



Lawrence Leroy O'Kelley Papers (SP0020)

Collection Number: SP0020

Collection Title: Lawrence Leroy O'Kelley Diary

Dates: 1918-1919

Creator: O'Kelley, Lawrence Leroy, 1894-1968

Abstract: The Lawrence Leroy O'Kelley Papers document O'Kelley's experiences in France during WWI from April 1918 to October 1918. The collection also contains postcards, a cd of unidentified family photographs, and a certificate awarded to O'Kelley in 1919 for wounds he received in the war.

Collection Size: .2 cubic foot
(4 folders, 1 cd)

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-Springfield](http://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at springfield@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given, assigned, and transferred to the Society all copyrights, and associated rights the Donor may possess in the materials.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Lawrence Leroy O'Kelley Papers* (SP0020); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Springfield [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Springfield].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Lawrence M. O'Kelley on September 6, 2017 (Accession No. SP0027). An addition was made on July 25, 2019 by Lawrence M. O'Kelley (Accession No. SPA0061).

Processed by: Processed by Erin Smither, September 22, 2017

Biographical Note:

Lawrence Leroy O'Kelley was born May 30, 1894, in Mount Vernon, Missouri, the son of Charles W. O'Kelley and Nellie M. Bearden. As a child, O'Kelley's family relocated to Ash Grove, Missouri, where he spent his childhood. In 1918, he served as an officer in Company M of the 139th Infantry Division. He went through basic training at Camp Doniphan in Oklahoma and served in France from May 1918 until he was wounded at the Battle of the Argonne Forest in September 1918.

After the war, he married Inez Delores Hazen. They married between 1917, when he is listed as single on his draft registration card, and 1923 with the birth of their first child, Betty J. O'Kelley. The family resided for a time in Pueblo, Colorado, before settling in Denver. In 1928, the family celebrated the birth of son Lawrence Alan O'Kelley. O'Kelley worked in the lumber industry, and according to his grandson, was successful and well-regarded by his peers. O'Kelley relocated to Seattle, Washington, in 1948, where he lived until his death on August 23, 1968, at the age of 74. He is buried in Willamette National Cemetery in Portland, Oregon.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into four folders and is arranged by media and document type.

Scope and Content Note:

The Lawrence Leroy O'Kelly Papers consist of several postcards, a detailed and descriptive diary of his wartime experiences, a cd of O'Kelley family photographs, and an oversize certificate given to casualties of WWI. The diary records his time in France during WWI from April to October 1918. The diary documents the movements of the army, and describes the landmarks and towns they passed. Lieutenant O'Kelley was responsible for censoring the mail of his men, and his men would not have been allowed to keep such a detailed diary for fear of it falling into enemy hands. What initially reads like a vacation travelogue, grows darker as time passes. Once they arrive at the front, O'Kelley describes the horrors of living in the trenches, the experience of being shelled, and the diary ends with a graphic account of the Battle of the Argonne Forest. Writing from his hospital bed on October 10, 1918, O'Kelley recounts the battle, revealing the fate of comrades and how he came to be wounded. The postcards feature images of O'Kelley's unit in training. Some contain personal messages. There are also images of Springfield and Ash Grove, Missouri. The vast majority of family photographs are not identified and it is unclear how they are related to O'Kelley. There are, however, numerous pictures of O'Kelley himself. The final folder, in an oversize box, contains the certificate issued to O'Kelley in recognition of the wounds he received in the war.

Container List:

Box001	f. 1	Diary, 1918
	f. 2	Postcards, 1918
	f. 3	CD of photographs, no date
Box002	f. 4	Veteran certificate, 1919

Index:

Index Term	Folder	Image
Argonne, Battle of the, France, 1918	1	
Ash Grove (Mo.)	1-2	Yes
Camp Doniphan (Okla.)	1-2	Yes
Clark, Samuel G., 1882-1930	1	
Coates, Frank D., 1889 -1918	1	
Cosgrove, John D., 1895-1918	1	
Greene County (Mo.)	2	Yes
Hall, William Harry, 1900-1918	1	
McDonald, Donald Malcolm, 1892-1918	1	
O'Kelley, Lawrence Leroy, 1894-1968	1-4	Yes
Stepp, William Dale., 1873-1918	1	
World War I, 1914-1918--France	1, 2, 4	