

**Guide to the
John Wright Collection**



**Gettysburg College, Musselman Library
Special Collections & College Archives**

**Processed by Kayla Lenkner
August 2008**

MS-095: Letters received by John Wright, World War I

(1 box, .27 cubic feet)

Inclusive Dates: 1917-1919

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Provenance

Purchased from *The Rhodes Scholar* catalog.

Biography

Knoxville, Iowa, located about 25 miles south-east of Des Moines, is the county seat of Marion County. It was founded in 1845 by Joseph Robinson and James Montgomery. The local newspaper, the *Knoxville Journal*, was founded ten years later. During World War I, the paper's editor, John W. Wright, received letters from more than twenty-five local men in the military, stationed both in the states and abroad. These letters were frequently published in the paper.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consist of 32 letters and ten postcards received by John Wright between 9 June 1917 – 18 December 1919. Most of the correspondence is addressed to John Wright or the *Knoxville Journal*, however, some letters are addressed to other people who presumably passed the letters along to Wright for publication in the paper. The collection contains a mixture of letters from soldiers, sailors, cavalry men and officers.

None of this correspondence refers to actual combat. Instead, the letters focus on daily life in the military, training, and life on the front. The letters include very few specifics or details due to the censor, a restriction frequently mentioned in the letters. While the letters themselves show no physical signs of censorship, the envelopes often have stamps or stickers indicating that the letter was opened and inspected by a censor.

Almost half of the correspondence is from France. The other letters are from various locations across the United States, with the exception of one letter from Liverpool and two from Niederbreisig in Germany. Correspondence from France frequently describes the French countryside, people, and customs, as well as the quartering and living conditions of the soldiers. The 9 January 1919 letter from Major Robert Blaine describes working on the Verdun-Metz railroad and seeing the destruction caused by the war. The majority of the correspondence from the United States is sent from training camps and the letters are mostly about training, impending military assignments and adjusting to life in the military. Quite a few of these letters express an enthusiasm to join the excitement on the front and a lot of the men speculate about when they will be going "across the pond". One letter is written from a sailor on the USS Canandaigua (14 March 1918) and another from the USS C. W. Morse (5 May 1918). The 15 April 1918 letter

from Leslie O. Oswandel describes life as a member of the border patrol stationed in Texas.

Several letters refer to illnesses and quarantines (15 February 1918; 20 March 1918; 30 April 1918; 20 May 1918; 17 January 1919). Another common topic is the work of the YMCA (25 April 1918; 5 May 1918; 12 May 1918; 30 January 1919). Nearly every letter mentions reading or wanting to read the *Knoxville Journal*. A few letters respond to and discuss the letters of other soldiers published in the paper.

The letters are arranged chronologically.

Box 1

1 – 1 Correspondence: 9 June 1917 – 11 November 1917

- 9 June 1917 Paris Island, SC: Pvt. Brann to John Wright; ALS-1p. (includes envelope)
- 23 October 1917 Great Lakes, IL: F. C. Conrey to John Wright; ALS-4pp. (includes envelope)
- 11 November 1917 France: Walter Kester to the *Knoxville Journal*; ALS-4pp. (includes envelope)

1 – 2 Correspondence: 4 January 1918 – 27 January 1918

- 1918 Ben H. Snelson to the *Knoxville Journal*; CS.
- 4 January 1918 France: Levi C. Shivules to the *Knoxville Journal*; ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)
- 5 January 1918 France: Clarence Philips to John Wright; ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)
- 6 January 1918 France: Pvt. C. W. Dawson to John Wright; ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)
- 8 January 1918 France: Lt. C. T. Brann to M. L. Curtis; CS
- 20 January 1918 France: Ross C. Dean to Mrs. Ross C. Dean; ALS-4pp. (includes envelope)
- 20 January 1918 France: Ross C. Dean to the *Knoxville Journal*; ALS-7pp. (includes envelope)
- 27 January 1918 Evanston, IL: Gary Anderson to John Wright; ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)

1 – 3 Correspondence: 10 February 1918 – 27 February 1918

- 10 February 1918 France: Ross C. Dean to Mrs. Ross C. Dean; ALS-3pp. (includes envelope)
- 12 February 1918 Camp Dodge: Henry O. Park to “friend Stewart and the gang”; ALS-3pp.
- 15 February 1918 Great Lakes, IL: L. J. Martin to John Wright; ALS-3pp. (includes envelope)

