



Jesse E. Wrench Papers (C2509)

Collection Number: C2509

Collection Title: Jesse E. Wrench Papers

Dates: 1871-1976

Creator: Wrench, Jesse E., 1882-1958

Abstract: The papers of Jesse E. Wrench, a University of Missouri history professor, include teaching materials, correspondence, and records of organizations with which Wrench was involved in at the university and in Columbia, Missouri. The papers also include some family papers and photographs and two unpublished manuscripts from the Cornell Expedition to Asia Minor in 1907-1908.

Collection Size: 2.0 cubic feet
(124 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia. If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Jesse E. Wrench Papers* (C2509); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by the Department of History on September 5, 1961 (Accession No. CA3489). Additions to the papers were made by an unknown donor in November 1975 (Accession No. CA4003); Dorothy P. Holladay on April 20, 1978 (Accession No. CA2140); and Carl Chapman on October 15, 1975 (Accession No. CA3953), April 14, 1981 (Accession No. CA4337), January 12, 1982 (Accession No. CA4397), September 27, 1985 (Accession No. CA4672), and January 6, 1986 (Accession No. CA4694). The material about the Cornell University Expedition, donated by the University of

Missouri Library on July 31, 1946 (Accession No. CA2862), was added to the papers when they were re-processed in 2001.

Note: Historical materials are products of their time, and some of the materials in this collection contain offensive language or negative stereotypes. Titles and folder labels have been retained to preserve their historical context.

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the Jesse E. Wrench Papers can be found in the following collection:

[*Jesse Wrench Photographs*](#), (P1214)

Processed by: Processed by Jennifer Lukomski from November to December 2000, and July 2001. Finding aid revised by Elizabeth Engel on May 3, 2022.

Biographical Note:

Jesse Erwin Wrench was born in Afton, New York, on 10 September 1882, and spent his childhood on a farm in North Afton. He attended Cornell University where he studied for the ministry. In his junior year he went to the American School of Archaeology at Jerusalem with a professor and two other students from Cornell. They traveled throughout Israel and Syria and became the first people to circumnavigate the Dead Sea in a rowboat.

He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Cornell in 1906 and was given a fellowship in European History from the University of Wisconsin. After one semester he left Wisconsin to take part in the Cornell Expedition to Asia Minor and the Assyrio-Babylonian Orient (modern-day Iraq and Turkey). Just prior to this trip he married Jane (Jennie) Shurter of Brookton, New York. Wrench returned home in 1908 and taught at Wisconsin for a year before accepting a job at Syracuse University as a history professor.

In 1911 he was hired by the University of Missouri to teach European History. He returned to Wisconsin for one more semester of teaching in 1912 but then spent the rest of his career at the University of Missouri.

At Missouri he was known as a friend and advocate of the students. He founded a pep squad called Wrench's Wranglers that became the nucleus of the Thundering Thousand and Wrench could often be found leading cheers at pep rallies and football games. He was a faculty advisor for several organizations on campus including the drama club (Harlequin Players) and the Turkish-American Society, Dostluk. He and his wife also served as house parents for the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity for several years.

Wrench was an unofficial advisor to foreign students and invited many of them to stay in his own home. He organized co-ops during the Depression so students could have affordable food and housing while attending school. In 1939 he founded the Independent Men's Association to prevent the fraternities and sororities on campus from controlling student politics.

In 1933 he organized an archaeological survey of Missouri, and the following year founded the Missouri Archaeological Society. He served as the society's president for 25 years.

He wrote two books: *American Citizenship Practice* in 1924, and *The March of Civilization* in 1931, which was used as a high school textbook for many years.

Wrench was an honorary member of Lambda Chi Alpha and a life member of the Columbia, Missouri, chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Upon his retirement in 1953, the Missouri State Legislature stated he was “a symbol of the University itself,” and *TIME Magazine* called him “Mr. University of Missouri.”

He and his wife had one daughter, Helena (Ayesha) Wrench Heller. Wrench died on 15 October 1958.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following four series:

University of Missouri
Correspondence
Personal
Cornell Expedition

Scope and Content Note:

The Jesse E. Wrench Papers consist of teaching materials, records of student organizations, correspondence, photographs, family papers, and two manuscripts from the 1907-1908 Cornell Expedition, and document Wrench’s work as a professor and student advisor at the University of Missouri.

The **University of Missouri** series contains syllabi, reading lists, and exams used by Wrench to teach various history courses at the university. Also included are correspondence, notes, and records of the many student organizations and activities with which Wrench was involved, and specifications for several campus buildings done by the M. Fred Bell architectural firm in 1892. This series is arranged alphabetically by topic and documents campus life from the 1910s to the 1950s.

The **Correspondence** series consists of letters written to and from Wrench and his wife and concern both university and personal matters. Many of the letters are from former foreign students who kept in touch with “Mother Wrench” after they had returned to their homeland. This series is arranged chronologically.

The **Personal** series contains a scrapbook of publicity clippings, photos, farm records, and other miscellaneous items, arranged alphabetically by topic. These miscellaneous items include *Cub*, a publication of Jefferson Junior High School in Columbia, Missouri, a cookbook from Hermann, Missouri, and excerpts from the memoir of Willard Heller, husband of Ayesha Wrench. This memoir describes Heller’s impressions of the Wrench family and university life as a student in the 1910s.

Other items in this series include a publication entitled *Mother Goose in War Time*, which used familiar rhymes to encourage people to conserve food and energy during World War I, and a scrapbook of photographs taken on a grand tour of Europe from 1871 to 1873. The origin of this scrapbook is unknown.

The **Cornell Expedition** series contains a typewritten journal, two volumes of topographical notes, two unpublished manuscripts, a list of photographs taken on the expedition, and publicity notices in archaeological journals regarding the trip. Both the journal and manuscripts are missing some scattered pages as well as large sections. Only one publication came out of this expedition—*The Hittite Inscriptions*—in 1911. The other manuscripts were never published.

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