



## **Wessel and Schaefer Family Papers (S0522)**

**Collection Number:** S0522

**Collection Title:** Wessel and Schaefer Family Papers

**Dates:** 1907-1975

**Creator:** Wessel, Lillian Schaefer, 1898-1975

**Abstract:** The Wessel and Schaefer Family Papers contain correspondence, diaries, newspaper clippings, and photographs documenting the lives of Lillian Schaefer and Emil Wessel. The collection contains material both prior to and during their marriage, including family correspondence from 1954. The complete date range of the collection is 1907 to 1975, with bulk dates from 1917 to 1923.

**Collection Size:** 2.5 cubic feet  
(48 folders, 43 photographs)

**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-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at [stlouis@shsmo.org](mailto:stlouis@shsmo.org). Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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**Preferred Citation:** [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Wessel and Schaefer Family Papers* (S0522). The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

**Donor Information:** The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by R. Wessel on July 18, 1991 (Accession No. SA3002).

**Related Materials:** Additional materials related to the *Wessel and Schaefer Family Papers* can be found in the following collections:

[Geoffrey Wade Donnan Papers \(S1222\)](#)

[Wessel/Donnan Papers \(S0787\)](#)

**Processed by:** Processed by Reilly McDonald and AJ Medlock, July 13, 2023

**Historical Note:**

Lillian Schaefer was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 10, 1898, to William and Bertha Schaefer. During her teenage years, she involved herself in social and religious organizations such as the St. Andrews Young People League. In February of 1918, Lillian met Emil Wessel, another active member and future president of the League. The two became close acquaintances, working together to organize social events and regular meetings. In November of the same year, Wessel enlisted in the United States Army and traveled to New York for training. Lillian and Emil exchanged friendly correspondence for the short duration of his service. Also, during this time, Lillian carried out her social activities as normal, documented by diary entries and correspondence exchanged with friends and casual romances. In December 1918, Emil Wessel returned from training and resumed involvement in the St. Andrew's Young People's League. He and Lillian grew closer, often attending picture shows and other social engagements. Emil proposed to Lillian in February of 1920, and the couple married in December of the same year.

The couple moved to Webster Groves, Missouri, shortly after marrying. In the following years, they had a daughter, Gloria (1922-2019), and two sons, Robert (1923-2015) and Richard (1931-2020). In the early 1920's, Emil began his own business, the Emil F. Wessel Commissions Co., where he supplied poultry, eggs, and dairy products to customers in the Greater St. Louis Area. In 1936, he became the president of the St. Louis Butter, Egg, and Poultry Exchange after finding success in his own company. Lillian and Emil remained involved in their community by supporting the St. Louis Children's Guardians. Through this organization, they briefly fostered Jack D. Salsman (1928-1969), a young boy receiving treatment for polio. However, Lillian and Emil never adopted Salsman, as his background of petty crime caused problems in the family, eventually leading to his incarceration in the Oklahoma State Penitentiary. During this time, he frequently attempted to correspond with Lillian and Emil Wessel but received no response.

In 1953, the couple moved again to Kirkwood, Missouri, where they opened the Wessel Stables. This business would later pass to their daughter, Gloria, and her husband, Dwight Donnan (1920-1988). Emil Wessel passed away in August 1971, followed by Lillian in September 1975.

**Arrangement:**

The collection has been arranged into the following four series with seven subseries:

- Lillian Schaefer Wessel
  - Correspondence
  - Diaries and Sketchbooks
  - Photograph Guidebooks
- Emil F. Wessel
  - Correspondence
  - Business and Personal Papers
- The Wessel Family
  - Correspondence
  - Scrapbook Materials
- Photographs

**Scope and Content Note:****Lillian Schaefer Wessel**

This series consists of correspondence, diaries, sketchbooks, and photograph guidebooks documenting the life of Lillian Wessel, born Lillian Schaefer. Topics of interest include the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic, the American Suffragette movement, and the Saint Louis Streetcar Strike of 1918. Materials of note include correspondence exchanged with United States Army soldiers in the early 20th century and diary entries documenting Lillian's social and romantic encounters. The materials in this series date from 1912 to 1975 and are arranged alphabetically by subject.

The correspondence subseries contains letters sent and received by Lillian Schaefer Wessel from close friends, romantic partners, and family. Materials of note include correspondence with close friends Jack A. Finegan, Eddie Faber, and William C. Weisenberg. Also included is early correspondence between Lillian and Emil Wessel before their engagement. The materials in this subseries date from 1912 to 1924 and are arranged chronologically.

