

Albert D. Hequembourg World War I diaries

Ms. Coll. 1153

Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

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

2015 November 19

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Hequembourg, Albert D., 1884-1967
Title	Albert D. Hequembourg World War I diaries
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1153
Date [inclusive]	1918-1919
Extent	0.2 linear feet (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	Albert D. Hequembourg (1884-1967) served as a dental surgeon in France during World War I. This collection includes a two-volume diary as well as a few items laid into the volumes which document Albert D. Hequembourg's service in the war as well as his thoughts about the war, politics, and peace negotiations following the war.

Cite as:

Albert D. Hequembourg World War I diaries, 1918-1919, Ms. Coll. 1153, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Albert James Draper Hequembourg was born on September 5, 1884, in Dunkirk, New York, to parents Walter King (1850-1915) and Ellen Draper (1847-1894) Hequembourg. Following his mother's death at age 46, he appears to have lived with his uncle Frank Harden for some time, before attending the University of Pennsylvania and graduating in 1908 with a DDS. While at Penn, Hequembourg was a member of Psi Omega and the Kirk Dental Society. He moved to New York City after his graduation where he worked as a dentist with R.H. Macy & Company.

On July 31, 1917, Hequembourg enlisted as a private in the infantry. He was called into active service as a 1st Lieutenant of the United States Army Dental Corps on May 2, 1918 and served overseas from June 4, 1918 to July 22, 1919. He was promoted to Captain on May 3, 1919 and honorably discharged on July 28, 1919. According to the United States Army Office of Medical History, during World War I, more than one million soldiers of the American Expeditionary Forces "were treated for many different dental conditions ... [and] dental officers provided ... restorations, ... extractions, ... crowns, and ... dentures." Hequembourg trained at Camp Greene in North Carolina and at Raritan Training Camp in New Jersey from January to May, 1918, before traveling to France aboard the S.S. *Mauretania* which left New York City on June 5, 1918. He landed in Liverpool, England, traveled south by train to Southampton; and took Channel transport to Havre, France, arriving there on June 14, 1918. During his time in France, he was "in action from close to Ypres, Belgium to Amiens, France," (inside front cover, Volume 2).

Following his return to civilian life, Hequembourg married Jessie Gillies Sibley on June 19, 1920 in Cuba, New York. Hequembourg and Jessie appear to have known each other before he began writing his diary, but their relationship was strengthened during the war and through what seems to have been a regular correspondence while she was in France performing war work with the YMCA. She graduated from Cornell University and worked as a librarian. They appear to have settled in White Plains, New York, where Hequembourg practiced dentistry. Hequembourg died on May 7, 1967 in Winter Park, Florida.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes a two-volume diary as well as a few items laid into the volumes which document Albert D. Hequembourg's service in World War I.

Volume 1 begins on January 1, 1918 in at Camp Greene in North Carolina, where Hequembourg appears to have been performing dental work for his regiment. During the earliest entries, he spent significant amounts of time studying for an exam which would qualify him for the Dental Reserve Corps (exam taken on January 12, 1918) and writes of the process of receiving a commission. On March 17, 1918, Hequembourg left Camp Greene, via troop train, and arrived at Raritan River Ordnance Training Camp in New Jersey on March 20. He appears to have spent most of his time on guard duty, rather than performing dental surgeries, while waiting for his assignment to active duty, which he received on May 2. On May 4, he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and served at the base hospital at Mineola, Long Island until May 14, at which point he was sent to Hoboken where he received orders for overseas duty in France. After a short leave in Dunkirk, Rutherford, and New York City, New York, Hequembourg traveled to France on the S.S. *Mauretania*, leaving New York on June 5 and arriving in England on June 11. In England, Hequembourg traveled from Liverpool to Ramsey, and Southampton before taking Channel transport to Havre, France, where he arrived on June 14, 1918. He spent several days enjoying the experience of France in Havre before they were transported to the 30th Division headquarters and from there to his billets with a French farmer. He began his official dental work on June 29, 1918, the last entry in the first

volume. Entries are narrative and include the date, the weather, meals, letters written and received (particularly to his "Aunt Lottie"), his feelings for women (particularly Alma Nilson, although his future wife, Jessie Sibley, is mentioned), and the day-to-day activities both in the camp and in the dental office. He comments on fellow dental surgeons as well as his superiors, in particular, Lt. Steffers. He frequently mentions "war news."

