

LMHS.05: Russell Byerley Memorial World War II letters collection

05

**Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael
Gubicza through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden
Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories.**

Last updated on November 09, 2012.

Lower Merion Historical Society

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Summary Information

Repository	Lower Merion Historical Society
Creator	Byerley, Russell
Title	LMHS.05: Russell Byerley Memorial World War II letters collection
Call number	05
Date [inclusive]	1941-1945
Extent	7.4 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	The Russell Byerley Memorial World War II Letters Collection, 1941-1945, consists of original letters and photographs of service men and women whose homes were in Lower Merion Township or the Borough of Narberth. These letters and photographs were sent during the war to Mr. Russell Byerley, a woodshop teacher at Lower Merion Senior High School in Ardmore, Pennsylvania.

Biography/History

Russell Byerley was born in 1899 to John Jacob and Kathryn Byerley. He was the oldest child with four younger sisters: Frieda, Ella, Elizabeth, and Ruth. John Jacob Byerley worked for the Phoenix Iron and Steel Company, played professional football, and was a veteran of the Spanish-American War.

At the age of sixteen Byerley was admitted to The Williamson Free School of Mechanical Trades in Media, Pennsylvania, where he studied carpentry. Byerley graduated in the class of 1920. He was a four-star athlete at Williamson, and briefly played professional football and baseball after graduation.

After working as a carpenter in the area he obtained a position teaching shop class in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. It was there he met his wife, Evelyn Ayers, who was teaching in the same school. Ayers was born October 4, 1901, and was the oldest daughter of Walter H. and Dolly W. Ayers. She was a resident of Indiana, Pennsylvania, and a graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She had four sisters--Dorothy, Marion, Helen, and Jean--and a brother named Walter. Her father, Walter H. Ayers, was the Recorder of Deeds at the county courthouse in Indiana, Pennsylvania. Evelyn passed away in 1990

Byerley and Ayers were married on May 27, 1923. They built their home in Broomall, Pennsylvania, in 1926. Their son, David A., was born in 1927. In 1928 Byerley obtained a position teaching in the woodshop at Lower Merion High School. He also helped coach football and basketball for Lower Merion, and refereed games at other area schools.

During World War II, he solicited letters and photographs from service men and women whose homes were in Lower Merion Township or the Borough of Narberth, many of whom he had known as students. Byerley instituted the publication of a series of wartime "News Letters"/columns, printed at the Lower Merion school district print shop. In this series, he and a staff of volunteers related stories from the service men and women's correspondence.

Byerley retired from Lower Merion High School in 1951 to focus on his construction business, building single homes for private customers. He passed away in 1969.

Scope and Contents

The Russell Byerley Memorial World War II Collection consists of original letters and photographs of service men and women whose homes were in Lower Merion Township or the Borough of Narberth. These letters and photographs were sent during the war to Mr. Russell Byerley, a shop teacher at Lower Merion Senior High School, Ardmore, Pennsylvania. The collection is indexed and arranged alphabetically by name.

Administrative Information

Lower Merion Historical Society

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Sponsor

This preliminary finding aid was created as part of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories. The HCI-PSAR project was made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Access Restrictions

Contact Lower Merion Historical Society for information about accessing this collection.

Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Photographs donated by Lower Merion Senior High School, circa 1994. Letters donated by David Byerley, 1997.

Controlled Access Headings

Geographic Name(s)

- Ardmore (Pa.)
- Bala-Cynwyd (Pa.)
- Bryn Mawr (Pa.)
- Gladwyne (Pa.)
- Haverford (Pa. : Township)
- Lower Merion (Pa. : Township)
- Merion (Pa.)
- Montgomery County (Pa.)
- Narberth (Pa.)
- Villanova (Pa.)
- Wynnewood (Montgomery County, Pa.)

Subject(s)

- Prisoners of war
- Soldiers
- Teachers
- United States. Army
- World War, 1939-1945