicknamed "Bon." The bulk of these letters were written during Williams's service in the U.S. Army Expeditionary Forces over the following periods: 1908 to 1909, in which Williams was stationed in Cuba and Fort Myer, Texas; 1916-1917, in which he was deployed to Mexico as part of the Mexican Expedition; and 1917 to 1919, in which he was deployed to Europe during World War I with the 12th Field Artillery Regiment. The collection also contains some limited correspondence from Williams to family members after his retirement and up to his death in 1950, as well as some official communications relating to his military service. This collection may best serve researchers interested in family correspondence during military deployment.</p>

Cite as:

Herbert S. Williams papers, 1908-1950, Ms. Coll. 1416, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Herbert S. Williams was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 12, 1881 to James Williams and Sarah Williams, nee Oglesby. He received his degree in veterinary medicine from the University of Pennsylvania in 1906 and enlisted in the U.S. Army Expeditionary Forces in 1908. He served in the Army until 1930 and took part in the Mexican Expedition and World War I as part of the Veterinary Corps. He married Honoria Moomaw in 1912 and they had one son, Winslow, who would become a Yale graduate and portrait artist. Williams rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and received a commendation for his service in World War I as well as the Victory Medal.

Williams maintained regular correspondence with his family and his sister Emily in particular during his military deployments. These documents form the principal part of this collection. Williams was stationed in Cuba and Mexico during his first deployment and France, Luxembourg, and Germany during his second, writing to his family about military life, travel, and the day-to-day goings-on back home. He saw combat in France and suffered mustard gas burns in October 1918, according to Pennsylvania WWI Veteran's Service and Compensation files. Returning to the U.S. in 1919, Williams settled in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania where he died on August 7, 1950. He is interred with his wife at Arlington National Cemetery.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents Herbert S. Williams's family relationships during his time in the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps from 1909 to his retirement 1930 and, to a limited degree, following his retirement until his death in 1950. The bulk of the collection includes letters written by Williams to his family while serving in Cuba, Mexico, and Europe. There are also a few official documents from the U.S. Army and a limited amount of material relating to his family and personal life.

This collection is arranged in three series: Series I. Letters from Williams to family; Series II. Official military communications; Series III. Family and biographical material. Series I. Letters from Williams to family date from very early in his army career when he served in Cuba from 1908 to 1909. All of the letters in this timeframe are to his sister, Emily P. Williams, nicknamed "Bon." He writes largely about family matters, the hard work of military life, and his sister's relationships back home. From 1916 to 1917 he was involved in the Mexican Expedition. Very little of military-historical interest is discussed during

this period, apart from some general discussion of the hunt for Pancho Villa, on which the Mexican Expedition was based. The majority of the letters are to Emily, but those letters often are addressed to include the whole family; as well as one letter to Madgie, likely another family member. The bulk of letters in this collection were written during World War I from 1917 to 1919, with Williams serving in France, Luxembourg, and Germany. Letters were written to: James L. Smythe [nephew], Mrs. A. Felton Wood, Aunt Teresa, Madgie, Emily P. Williams, Florence Wirt, and Aunt Nancy. He discusses his day-to-day life and that of his correspondents, books and periodicals, and his travels. From 1925 until his death in 1950, the only letters in the collection were written to his son, Winslow, one of which is hand illustrated with animals. There is one letter from Winslow to his father, written in 1925.

Series II. Official military communications contains documents relating to Major C.P. Summerall's commendation of Williams prior to Summerall's retirement from the American Expeditionary Forces, as well as the award of the Victory Medal to Williams in 1920. This series also includes Summerall's personal letter to Williams on the occasion of Williams's retirement from the Army in 1930.

The final series, Family and biographical material, contains a limited amount of material, including a photograph of Williams, a small amount of information about his military service, and his obituary. There is also a general genealogical document and an obituary of his brother-in-law, J.K. Stevenson, husband of Emily.

This collection noticeably does not include letters to Williams's wife. Because of wartime censorship, they also do not include much in the way of direct reference to the events and developments of the military conflicts in which Williams served. This collection may best serve researchers interested in family correspondence during military deployment.

Administrative Information

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

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Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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Source of Acquisition

Sold by Beltrone & Company, 2019.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At the World War I Museum and Memorial:

Bound rosters of Veterinary Officers with the 3rd Army. 2006.74.44 and 2006.74.45

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- United States. Army. American Expeditionary Forces.
- United States. Army. Veterinary Corps.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Correspondence

SUBJECT(S)

- Families
- Medicine
- Military
- Veterinarians
- Veterinary medicine
- World War, 1914-1918

Collection Inventory

SERIES I. LETTERS FROM WILLIAMS TO FAMILY, 1908-1950.

	Box	Folder
Cuba and Fort Myer, Virginia, 1908-1909.	1	1
Mexico and Texas, 1916-1917.	1	2
France, Luxembourg, and Germany, 1917-1919.	1	3
1925-1950.	1	4

SERIES II. OFFICIAL MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS, 1919-1930.

	Box	Folder
Letters related to commendations and the Victory Medal, 1919-1920.	1	5
Letter relating to Williams's retirement, 1930 November 4.	1	
Veterinary Corps pins, undated.	1	7

SERIES III. FAMILY AND BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL, 1919-1943, 1950.

	Box	Folder
Herbert S. Williams photograph, retired list information, and obituary, 1938-1939, 1950, undated.	1	
Genealogical record, obituary for J.K. Stevenson (brother-in-law), and mourning poems, 1919, 1943, undated.	1	9