27 February 1918 Camp Merritt, NJ: Henry O. Park to John Wright; CS.

1 – 4 Correspondence: 1 March 1918 – 24 March 1918

1 March 1918 Camp Merritt, NJ: Henry O. Park to John Wright; ALS-5pp.
(includes envelope)
6 March 1918 France: Cpl. John P. Ward to Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Ward; TLS-1p.
(includes envelope)
14 March 1918 Newport, RI: G. Wright to John Wright; ALS-3pp. (includes
envelope)
17 March 1918 France: Cary Jones to Mrs. Ralph Hayes. ALS-1p. (includes
envelope)
18 March 1918 Envelope addressed to the *Knoxville Journal*, “From a Canadian
soldier”.
20 March 1918 Camp Pike, Little Rock, AR: W. R. Wetherall to John Wright;
ALS-5pp. (includes???)
24 March 1918 Waco, TX: Lieutenant Arthur E. Shappell to Mrs. Anna Gregg;
ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)

1 – 5 Correspondence: 7 April 1918 – 30 April 1918

7 April 1918 Douglas AZ: An unidentified soldier to his mother, Mrs. Scott
Beaman; AL-2pp. (includes envelope and a photograph of an
unidentified cavalry man with a note on the back that says “Miss
Lillian McNulty”)
15 April 1918 Fort Ringgold, TX: Leslie O. Oswandel to John Wright; ALS-5pp.
17 April 1918 France: Cpl. Henry O. Park to John Wright. TLS-2pp. (includes
envelope)
25 April 1918 St. Louis, MO: Gary Anderson to John Wright; ALS-3pp.
(includes envelope)
30 April 1918 Philadelphia, PA: L. J. Martin to John Wright; ALS-3pp. (includes
envelope)
30 April 1918 Camp Mills, Long Island, NY: Ben H. Snelson to John Wright;
ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)

1 – 6 Correspondence: 5 May 1918 – 26 May 1918

5 May 1918 Brooklyn, NY: Lee S. Green to John Wright; ALS-4pp.
12 May 1918 France: Lieutenant Robert B. Thrasher to John Wright; CS.
20 May 1918 Camp Cody: Parke Leong to John Wright; ALS-8pp. (includes
envelope)
23 May 1918 France: Pvt. E. H. Long to Charles Long; ALS-1p.
26 May 1918 Newport, RI: Loren T. Anderson to Morris L. Curtis. CS.

1 – 7 Correspondence: 9 January 1919 – 31 January 1919

9 January 1919 Verdun: Major Robert Blaine to John Wright; ALS-8pp. (includes envelope)
 17 January 1919 France: Sgt. Ralph C. Daubenspeck to John Wright; ALS-3pp. (includes envelope)
 24 January 1919 Niederbreisig: Clarence Phillips to John Wright; ALS-2pp. (includes envelope)
 30 January 1919 Pauillac, France: Leslie J. Martin to John Wright; ALS-3pp. (includes envelope)
 31 January 1919 Nice, France: E. T. McLaughlin to John Wright. CS

1 – 8 Correspondence: 3 May 1919 – 18 December 1919

3 May 1919 Nice, France: E. T. McLaughlin to John Wright; CS.
 18 December 1919 Niederbreisig: Sgt. C. W. Dawson to John Wright; CS.

1 – 9 Correspondence: Not Dated

n. d. Liverpool, England: H. C. Dawson to John Wright; ALS-1p.
 n. d. Postcard from Henry O. Park to John Wright; CS.
 n. d. Postcard with an image of an unidentified sailor. C.
 n. d. Nice, France: Envelope from E. T. McLaughlin to John Wright
 n. d. Envelope addressed to the *Knoxville Journal*
 n. d. Envelope addressed to Mr. John W. Wright

1 – 10 Photographs

Photograph 8x10. Camp Wadsworth, Spartanburg, South Carolina, with a note on the reverse about E. A. Wickes and entertainment programs, 17 October.
 Photograph 4x6. Studio portrait of an unidentified soldier. “Schriever, Scranton, PA”
 Photograph 8x10 print of an explosion on the transept of Rheims Cathedral in September 1914.