

C Davis, Ernest A. (1896-1990), Papers, 1846-1990
2606 .3 linear feet

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INTRODUCTION

The personal papers created and collected by Ernest A. Davis consist of letters sent by Davis to his mother Gertrude while he was in the army during World War I. Photographs depict him and his family, and group photographs of Davis's army units. Two volumes of church records document the Providence Baptist Church in Johnson County, Missouri, c. 1846-1888. Other records document the genealogy of Davis's family through newspaper clippings and a photocopy of family records.

DONOR INFORMATION

The Davis Papers were donated to the University of Missouri by Bernadine Ford on 30 September 1994 (Accession No. 5476). An addition was made to the papers on 27 November 1995 (Accession No. 5577)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ernest A. Davis was the son of John James Davis (1867-?) and Gertrude (Downing) Davis. He was raised near Warrensburg, in Johnson County, Missouri.

Davis graduated from the Johnson County Public School's eighth grade in 1913. In April 1918 he began training with the United States Army. He continued with the Iowa State College Training Detachment from April to either May or June 1918. He was promoted to corporal some time in the summer of 1918. After preliminary training in Iowa, Davis was stationed in Camp Jackson, South Carolina, and wrote letters from there throughout the summer of 1918. In either September or October, Davis was promoted to sergeant, and his unit was redeployed to Camp Custer, near Battle Creek, Michigan, where he remained for the rest of the war. His division was demobilized in January 1919 and Davis returned to Missouri soon thereafter.

He is known to have returned to military service from 1942 to 1943, when he was assigned to the 327th Quartermaster Company, and stationed in Ledo, India. During this term of service, he was promoted from private to staff sergeant.

His activities between the World Wars and after World War II are almost entirely undocumented, though it appears he resided in Johnson County, Missouri, during both these periods.

Ernest A. Davis had three brothers and one sister. His brother Joseph H. (d. 1908) married Sallie Oden (1877-1904) in 1899, and was buried near his wife in Texas. Ernest's youngest brother Edgar (b. 1898) married Emma Stout of Warrensburg, Missouri, in 1922. Little information aside from photographs is available regarding the boys' sister Marian K. (b. 1905), but Ernest and Marian seem to have been close throughout their lives. Another brother, James Ray (b. 1893) is thought to have died as an infant. Ernest Davis is not known to have married or fathered any children. Many family members' remains were interred in the Providence Baptist Church cemetery plot in Johnson County, Missouri.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Ernest A. Davis Papers are organized into five sections:

Correspondence**Newspaper Clippings****Photographs****Family History****Church Records**

Correspondence, 1910, 1918-1919, bulk: 1918, consists exclusively of letters sent by Ernest A. Davis to his family, mostly to his mother. One of these letters was written in 1910 at the age of 14. It discusses Ernest and Edgar's visit with family in Fayetteville, Missouri, including farming practices. Besides this letter, other correspondence consists of ten letters sent by Ernest to his father and mother and one extra envelope, that establishes Davis's earliest presence at Camp Jackson. These letters were written during Ernest's service with the United States Army at three locations: Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa; Camp Jackson in South Carolina, and Camp Custer, near Battle Creek, Michigan. These letters describe the routine of daily life in the Army, restrictions in furlough due to quarantine, camp conditions, Davis's promotions and pay, and planned visits home.

Newspaper clippings, 1976, n.d., from Missouri newspapers usually do not include byline or dateline information, and frequently consist of items reprinted for historical interest years after the events described. Subjects vary greatly. One clipping describes Ernest Davis's lily pond and sport fishing in 1935. An account of Davis family history from the *Daily Star Journal* of Warrensburg, Missouri, emphasizes Ernest's parents John James and Gertrude, but contains biographical information about Ernest's grandparents Robert I. (d. 1875) and Mary A. (Helterbrand, d.1910) Davis, and other family members as well. A few brief clippings pertain to Davis family members J. Edgar Davis and Robert Russell Downing. The newspaper clippings originally had been folded and kept in mail envelopes. The envelopes have been retained and precede the clippings originally contained therein. All newspaper clippings have been photocopied for preservation.

Photographs, c. 1890-1986, including cabinet cards, are divided into two categories: Family portraits and Ernest A. Davis portraits. Family portraits consist of six group portraits of Ernest A. Davis and his family, eleven photographs of individual family members including his cousins in the Downing family, and two photographs of the Providence Baptist Church congregation in Johnson County, Missouri. Family members include his parents John James and Gertrude Davis, his brother Edgar, sister Marian, and his maternal cousins Myrtle, Esta, and Eulah Downing, in addition to a few photographs without captions. Eleven images categorized as Ernest A. Davis portraits include baby pictures (1896), pictures of him in military garb (1918, 1943), oversized panoramic photographs of his military units (1918) and other photographs of him (1986, n.d.).

The single folder of **Family History** materials, 1913-1990, contains a variety of documents related to the lives of Ernest A. Davis and his family. A photocopy of genealogical notes documenting the line of descent from Robert I. Davis, through John James Davis (b. 1867), to Ernest A. Davis, includes spouses and siblings (n.d.). A letter of recommendation concerns

Ernest Davis's service in the United States Army while stationed in Ledo, India, from 1942 to 1943. Ernest Davis's eighth grade diploma (1913) and funeral program are also included.

Church Record Books, 1846-1888, consist of two volumes of handwritten pages documenting the creed, rules of decorum, membership, staffing, and other affairs of the United Baptist Church of Providence in Johnson County, Missouri.

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