The second volume begins with a few explanatory notes, one of which describes a numbering system of locations in France. According to Hequembourg, "the numbers in brackets refer to towns in Belgium and North Western France where [they] were posted, but the key to the numbers was lost." As a result, it is very difficult to ascertain the location of events described in the second volume. Albert's first entry was written on July 7, 1918, somewhere in France and Belgium, where he began by examining the teeth of 348 American soldiers. In this volume, Albert's description of the front and surrounding areas include observations on the women, children, and elderly inhabitants of the towns; the damage to the landscape and villages; and sounds of guns ever-present in the distance. The need to move the dental equipment and office regularly seems to have occupied the time of the dental surgeons almost as much as their actual dental work; although in the period just before the soldiers were sent to the front lines, Hequembourg's time was spent "getting patients ready to go to front, filling root canals and putting treatments in to hold over till they get back." He describes in great detail being caught in a German air-raid, living in a dug-out and working in a dental office in "a corrugated iron shed camouflaged with branches," and seeing a field hospital. It seems that Hequembourg and his fellow soldier Lt. Rhea traveled with transport and were often in the midst of shelling. The entry written on November 11, 1918, describes not only the celebrations in France, but the problems in Germany. Following the armistice, Hequembourg continued to work as a dentist in France until sent to Germany to the 351st Ammunition Depot in Coblenz and later to Bendorf. During his time in Germany, he took great interest in the peace talks and the League of Nations, and he reported on peace celebrations taking place on June 28, 1919. Hequembourg's Army service took him to Luxembourg and Brest before he left Europe on July 14, 1919 to return to the United States. Entries in this volume are highly patriotic, and although Hequembourg refers to the war as a waste, he is clearly a believer in the cause. Like in the first volume, entries are narrative and include the date, the weather, meals, letters written and received, his feelings for women (particularly Alma Nilson, although his future wife, Jessie Sibley, became increasingly important), friends (especially Lt. Rhea, Chaplain Phelps, Grogan, and Bobst who was his dental assistant), and the day-to-day activities of a dental surgeon in the midst of a war.

Items laid into the volumes were removed and placed in folders. Of interest is Albert Hequembourg's American Expeditionary Forces identity card and letters written to his Aunt Lottie, Mrs. T.M. Hequembourg. It seems that Mrs. T.M. Hequembourg sent one of his letters to a newspaper which published it in its entirety and it can be found in box 1, folder 6. Also of interest is a photograph of a dental office which was probably located near the front lines in France.

Researchers interested in the American soldier's training and overseas experiences in World War I, medical work during World War I, and the American soldier's perspective of war and the peace negotiations following the war will find this collection to be very valuable. Hequembourg provides vivid descriptions of the battlefield, and more frequently the area just beyond the battlefield.

Administrative Information

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

2015 November 19
Finding aid prepared by Holly Mengel.

Access Restrictions

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Custodial History note

Transferred from the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, 2015.

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- Camp Greene (N.C.).
- Raritan Arsenal (N.J.).
- United States. Army. American Expeditionary Forces.
- United States. Army. Dental Corps.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Photographs

SUBJECT(S)

- Dentistry, Military
- World War, 1914-1918
- World War, 1914-1918--France
- World War, 1914-1918--Germany
- World War, 1914-1918--Personal narratives, American
- World War, 1914-1918--United States

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Diary, volume 1, 1918 January 1-June 29.	1	1
Diary, volume 2, 1918 June 30-1919 July 14.	1	2
Identity card and photograph, 1918.	1	3
Letters written to Mrs. T.M. Hequembourg ("Aunt Lottie"), 1918 October 23, November 27.	1	4
Military pass and telegram assigning Hequembourg to active duty, 1918-1919.	1	5
Newspaper clippings, 1918.	1	6-7

Paper money, French and German, circa 1918-1919.	1	8
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Photograph of dental office, probably near the front lines, circa 1918-1919.	1	9
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