The diaries and sketchbooks subseries consist of three diaries and two sketchbooks owned by Lillian Wessel. These materials document Lillian's life in her own words, including information about her social life and romantic encounters. Diary entries of note provide a near-complete timeline of Lillian's early relationship with Emil Wessel and their later years in 1967 and 1975. The materials in this subseries date from 1912 to 1975 and are arranged chronologically.

The Photograph Guidebooks subseries contains photograph guidebooks sent to Lillian Wessel from Jack A. Finegan, a long-time friend and pen-pal. As an Ohio Chamber of Commerce employee, Finegan often traveled for work, picking up photograph guidebooks from locations around Ohio and North Carolina. Finegan sent them to Lillian Wessel, who collected them over the years. The materials in this subseries date from 1916 to 1917 and are arranged chronologically.

**Emil Wessel**

This series consists of correspondence, newspaper clippings, and material relating to the life of Emil F. Wessel. Topics of interest include post-World War I American military activities and the St. Louis Butter, Egg, and Poultry Exchange. The materials in this series date from 1918 to 1952 and are arranged alphabetically by subject.

The Correspondence subseries consists of letters exchanged between Emil Wessel and his family during his time in the United States Army. In the letters, Wessel describes the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic, including military vaccination protocols and the role of the Young Men's Christian Association in providing housing and other amenities for troops. The materials in this subseries date from 1918 to 1940 and are arranged chronologically.

The Business and Personal Papers subseries contains correspondence and promotional flyers regarding the Emil F. Wessel Commission Company and other business ventures undertaken by Emil Wessel, including his involvement in the St. Louis Butter, Egg, and Poultry Exchange in the early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Also included are pamphlets and other ephemera collected during Wessel's United States Army service in 1918 and a 1952 edition of the *Community Press*

*Directory of West St. Louis County.* This subseries dates from 1916 to 1962 and are arranged chronologically.

### **The Wessel Family**

This series consists of correspondence and materials taken from Wessel family scrapbooks such as anonymous writings, children's artwork, and newspaper clippings. Topics of interest include the Boy Scouts of America, the Young Men's Christian Association, and World War II. The materials in this series date from 1907 to 1953 and are arranged alphabetically by subject.

The Correspondence subseries contains letters, postcards, and greeting cards sent and received by members of the Schaefer and Wessel families. Materials of note include postcards sent from Robert and Richard Wessel to their parents, Lillian and Emil during their travels in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Also included in the subseries is correspondence with, and regarding Jack D. Salsman, a young man incarcerated in the Oklahoma State Penitentiary to whom Emil and Lillian Wessel provided temporary housing and care during his early life. The materials in this subseries date from 1907 to 1952 and are arranged chronologically.

The Scrapbook Materials subseries contains anonymous writings, children's artwork, newspaper clippings, theatre programs, certificates, and promotional flyers once contained in Wessel family scrapbooks. The materials shed light on the life of the Wessel family, including their involvement in social and religious organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America and the St. Andrew's Young People's League. The subseries dates from 1916 to 1949 and is arranged alphabetically by subject.

### **Photographs**

This series consists of fifty-three photographs featuring members of the Schaefer and Wessel families and close friends. Materials of note include early photographs of Lillian Wessel, her sister, Hazel, and her father, William. The photographs in this series date from 1918 to 1951 and are numerically arranged according to unique identifiers.

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	f. 5-6 1916-1917
	f. 7-9 From Jack Finegan, 1917-1924
	f. 10 1918
	f. 11 From Emil Wessel, 1918-1923
	f. 12 William C. Weinsberg, 1918-1919
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- f. 19 Middleton, Ohio, 1916
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- f. 23-28 Emil F. Wessel
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    - f. 27 Military Service and Emil F. Wessel Commissions Co., 1916-1940
    - f. 28 *Community Press Directory of West St. Louis County*, 1952
- f. 29-47 The Wessel Family
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    - f. 32 From Bill and Marge Nowack, 1941-1953
    - f. 33 From Bob Harter, 1942-1945
    - f. 34 From George Wamser, 1942-1953
    - f. 35 From and regarding Jack Salsman, 1947-1951
    - f. 36 1950-1952
    - f. 37 Large greeting cards, announcements, gift tags, no date
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- Box 005 f. 38-47 Scrapbook Materials
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  - f. 48 522.1-522.45, 1918, 1943-1951, no date

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